

Journalism students' profile and their perceptions of journalism education in Brazil: A comparative analysis of local and national scenarios

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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses the profile of journalism students in Brazil: what they think of the education they receive and the activities undertaken by the university. It also discusses the modalities for constructing and incorporating journalistic culture within Brazilian academic institutions. It is based on a questionnaire administered to 611 students in six higher education institutions.

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Various studies have identified an expansion in the number of journalism courses in the world and the impacts of that phenomenon on the journalism labour market and professional practices (Mellado, 2011; Nascimento, 2008; Delano, 2008; Frith & Meech, 2007). Such discussions have usually been associated with the question of the quality of higher education courses, the profile of graduates, and the qualification being offered. This includes the debate on whether there should be greater emphasis on theory or on practice and the extent of its adaptation to the transformations in the media and communication scenario, with a focus on the phenomena of technological convergence, the emergence of new journalistic practices, and the emergence/expansion of the organizational communication sector, among others (Jorge, Pereira, & Adghirni, 2012; Deuze & Marjoribanks, 2009).

In Brazil's case, the question of qualification has a peculiar twist. For forty

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years (1969-2009), anyone who intended to practice was required by law to have a degree in journalism, which meant that every active journalist experienced a period of study at a university. In that respect, the university can be considered a sphere of socialization for future journalists insofar as it seeks to discuss professional values and practices. Making this assumption, this study seeks to understand what characterizes journalism students in Brazil and their relationship to professional culture and higher education. To this end, we ask several questions:

- What is the profile of journalism students in Brazil?
- How do they define the training they receive?
- What role does local context¹ play in forming and constructing a professional culture in Brazilian journalism?

This research pursues two lines of analysis to explore the answers to these questions. First, there is the presentation of a set of data concerning aspects of the students' profile and their assessments of higher education obtained from the administration of a questionnaire in six Brazilian higher education institutions, namely Alcântara Machado Integrated Faculties (Faculdades Integradas Alcântara Machado - FIAM), State University of Rio de Janeiro (Universidade do Estado do Rio de Janeiro - UERJ), University of Brasília (Universidade de Brasília - UnB), Federal University of the Pampa (Universidade Federal do Pampa - Unipampa), Federal University of Rio Grande do Norte (Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Norte - UFRN) and Tuiuti do Paraná University (Universidade Tuiuti do Paraná - UTP).

The second line of analysis consists of a comparison between the data obtained from the national sphere and the replies of the University of Brasília journalism students located in Brasília, the federal capital of Brazil - a popular environment for the professional practice of political journalism (Le Cam & Pereira, 2012; Nascimento, 2010).

Gaining an understanding of those two lines of analysis will make it possible to discuss possible congruence between the profile of journalism students and that of the professional practitioner. At the same time, the question arises of the tension between the current movement to standardize journalistic practices in various countries and the reinforcement of regional diversity in journalistic production in a country of continental proportions like Brazil, where the debate in the field of communication has historically been marked

1. This refers to the context of the university in which the questionnaire was applied, including the university environment, the city's culture, and the history of its journalism course.

by the claims of social-political movements calling for the regionalization of culture and democratization of access to the means of communication (Peruzzo, 2011).

This article is divided into five sections. The first consists of a review of the studies on journalist education and qualification and the profile of journalism students in Brazil. This is followed by a presentation of conceptual and theoretical frameworks, the methodology used, and the results obtained. The article ends with a discussion of the research data in keeping with the lines of analysis on which the article is based.

Journalism students in Brazil

It goes beyond the scope of the present article to present an exhaustive review of the international literature on the profile of journalism students and their perceptions and assessments of their higher education. Instead, it will concentrate on Brazilian studies of the same subject. First, however, we will refer to a comprehensive review undertaken by Claudia Mellado et. al. (2013), which reported on a considerable number of studies carried out in other nations: the United Kingdom, China, Greece, Russia, Sweden, Denmark, Finland, Spain, and the United States. The authors identified three serious limitations to the studies they reviewed:

1. a failure to analyze possible variations in responses from students according to the course year they were in;
2. restriction of the groups studied to western hemisphere countries only; and
3. the relative lack of trans-national comparisons.

We know of only one regular study about Brazilian journalism students' profile with a national outreach, completed by the Ministry of Education in view of National Course Examinations. The first report, released in 2006, did not differentiate data according to majoring options or specializations. Rather, it presents the profile of communication students (Cinema, Publishing, Journalism, Advertising, Broadcasting and Public Relations) (INEP, 2006). The second, published in 2012, differentiated the data from journalism students and other communication areas (INEP, 2012).

There are other Brazilian studies profiling journalism students, but they tend to focus on local or regional realities and involve research projects of a

merely exploratory nature, such as Schwingel, Melo, and Figueiredo (2005), which investigates the profiles of students enrolled in eight Schools of Journalism in Salvador, capital city of the state of Bahia. A total of 400 questionnaires were administered to students. The survey revealed that 66% of them were women aged 21-27 and 44% of the total number of students had chosen the course on the basis of personal interest. Regarding the profession, 52% of the total group stated that they were looking for personal satisfaction. Regarding the labor market, 42% were searching for professional advancement and progression; they stated that television was their preferred area of work. In response to the questions on how often they were in contact with the communication media, 41% declared that they read printed newspapers every day, but only 20% reported regular reading of magazines. 68% accessed the Internet every day, 64% listened to the radio every day, and 81% watched television every day. 74% of the interviewees had worked or were working in the field of journalism, although the questionnaire did not make any distinction between contracted professionals and trainees.

