

Journalism education survey: Brazil

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1. What is the framework of higher education and situating journalism education in that?

The higher education system in Brazil consists of public and private universities, faculties and university centers (campuses that have not attained the status of university). The majority of the public universities are federal, under the administration of the Ministry of Education. State universities are also frequent, and community (municipal) universities coexist in a reduced number. Private institutions predominate in the higher education system; Catholic and Methodist universities having an important position in research and education.

According to the last available Census of Higher Education, in 2013 there were 2.391 educational units in Brazil, from which 106 were federal universities; 119 state universities; 76 municipal colleges; and 2.090 private universities. Data of the Census pointed out that the area of Social Sciences, under which the Communication/Journalism courses are aggregated, was the largest one, with 9.650 courses (1.701 in public universities and 7.949 in private institutions).¹ Starting in the 1970's, Journalism took its place as an area of specific studies of Communication. This was an important step for an occupation that long had as a common profile professionals of bohemian types, generally associated to literary work. In 2007, the acknowledgment of Journalism as a specific research area lead the Ministry of Education to the authorization of the first Master Degree course in Journalism at the Federal University of Santa Catarina.

For almost 40 years, from March 1970 until June 2009, a university diploma was mandatory for journalists in Brazil. According to Decree n° 83,254 of March 13, 1970, which regulated the profession in the country for nearly four decades, only the professionals registered in the Labor Ministry could work as journalists. Until the 2009 Federal Supreme Court's final decision, however, the mandatory nature of the diploma had been subject of legal controversies for decades. In their final decision, the great majority of the Supreme Court judges considered the compulsory diploma "unconstitutional", since it could represent a menace to the freedom of expression, particularly if taking into account the Article 13 of the American Convention on Human Rights, also known as the *Pacto de San Jose da Costa Rica*.

¹ Censo da Educação Superior 2013 – Resumos Técnicos. MEC/INEP, pp. 17-22. Available at <http://portal.inep.gov.br/web/centso-da-educacao-superior/resumos-tecnicos>

2. What are the levels at which journalism education is offered?

Journalism is regularly offered as an undergraduate course by public and private institutions since the 1960's. Amongst Brazilian universities, only one – the Federal University of Santa Catarina – provides an undergraduate course of Journalism. The foundations of journalism, plus journalistic processes and products are the core research areas in its graduate course in Journalism. Two other universities offer what in Brazil is identified as “research lines” linked to the Journalism field: the University of São Paulo, and the University of Brasilia. Other research possibilities in the field appear in a transversal way in some of the graduate courses centered in the area Communication. They are listed under terminologies like: genres and formats in media culture; media processes and products; media and interaction processes; culture, media, and technology; media analysis; cyber and digital media; products and languages of media culture; media and citizenship; media languages.

Considering the research developed in contemporary courses, it is possible to affirm that today Journalism have established strong links to cultural studies, digital contexts, and the studies on media and communication.

3. How many institutions are offering these programmes and at what level?

It is very difficult to determine the exact number of Journalism programmes currently offered in Brazil, but they are almost exclusively at the undergraduate level. In 2012, Bernardo & Leão's research in the database of the Educational System of Information on Undergraduate Programs (2012), in 2010 there were 375 programmes. According to the National Education Research Institute's official databank, presently there are 262 Journalism undergraduate courses listed. Regarding the graduate education, there are three programmes of Professional Journalism, two of them in the state of São Paulo, and another one in northeastern state of Paraíba.

4. What is the national intake of students at different levels?

It is also a very difficult assignment to obtain accurate information regarding the national intake of Journalism students in all levels. It is possible to estimate a total of around 12.000 Journalism students enrolled in undergraduate courses, and about 60 on the 3 professional graduate programmes.

In 2010, considering the number of vacancies offered in the national admission test (called Vestibular), there were 35,509 openings in 316 courses (89.8% in private institutions and 11.2% in public universities). However, it is important to emphasize that this total represented vacancies in communication courses, in which the choice of a specific area of education occurs along the course. Although theoretically all candidates could opt for journalism, the precise percentage is unknown. It is also worth noting that the more than 35,000 vacancies correspond to the total openings offered, but there are schools that fail to fill all vacancies.