A pool entitled "Socio-Economic Profile: The Social Communication Undergraduate at Ufam" (*Perfil Socioeconômico: Acadêmico de Comunicação Social da Ufam*) (Azevedo, Mafra, & Naiara, 2009) analyzes the process of gradual predominance of the social elite matriculating in the social communication course from 2003-2007. Results showed that in 2003, 46% of those entering the course came from private schools; in 2004, the percentage went up to 63%, and by 2005, 65% of them had studied in private institutions. Despite the number going down to 58% in 2006, it was still well over half.

The Ministry of Education's regulation of the respective legislation introduced greater flexibility into the course curriculum; this was the starting point for the study conducted by Campos and Rocha (2011). This study compared journalism undergraduates' profiles in two government-run universities in the state of São Paulo: one located in the state capital (Universidade de São Paulo-USP), and the other in a city in the interior of the state (Universidade Estadual Paulista-Unesp-Bauru). The data showed that the USP students were more satisfied with their course (62%) but had complaints, especially about the lack of interdisciplinarity in curricula. At the Unesp, only 13% of the respondents declared they were satisfied with the course. In their view, the main failing was the curriculum structure, which placed theoretical study courses immediately after the practical ones.

Finally, data published in 2012 by the Ministry of Education (Instituto Nacional de Estudos e Pesquisas Educacionais - INEP) using a socio-economic questionnaire administered to 10,477 students participating in the National

Student Performance examination (*Exame Nacional de Desempenho de Estudantes* – Enade) revealed a tendency towards feminization of the profession among those completing their course (62.7%) and a concentration of those more recently graduated in the age group of 24 or under (61.2%). 66.0%² of survey respondents were white, a reduction compared to the date from 2006 (76.6%). This reduction can be explained by the policy of racial quotas instituted in 2005 for university admission in Brazilian public universities. The family income of 69.3% of the students is over three times the official minimum wage (USD\$830,52). It also shows that 36.8% of students' fathers and 41.6% of their mothers completed university programs at least (INEP, 2012).

The context of journalism education in Brazil

As we have stated, the status of a professional journalist in Brazil was, up until 2009, limited to those holding a bachelor's degree in journalism. Even though the Supreme Federal Court (*Supremo Tribunal Federal* – STF) repealed this law, the university continues to be the main pathway to the profession; a national survey conducted by Mick and Lima (2013) in 2012 showed that 89.2% of journalists hold a bachelor's degree in journalism.

The former legal situation led to a considerable increase in the number of journalism courses to address the demands of the market and the requirements of the law. In 2015, however, four years after the law requiring a university diploma was struck down, there were still 415 courses offering a qualification in journalism in Brazil, with most of them (362) being offered by private higher education institutions according to the Ministry of Education's (2015) own data (<http://emec.mec.gov.br/>).

The former law also greatly influenced the identity of the journalist as a professional in Brazil, since all that was needed was a university degree in journalism, even if the person had never actually worked in a newsroom or other news media organization. The idea of professionalism held by journalists was imbued with that definition (Le Cam & Ruellan, 2004) and was also defended by the trade union organizations associated with the field of journalism. As a result, between 1980 and 1990, there was a process of gradual occupation by journalists of spaces like social communication advisory bodies and press relations offices, traditionally occupied by public relations

2. It is possible that the recent implantation of a policy of racial quota provision for university admission in some Brazilian Universities will have altered those figures by the time of reading.

(Sant'anna, 2009). The Brazilian Ministry of Labour and Employment figures for 2010 showed that 42% of the country's 89,000 journalists working at that time were not actually working in the media sector. A survey conducted by Mick and Lima (2013) showed that 45% of journalists were working outside of the media, with 40% in communication and 5% in teaching.

The quest for the perfect journalism course

Cunningham (2005) proposed that the underlying hypothesis for debates in courses in the United States on journalism education is the quest for the perfect school of journalism. In Brazil, while the context is quite different, there is a similar endeavour underway to achieve the perfect journalism course – a matter which has led to a heated debate.

In the Brazilian case, the existence of this search for the ideal course is closely tied to a frequently linear way of reasoning, linking the profile of the professional person, professional identity, and professional practices to the professional qualification process. At one end are the professional profile/identity and professional practices, seen as the goal of the process, and at the other, the curricular structure/education, seen as the means to that end. In a form of logic that seems to suggest that the ends justify the means, journalism education is called on to adjust itself to help students achieve the end goal: success in the market.

The myth on which that reasoning is based lies within the structure of the Education Law (*Lei de Diretrizes e Bases da Educação Nacional – LDB*) itself, insofar as it proposes that one of the objectives of higher education is to prepare professionals for the labour market: “to train graduates in the various fields of knowledge, preparing them for insertion into professional sectors and participation in the development of Brazilian society, and collaborate in their continual training [trans. by authors].” (Presidência da República, 1996).

In this ongoing process of structuring journalism education in Brazil, which dates back to the mid-twentieth century, one of the recurrent topics of debate is the discussion about whether journalism courses are more akin to the humanities and social sciences or to the broader field of communication. Discussion of this topic is often heated, and feelings can run high, since it is a debate that may well determine whether the course – and its formal curriculum – should be more strongly focused on social theories, communication theories, or the more technical and practical aspects of journalism.

Furthermore, the debate embraces the question of whether the journalism

course should have more or less autonomy than the communication course. That issue has generated much tension in the evolution of journalism education in Brazil, so much so that at the turn of the twentieth century through to the twenty-first, various professional, academic, and scientific sectors mobilized to press for the creation of a specific journalism course. Prior to that, the various communication-related degree courses were all considered to be communication courses with a major in a particular area, such as journalism.

In Brazil, the creation of university journalism courses began in the 1940s, with the first course, titled “Higher Education Course in Journalism,” established in 1947 at the Cásper Líbero University in São Paulo State. In 1969, the Ministry of Education created a course in social communication. From then on, until 2013, when the new Curricular Directives for Journalism were passed, academic training in journalism became merely a competence amongst others³ within the social communication course. Three basic curricula⁴ were developed in the years 1969, 1978, and 1984 (Antonioli, 2014). It was only following the basic curriculum of 1984, the author explains, that foundation courses were no longer compulsory: “subjects common to all competences could be distributed in parallel to specific programs or concentrated within the first two years, as set out in the previous curricula” (p. 185).

Ultimately, in the 1990s, a new educational focus was proposed by Laws 9.131/95 and 9.394/96, which marked a paradigm shift from the basic curriculum that typified curricular structures to the adoption of “National Curricular Directives,” as stated in the National Education Plan (*Plano Nacional de Educação* - PNE), with the aim of

“...[e]stablishing, at a national level, curricular directives that ensure the necessary flexibility, creativity and responsibility of institutions, diversity within the programs offered by the various higher education institutions, so as to better meet the different needs of their clientele and the peculiarities of the regions in which they operate... [trans. by authors]” (Presidência da República, 2001).

3. The other competences established for the Social Communication course were Propaganda and Advertising, Public Relations, Editing, and Broadcasting. The latter was later scrapped (Antonioli, 2014).

4. For readers who are unfamiliar with the basic curricular model adopted by Brazil until 2000, this excerpt from CNE/CES (National Education Council/Higher Education Chamber) Statement 67/2003, is important: “The conception of basic curricula ... entailed in-depth detailing of subjects and compulsory hourly loads, failing which, the course would not be recognized or even authorized to take place when proposed, or when assessed by the Review Committees, thus hindering institutions in creating educational projects in line with conceptions of existing courses, in order to meet the demands of different kinds” (Ministério da Educação, 2003).

Antonioli (2014) points out that while the National Curricular Directives represented an accomplishment for higher education in Brazil, there remained a challenge for journalism: "... its status as a competence of social communication graduates..." (p. 186). In 2009, the Ministry of Education (MEC) designated a Committee of Specialists on the indication of their peers in the academic community. The Committee drew up the document, *Diretrizes curriculares nacionais para o curso de jornalismo: Relatório da comissão de especialistas instituída pelo Ministério da Educação*,⁵ which, after a passage of three years duration in the National Education Council (*Conselho Nacional de Educação - CNE*)⁶, was finally approved in February 2013, establishing new Curricular Directives for Journalism Courses.⁷

A survey undertaken by Antonioli (2014) on the academic training of journalists in Brazil in the light of this education legislation confirms that journalism courses, along with other higher education courses in Brazil, have always been subject to the state. In the case of journalism courses, it was only in 2001, when the Curricular Directives were passed, that institutions obtained the freedom "to compose their curricular structures in accordance with the graduate profile desired, without any imposition from the Ministry of Education (MEC)" (p. 183). The study also mentions that despite the 2013 Curricular Directives, the traditional dichotomy between theory and practice remains to be addressed by journalism courses in Brazil.

Furthermore, thinking on journalism education in Brazil has been highly affected by the debate as to whether a degree should be obligatory for the

5. The report by the Committee of Specialists proposed the following graduate profile: "Journalism graduates are professional, qualified journalists, with university training that is general, humanistic, critical and reflective. This enables them to act as intellectual producers and agents of citizenship, showing awareness, on the one hand, of the characteristic complexity and pluralism of contemporary society and culture, and on the other, of the 17 specific, theoretical and technical foundations. Thus, they will have the clarity and assurance to exercise their specific social function in the context of their singular and distinguished professional identity, within the broader field of communication" (Ministério da Educação, 2009, p. 16-17).

6. In 2013, the CNE approved CNE/CES Statement 39 of February 20, 2013, followed by Resolution 1 of September 27, 2013, which confirmed the status of Journalism as an undergraduate degree and no longer merely a competence within social communication courses.

7. The new Curricular Directives in force, approved in 2013, outline the following profile for future journalists: "Those who complete Journalism courses should be prepared to undertake the professional duties of a journalist, with academic training that is general, humanistic, critical, ethical and reflective, thus enabling them to act as intellectual producers and agents of citizenship, able to show awareness of the characteristic complexity and pluralism of contemporary society and culture, whilst possessing the specific theoretical and technical foundations, so as to provide them with the clarity and assurance to exercise their particular social function and singular and distinguished professional identity within the broader field of social communication" (Ministério da Educação, 2013, p. 2).

right to exercise the profession. Opinions have been divided among the community of researchers, professionals, journalism students, and communication companies alike. According to a survey conducted by Bergamo, Mick, and Lima (2012), professional journalists overwhelmingly “defended the requirement of a university degree to exercise the profession, while over half argued for specific qualifications in journalism” (p. 16). Most importantly, it was a heated debate involving social agents acting in their institutional capacities via academic, research, or professional entities. Among the professional and research organizations, FNPJ,⁸ SBPJor,⁹ and FENAJ¹⁰ have declared their support for the degree requirement, while COMPÓS,¹¹ ENECOS,¹² and ANJ¹³ have expressed opposition to the need for specific qualifications to exercise

8. The National Forum of Journalism Professors, which assembles professors of journalism, stated its view officially via the Belo Horizonte Letter, among other declarations: “The professors, students and professionals present at the 12th National Meeting of Journalism Professors (ENPJ), which took place between April 16 and April 19, 2009, publicly defend the field of Journalism and advocate for the need to maintain the requirement of university training in journalism to exercise the profession” (Fórum Nacional de Professores de Jornalismo, 2009).

9. The Brazilian Journalism Researchers Association (SBPJor), which assembles journalism researchers, defended the need for the qualification, among other comments: “SBPJor understands that the quality of journalistic information depends upon the qualified training of its professionals, something which has been jeopardized by the STF’s decision. This deliberation demonstrated a lack of knowledge regarding the nature, complexity and specificity of journalism in contemporary societies” (Franciscato, Quadros, Benetti, & Teixeira, 2009, p. 1).