Just to have an idea of the interest for journalism education in a communication course: in 2012, of the 4.172 undergraduate students admitted at the School of Communication and Arts at the University of São Paulo, just 638 of the candidates had chosen the journalism course (USP, 2013).

5. What are the main components of the curricula at different levels?

In general terms, journalism courses' curricula include subjects from the Social and Human Sciences, with a focus in subjects of applied nature, such as interviewing, writing and editing for all types of media. At the end of the four years (eight semesters) course the student should produce a theoretical monograph or a practical work in order to get the degree. From 2007 on initiatives devoted to launch database networks (local, regional or national) of Journalism schools are underway, so the information or the works produced by journalism students to get their bachelor's degree are not available for search and research. It is common, then, the recurrence of themes and methods, which contributes to slow the courses and their curricula improvement.

In December 2008, a Committee of Journalism Specialists was appointed by the Ministry of Education to work on a revised national journalism curricula guideline. The task of the Committee's eight assigned members was to gather information and promote the exchange of ideas within the academic and the professional sectors aiming the elaboration a document for a new national curricula guideline. The work took place in the first semester of 2009 and a final report was presented to the Ministry of Education in August 2009. The final report of the Experts Committee proposed changes in the curriculum guidelines and incorporated some of the recommendations of UNESCO Curriculum. It also considered in its public meetings the publication of the Model Curriculum in Portuguese.

6. What is the response/attitude towards these programmes by professional journalists and media industry?

Since the 1980's, the diploma prerequisite prevented professional journalists from teach in the universities. But there was also a group of young professionals who migrated from newsroom to classroom and many are now involved with journalism and/or communication research. The central paradox faced by Brazilian journalism educators during the decades of mandatory diploma was: at the same time that the requirements for training required the courses to be equipped in order to reproduce the professional environment in the so called 'laboratories', the academy lost its link to the newsroom, previously represented informally in the courses by the journalist-professor. Today, the bridge between organizations and the academic world is yet the subject of a complex reconstruction.

7. Give a profile of the human resources involved in teaching/training in terms of permanent faculty and visiting faculty.

The number of visiting professors is irrelevant; the vast majority is constituted of permanent faculty. The majority of professionals involved in journalism education have an undergraduate degree in Journalism, usually with some years of experience in media industries, along with specialization courses in the area of communication. According to Mick (2012), contrasting with the newsrooms - where the majority of professional journalists are women (63%), young (20-30 years old) white and single -, Journalism professors are mostly men (58%), white, married and middle age (41-64 years old). Although there are professors from other fields (mainly Humanities) involved in the journalism education, there is a preponderance of professors that are also journalists. Most of them work in private universities and colleges, institutions where they generally face a stressful routine, since their salaries correspond to the effective classroom hours.

8. Provide a short assessment of journalism education in your country.

In the same way that it was at the origin of education and research in communication, Journalism studies were the base around which the academic production was organized through time in the setting of scientific associations in the field.

Presently, the number of Journalism schools in the country remains stable, opposing to forecasts of some critics, for whom there would happen an inevitable, almost immediate, closing of the courses, especially those in private schools, once the diploma wasn't mandatory. As part of the area of Applied Social Sciences, Journalism remains popular among students: the demand for Journalism courses maintained rather high levels of enrollment during the first decade of the 21st century, even with the cutback observed between 2008 and 2010, in the toughest moment of the debates regarding the pertinence of the Supreme Court's 2009 ruling.

Here, the University of São Paulo can be used as an example once more: the ratio of applicants in Journalism undergraduate courses was around 44.71 applicants for each vacancy between 2004 and 2008 (FUVEST, 2011). In 2012, however, data released by the institution demonstrated that the ceasing of mandatory diploma for journalists reduced the number of candidates in the admission tests in 2009 and in 2010, but the tendency changed in 2011, evolving from 32.20 candidates per vacancy in 2010 towards 34.62 candidates.