10. The National Federation of Journalists, which assembles journalists’ unions, affirmed in a public letter, amongst other things, that “It is important to clarify from the outset that advocating for specific training to exercise the profession is far from being a purely corporatist issue. Above all else, this is about meeting ever-increasing requirements in contemporary society that communication professionals have a high level of technical, theoretical and especially ethical, qualification” (Federação Nacional de Jornalistas, 2005, p. 1).

11. The National Association of Postgraduate Programs in Communication, which assembles postgraduate programs in Communication, has opposed the need for a degree.

12. The National Executive of Social Communication Students, which assembles communication students, argued in a public letter that: “... in the current context, the degree may represent a further attack on journalists. In this sense, we affirm that fighting only for the degree requirement is an individualist solution, implying a corporatist discussion, in which the main issue – the exploitation of communicators, not only graduates but also the broader group of social communicators and the working class – is not faced” (Executiva Nacional de Estudantes de Comunicação Social, 2010, p. 1).

13. The governing board of the National Newspapers Association, which assembles journalism companies, supported the abolishment of the need for a journalism degree to exercise the profession whilst declaring in the following statement that it would continue to hire journalism graduates, and opposed the resumption of the debate at the Federal Congress following the STF’s decision: “There are countless issues of real importance in the contemporary world of communication which warrant action from the Brazilian Legislature, such as the preservation of national content amidst the concentration on a global scale of distribution infrastruc-

the profession of journalism. At time of writing, a Constitutional amendment to bring back the requirement for a university degree to become a journalist in Brazil is under analysis in the Federal Congress.

Conceptual and theoretical framework: Journalism education and professional culture

This article approaches journalism teaching and student profiles from the perspective of the sociology of professions. Rather than adopting a normative view of the quality of university training or discussing course modules, the main interest here lies in understanding the perceptions students have of their training and how it relates to the jobs market and values of the profession. Thus, the aim here is to outline the students' profile, their expectations regarding the labor market, and their expectations towards what shall be termed "journalistic culture."

This article draws upon the definition of culture developed by Howard Becker (1999), which is closely linked to the concepts of "conventions" and "social worlds" (Becker, 1982). Culture is associated with conventional expectations and representations that appear via acts and artifacts, making it possible to act and coordinate activities within the ambit of a collectivity. The cultural process thus unfolds through the sharing of these conventions upon the realization of a social act. If it proves incapable of addressing a situation, actors are forced to improvise, to define new social conventions. In this sense, culture cannot be viewed as a stagnant notion, but rather it inserts itself within a permanent dynamic of negotiation and transformation.

One may think that "journalistic culture" is expressed by a set of representations about journalism, which Deuze (2005) calls "occupational ideology."¹⁴ In academia, there is no consensus on what really constitutes journalistic culture.¹⁵ However, it is evidently involved in the process of producing, circulat-

ture as well as technological systems, brought about by the new digital reality. It would be illogical and a waste of time – given the STF's clear stance in favor of full freedom of expression – to attempt to restore the degree requirement to exercise the profession of journalism. Let us look ahead and concentrate our efforts and energy on modernizing the country and consolidating democratic principles" (Brito, 2009, p. 1).

14. The author highlights five features of this professional ideology. Journalists (a) provide a public service; (b) are impartial, neutral, objective, fair, and credible; (c) ought to be autonomous, free, and independent in their work; (d) have a sense of immediacy, actuality, and speed; and (e) have a sense of ethics, validity, and legitimacy.

15. On this topic, see Hanitzsch's (2007) discussion and his proposal of a "Universal Theory"

ing, and consuming news, as well as the mechanisms for constructing and negotiating professional identity. Journalistic culture seems to have been adopted at newsrooms among journalism practitioners, though it also appears to be shared by other members of the world of journalists, such as sources, announcers, and audiences. In fact, a significant set of representations about journalism exists in different theaters of social life (Boyer & Hannerz, 2006) in the way images of the profession circulate in society and the way people experience news consumption daily. Hence, an individual's contact with journalistic culture precedes their entrance into the jobs market. It is within this perspective that the role of educational establishments in diffusing journalistic culture is situated, as exemplified by journalism education in Brazil.

In the Brazilian context, journalism students have access to different aspects of the professional culture that blend in with academic culture throughout their time at university. On one hand, these realms seek to forestall elements of journalistic practice and newsroom routines, strengthening myths and emphasizing a set of technical aptitudes (e.g., information gathering or the quality of news texts), which prepare students for the jobs market. On the other hand, the academic culture itself is marked by other social worlds: the government, by way of public education policies, unions, and other corporative entities, research associations, etc. Courses are also typified by features from local culture in which higher education institutions are situated. This is conveyed in the way of life of people who participate in and contribute to the training realms (professors, professionals, students) as well as via orientations of a pedagogical nature, like the modules Regional History, Regional Reality, etc., which are often included in journalism curricula across Brazil.¹⁶

This discussion must also consider how journalistic culture itself understands the role of university training. On one hand, part of the group tends to value teaching as an element that helps in the "professionalization" process of this practice. Holding a degree thus works as a mechanism to legitimize the status of journalists (Pereira & Maia, 2011) and construct a new profile underpinned by the possession of technical expertise (Mick, 2012). In addition, it is argued that increased educational levels of journalists would reinforce their autonomy and independence vis-à-vis political actors, particularly in small and medium-sized cities (Nascimento, 2008).

for journalistic culture that encompasses "the normative and actual functions of journalism in society (institutional roles), the accessibility of reality and the nature of acceptable evidence (epistemologies), as well as responses to ethical problems (ethical ideologies)" (p. 380).

16. At certain points, the document containing the curricular directives for Journalism courses in Brazil mentions the need to value regional diversity in journalism teaching (Ministério da Educação, 2009).

On the other hand, some elements of journalistic culture refer to a sort of ideological suspicion towards training (Frith & Meech, 2007), expressed through the idea that journalism is learned via daily practice in newsrooms and that universities are far removed from the reality of the jobs market. "Courses and examinations can prepare you for eventualities but when you are on your own, dealing with difficult situations, that is training of a different sort" (Beal, 2003, p. 250). Furthermore, studies on professional aptitudes generally associate success in journalism with the possession of soft skills (such as adaptability, confidence, perseverance, leadership qualities in new situations) and interpersonal attributes (networking, proactivity). These attributes are considered more important than the academic performance of future journalists (Cooper & Tang, 2010).

In conclusion, the analysis of the profile and representations from Brazilian students about journalism teaching enables an understanding of the role of educational establishments in constructing, negotiating, and diffusing journalistic culture. To a degree, the academic experience acts as a mediating realm between academic culture, which emphasizes the teaching of technical skills and critical/theoretical modules; and the culture of journalists, who prefer to privilege attributes such as talent, competence, and practical experience in newsrooms. The interiorizing of journalistic culture also has to deal with the life experience of students, and it depends on other factors involved in the process of training future journalists: the makeup of the teaching staff, the profile of technicians and colleagues on the course, the way elements from local culture interfere in training, interaction with the jobs market, etc. In this case, relatively stable elements of journalistic culture – including "values of the profession" – are challenged and potentially adjusted throughout university training.

Methodology

This survey is part of a cross-national study undertaken across eight countries (Australia, Brazil, Chile, Mexico, South Africa, Spain, Switzerland, and the United States) (Mellado et al., 2013). The motif of the research in these seven countries is that "[i]t is therefore crucial to investigate the ways in which journalism education influences students' perceptions of and attitudes to their future profession, as arguably they would carry over into their career as journalists" (p. 857-858).

This cross-national, comparative study aims not only to identify the spe-

cific profiles of journalism students from each country but also to determine the extent to which phenomena are typically national and the scope of their cross-national application. Furthermore, this comparative study seeks to “analyze global and national trends and to assess whether or not universal tendencies exist among the next generation of journalists” (Mellado et al., 2013, p. 858).

In the specific case of this discussion, the aim is to define how much the results from this first research step in Brazil – carried out at the six universities and courses via a survey with 611 journalism students – bear out trends of national characteristics, typifying the profile of journalism students in Brazil or those of local/regional characteristics. As the discussion of the results demonstrates, there is a greater tendency for a national profile of journalism students than a markedly local/regional one. This is the conclusion that can be drawn from the first step of the study, and it can be verified more accurately at the next step with a wider national sample, which was intended for 2015.

To conduct the first stage of the survey, a questionnaire – first developed in Spanish and subsequently translated into English, German, and Portuguese – was administered to journalism students in six higher education institutions in Brazil, of which three are administered by the federal government, one by a state government, and two privately. Out of a total group of 2,267 enrolled students, 611 participated. At the University of Brasília, 119 of the 304 students enrolled in the journalism course took part (see Table 1).

The participating institutions are located in four of Brazil’s five macro-regions, excluding the Northern macro-region.¹⁷ The study embraced Brazil’s two major metropolitan regions (Rio de Janeiro/UERJ and São Paulo/FIAM), which are home to the country’s largest media organizations. It also included the federal capital of Brazil (Brasília/UnB), two state capitals (Curitiba/UTP and Natal/UFRN), and the city of São Borja (where the Unipampa’s journalism course is installed), a city with slightly over 61,600 inhabitants in the interior of the state of Rio Grande do Sul.

At this stage, the central goal of this research, inserted within a comparative, international study, is to uncover signs of trends in journalism students’ perceptions of professional training and thus, in the section outlined here, to verify whether local/regional factors had a significant impact on students’ perceptions. The national research team, composed of researchers from different Brazilian universities, purports to carry out a subsequent study with

17. The Northern region was left out from this study, because it assembles only 8.4% of Brazilian Journalism Programs (44.2% are in Southeast region). From 10,477 journalism students participating in the National Student Performance examination at 2012, only 846 have studied in the Northern region (INEP, 2012).

a representative national sample that will be used to ascertain the validity of results from the first research stage, regarded as a test. Hence, this research has its limitations. However well distributed the national sample was, it does not represent the real dimension of the private universities in Brazilian higher education. In the case of journalism, the ratio of private to public courses is 7 to 1.

Despite the limits of the sample from the first stage, the study seeks to provide empirical data to fashion a general understanding of the profile of journalism students in Brazil, which can be amplified at the next stage with a larger national sample, as is planned for 2015.

The questionnaires from this first research stage were self-administered during class-time from October 2011 to March 2012. To ensure representation of the different stages of qualification in journalism, the sample group was drawn from students in each of the course's four years. On average, students took 20 minutes to fill out the questionnaire.

Table 1: Sampling scheme

Journalism Programs	University Ownership	N° of students enrolled in 2011/2012	N° of students answering questionnaire	Response rate
Alcântara Machado Integrated Faculties (FIAM)	Private	1150	169	14.7%
State University of Rio de Janeiro (UERJ)	State Government	383	75	19.6%
University of Brasília (UnB)	Federal Government	304	119	39.1%
Federal University of the Pampa (Unipampa)	Federal Government	400	59	14.75%
Federal University of Rio Grande do Norte (UFRN)	Federal Government	430	172	40.0%

Journalism Programs	University Ownership	N° of students enrolled in 2011/2012	N° of students answering questionnaire	Response rate
Tuiuti do Paraná University (UTP)	Private	49	17	34.7%
Total		2716	611	22.5%

The confidence level determined for both the University of Brasília data and the overall national data was 90%. The margin of error in the national survey was 3%. In the the UnB survey, it was 6%.

This article analyzes the responses to seventeen of the thirty-six questions that made up the questionnaire. The tabulation process worked with the frequency of determined answers (expressed as a %) or by calculating the average values obtained in the responses to questions addressing age group and political affiliation. In the item that sought to identify the degree of importance attributed to University activities, a scale of 1 to 5 was used (1: Not important at all; 2: Of little importance; 3: Somewhat important; 4: Very important; 5: Extremely important). For analysis purposes, answers four and five were considered "Positive Evaluations."

Only valid answers were tabulated. The comparative analysis attributed significance to variations of over 10% between the results obtained in the national poll and the UnB poll.

Results

Table 2 shows the distribution of questionnaire respondents according to schooling levels. There is a relative correspondence of students in the two samples. The national sample had a greater number of students from the first two years of the course, and the UnB students are slightly more concentrated in the last two years. Given that the journalism course in Brazil lasts four years, those questionnaire respondents that marked year 5 are those who have fallen behind in their studies. It can be seen that the UnB sample has a higher proportion of students in that situation.

Table 2: Journalism students interviewed by course year.

	Brazil	UnB
First year	28.9%	22.9%
Second year	29.8%	23.7%
Third year	19.8%	19.5%
Fourth year	17.7%	24.6%
Fifth year	3.8%	9.3%

In presenting the results regarding the students' profile and their assessment of the university, the two directions of analysis mentioned earlier – a reading of the national data and a comparison between them and the reality in Brasília – have been maintained. To make that reading easier, we have identified figures in the tables with a variation of over 10% by printing them in bold type.

Student Profile

Gender, age group, and political ideology

Generally speaking, the profile of journalism students in the six Brazilian institutions that were analyzed is one of young people (average age 22.3), predominantly female (59.7%, Table 3), which confirms an overall tendency to a more juvenile profile (Mick & Lima, 2013) and to feminization of the newsrooms now underway in Brazil (Mick & Lima, 2013; Rocha, 2005).

Among the set of universities investigated, the UnB has the highest proportion of young students (average age = 21.1) and female students (65.5%), although the figures are quite close to the national average. The Tuiuti University in Parana (UTP) has the proportionally highest average age among journalism students (24.3). According to the project coordinator at the UTP, the explanation lies in the profile of the students, who are mostly professionals already engaged in the market and who have entered university to acquire a formal qualification in their area (Quadros & Laranjeira, 2012).

Table 3: Distribution of respondents by gender.

	Brazil	UnB
Male	40.3%	34.5%
Female	59.7%	65.5%

No significant differences between the national and local scenarios were detected for the question of political ideology. The students situate themselves a little to the left of center in the political spectrum (3.80 for Brazil as a whole and 3.67 for the UnB, considering 1 as left wing, 4 as center, and 7 as right wing), and they have a moderately liberal vision (3.51 for Brazil; 3.33 in the UnB, with 1 corresponding to liberal, 4 to center, and 7 to conservative). These results are discordant with results obtained from a survey of political ideology among working journalists (Mick & Lima, 2013; Herscovitz, 2010; Sant’anna, 2006; Herscovitz, 2000) which revealed that they predominantly situated themselves to the left of the political spectrum. Such data may indicate either an overall process of change in journalists’ professional profile in the direction of a more centrist political stance, or it may be that there is a phenomenon of a drift to the left among newly qualified journalism graduates that takes place when they start to actually exercise their profession.

Educational Background

The results of the questions investigating educational background show a more consistent variation between the two scenarios analyzed. Tables 4 and 5 show that the UnB has a higher percentage of respondents that were educated in private schools (77.1% against 55%) and with parents that had university qualifications (54.7% against 27.5%).

Table 4: Type of educational institution where you completed senior high school studies.

	Brazil	UnB
Government-run school	45.0%	22.9%
Private school	55.0%	77.1%

Table 5: Parents' schooling level.

	Brazil	UnB
Both parents completed university programs (or equivalent)	27.5%	54.7%
One parent completed a university program (or equivalent)	33.1%	25.6%
Neither parent completed university programs (or equivalent)	39.3%	19.7%

This can be explained by the specific situation of the city of Brasília, which is the capital city with the highest per capita income in Brazil according to the National Household Sampling Survey results reported by the Brazilian Geography and Statistics Institute (Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística - IBGE). Here, about one third of the population has an income of over three times the official minimum (IBGE, 2016).

Finally, there was no expressive variation among the students in regard to their having taken other higher education courses before ingression in the journalism course. In fact, it is the first degree course for 74.3% of the students in the national sample and 81.9% of the students at the UnB, as can be seen in Table 6. Those figures are in keeping with the average age of journalism students, which lies in the 18 to 22 age group in 67% of the cases surveyed.

Table 6: Did you take any other higher education course before studying journalism?

	Brazil	UnB
Yes	25.3%	18.1%
No	74.3%	81.9%

Vocation and contact with the profession

The set of questions that follows is directed at the students' sense of vocation and their eventual experiences with journalism outside the university.

There is little variation between the responses from UnB students and those from the national sample of six Brazilian Universities analyzed. For example, the national average for the age at which students decided to study journalism was slightly higher than that of the UnB students (17.3 as compared to 16.4). The time of opting for journalism was a little later in the case of the private universities (18.1 years old for the FIAM, 19.7 for the UTP, and 18.4 for the Unipampa).

Interestingly, students made their choice at a time when most of them were concluding their senior high school education (17 to 18 years old). This calls into question the idea that journalism is a choice made very early in life, as reported by other studies carried out among journalists (Marocco, 2012; Travancas, 1993).

Concerning the reasons for choosing journalism (Table 7), most respondents in Brazil selected the answers "I like journalism as a profession" (39%) and "I am talented and/or I like to write" (27.8%), followed by "For the possibility of changing society" (8.6%) and "I could not get into the program that I wanted" (5.6%). The distribution of answers appears to reinforce a duality in relation to the perception of journalism, while the profession is simultaneously technical by nature (fascination with the practice of reporting) and intellectual (pleasure in writing and the possibility of changing the world) (Pereira & Maia, 2011; Ruellan, 1993). On the other hand, remarkably few respondents selected the answer "For the possibility of covering scandals and abuses" (1.1% for Brazil and UnB alike). This is surprising insofar as it is discordant with the prevalent expectation that journalism students (especially in Brasília) would see journalism as serving a social watchdog role over the activities of political institutions.

Indeed, as Waisbord (2009) explains, the democratic transition that Brazil underwent in 1985 led to an improvement in conditions for exercising journalistic practice and civil participation, as well as a strengthening of state supervisory institutions. This would explain the increase in the number of investigative reports beginning in the 1990s and the popular idea of a journalism watchdog (Nascimento, 2013). Investigative reporting concerns primarily oversight of power, motivated by a sort of "political polarization" (Waisbord, 2009) on the part of the press, whose interest lies in antagonistic coverage against institutions and highlighting corruption scandals (Guazina, 2012).

Table 7: The main reason for your choosing journalism:

	Brazil	UnB
I could not finish my studies in another program	1.8%	-
I could not get into the program that I wanted	5.6%	5.3%
Journalism is easy to finish	0.7%	2.1%
I am talented and/or I like to write	27.8%	31.6%
I like journalism as a profession	39.0%	36.8%
For the possibility of changing society	8.6%	6.3%
For the possibility of covering scandals and abuses	1.1%	1.1%
For the possibility of being famous	1.8%	1.1%
Because I like to travel	1.3%	1.1%
Because I like to meet interesting people	3.2%	3.2%
Other.	9.0%	11.6%

Regarding prior contact with the profession, 40% of students in both samples declared that they had had some kind of prior experience associated with journalism (Table 8). The question did not allow internships to be considered as a professional experience, which probably explains the small percentage of positive answers. Data from the National Student Performance Exam (Enade) shows that only 16.7% had not undertaken an internship in 2012 (INEP, 2012). Another pool conducted by Mick and Lima (2013) showed that from an estimated universe of 145 thousand journalists, only 23.7% had not participated in internships.

Table 8: Have you had any professional experience related to journalism?

	Brazil	UnB
Yes	40.1 %	40.2%
No	59.9 %	59.8%

The questions that complete the investigation of this aspect concern the journalism students' consumption of information (Tables 9, 10, and 11). Once again, the variations between the Brazil sample responses and those of the UnB sample were very slight. If the items "Several times a week" and "Every day" are taken together, they show that Brazilian respondents consume a significant amount of news, with a preference for television news (85.4%),

followed by print (68.8%) and radio (49.4%). This distribution of preferences is similar to the distribution of national audience ratings for the three media. The data are also consistent with the results of research conducted by Schwingel et al. (2005) undertaken among students in the city of Salvador.

Table 9: Frequency of printed media consumption:

	Brazil	UnB
Never	2.0%	4.2%
Rarely	29.2%	30.3%
Several times a week	44.7%	44.5%
Every day	24,1%	21.0%

Table 10: Frequency of radio news program consumption:

	Brazil	UnB
Never	8.9%	7.6%
Rarely	41.7%	38.7%
Several times a week	31.2%	34.5%
Every day	18.2%	19.3%

Table 11: Frequency of TV news program consumption:

	Brazil	UnB
Never	1.0%	0.8%
Rarely	13.6%	16.0%
Several times a week	38.3%	51.3%
Every day	47.1%	31.9%

Higher Education Assessment

The last group of questions asked the students to evaluate their higher education. The first question of the group investigates their opinion of the importance of a university education for being a journalist (Table 12). At both national and local levels, the positive answers (86.2% and 80.7% respectively) back the historically consolidated belief that that a degree requirement is the

most effective way of regulating/controlling access to the profession. The students' options on this item were somewhat discordant with the findings of Mick and Lima (2013) in their 2012 research survey of journalists, wherein a mere 55.3% of respondents were in favor of a specific qualification as a requirement for entering the journalism labor market.

Table 12: Do you think a university degree is necessary to exercise the profession?

	Brazil	UnB
Yes	86.2%	80.7%
No	13.6%	18.5%

Table 13 sets out the result of the students' assessments of the academic preparation they have received. The positive evaluation represented by the sum of the items "Good" and "Very good" in the numbered scale is relatively low - 42.6% - in the national sample and even lower - 33.4% - for the UnB students. This low rating indicates that there is a need to re-think the curriculum and the kind of qualification being provided by the institutions that were surveyed. This should be done while keeping in mind the results displayed in Table 14, which sets out a more detailed evaluation made by respondents on specific aspects of the journalism course.

Table 13: The academic preparation future journalists receive is...

	Brazil	UnB
Very bad	3.5%	4.3%
Bad	10.1%	12.8%
Regular	44.9%	49.6%
Good	37.1%	32.5%
Very good	4.5%	0.9%

Table 14: How students rate the various activities of their journalism courses:

	Not important at all		Little importance		Somewhat important		Very important		Extremely important	
	Brazil	UnB	Brazil	UnB	Brazil	UnB	Brazil	UnB	Brazil	UnB
Prioritize the practice as fundamental within the education of journalism	2.1%	3.4%	7.4%	8.4%	15.9%	37.0%	33.0%	31.9%	41.6%	19.3%
Conceptually validate public relations/corporate communication as part of the field of journalism	4.8%	8.5%	9.5%	9.3%	27.8%	35.6%	38.9%	39.8%	19.0%	6.8%
Focus on graduate teaching	3.3%	5.1%	16.2%	21.2%	29.6%	32.2%	31.6%	26.3%	19.3%	15.3%
Publish scientific material	2.3%	-	11.0%	10.9%	22.1%	17.6%	39.4%	42.9%	25.2%	28.6%
Focus on undergraduate teaching	1.7%	1.7%	7.2%	5.2%	13.0%	17.2%	36.8%	46.6%	41.3%	29.3%
Validate only work in news media as the professional practice of journalism	15.3%	26.9%	25.2%	28.6%	32.2%	34.5%	19.5%	8.4%	7.8%	1.7%

	Not important at all		Little importance		Somewhat important		Very important		Extremely important	
	Brazil	UnB	Brazil	UnB	Brazil	UnB	Brazil	UnB	Brazil	UnB
Teaching skills and practical abilities	0.8%	1.7%	10.2%	9.2%	21.2%	28.6%	38.3%	40.3%	29.6%	20.2%
Build new knowledge	1.2%	-	5.4%	2.5%	5.3%	8.4%	29.9%	35.3%	58.2%	53.8%
Share knowledge	0.8%	-	4.9%	2.5%	4.3%	5.0%	29.7%	29.4%	60.3%	63.0%
Promote fieldwork	1.5%	0.8%	4.6%	0.8%	7.9%	10.9%	28.2%	34.5%	57.8%	52.9%
Accentuate the domain of professional techniques in the journalism curriculum	1.6%	0.8%	6.3%	6.7%	14.0%	21.8%	37.5%	40.3%	40.6%	30.3%
Present and promote scientific work within academia	2.8%	2.5%	8.9%	5.0%	24.3%	19.3%	33.2%	39.5%	30.8%	33.6%
Emphasize theory in the education of a journalist	2.6%	2.5%	13.4%	8.4%	22.6%	26.1%	34.2%	33.6%	27.2	29.4%
Differentiate the specific and distinctive place that journalism has within public communication	3.3%	3.4%	12.2%	13.6%	27.8%	34.7%	36.9%	32.2%	19.8%	16.1%

	Not important at all		Little importance		Somewhat important		Very important		Extremely important	
	Brazil	UnB	Brazil	UnB	Brazil	UnB	Brazil	UnB	Brazil	UnB
Constantly evaluate the teaching methods used	0.7%	-	9.7%	6.7%	17.8%	20.2%	37.8%	37.8%	34.0%	35.3%
Develop a reflexive and critical thought process among future journalists	0.8%	-	5.4%	2.5%	5.9%	8.4%	23.8%	21.8%	63.9%	67.2%
Develop academic research	1.3%	1.7%	7.9%	5.9%	19.7%	15.1%	36.8%	39.5%	34.3%	37.8%
Explain social phenomena through analysis	1.2%	-	6.8%	3.4%	20.6%	16.8%	37.9%	37.8%	33.6%	42.0%
Innovate teaching practices	1.6%	3.4%	9.7%	6.7%	17.8%	21.0%	33.1%	40.3%	37.8%	28.6%
Defend the joint teaching of journalism and communication studies within the journalists' educational curriculum	1.5%	1.7%	7.7%	5.0%	10.2%	10.9%	33.8%	34.5%	46.8%	47.9%

On the basis of the data displayed in Table 14, three aspects need to be addressed. First, the fact that in the national sphere, there is a certain degree of equilibrium between theory and practice in the qualifications being offered. Thus, the items “Share knowledge” (90%), “Build new knowledge” (88.1%), “Develop a reflexive and critical thought process among future journalists”

(87.7%), "Present and promote scientific work within academia" (64%), and "Emphasize theory in the education of a journalist" (61.4%) received ratings similar to those attributed to the items associated with practical aspects of the profession, namely "Promote fieldwork" (86%), "Accentuate the domain of professional techniques in the journalism curriculum" (78.1%), "Prioritize practice as fundamental within the education of journalism" (74.6%), and "Teaching skills and practical abilities" (67.9%). Our hypothesis is that in spite of the existence of a line of discourse that tends to underscore the tension between theory and practice in the process of qualifying journalists (Mellado, 2011; Delano, 2008; Meditsch, 2007; Marques de Melo, 2004), the students answering the questionnaires seem to deny the existence of that dichotomy. It is hard to know whether their position results from a relative lack of knowledge of the labor market conditions or whether it represents a possible appropriation of an institutional discourse that seeks an equitable distribution between the two poles (as shown by an analysis of the six institutions' curricula) and which advocates for a possible reconciliation between theory and practice in keeping with the curricula of most of the schools of journalism analyzed. In any event, these results point to the need to lower the tone of some of the radicalisms that have occasionally emerged in the political and educational debates around the issue of journalism training and qualification.

The second point to be addressed concerns the universities' role in preparing their graduates to perform in other labor market spaces, such as public relations (PR), corporate communication, journalism teaching, and journalism research. This broadening of the qualification is an attempt to accompany the evolution of the national (Mick & Lima, 2013; Sant'anna, 2009) and international (Müller, 2011; Deuze & Majorbanks, 2009; Mosco, 2009; Weaver, 2009) labour markets currently typified by the stagnation or state of crisis of journalistic enterprises and the expansion of practices located outside the sphere of news production.

Analysis of the results reveals duality in students' perceptions regarding journalists' performance in corporate communication: 57.9% of the respondents gave positive answers to the item "Conceptually validate public relations/corporate communication as part of the journalists' field" and 56.7% agree with the proposal "Differentiate the specific and distinctive place that journalism has within public communication." This duality is actually in alignment with the professional culture of the same issue now in course (Silveira & Góis, 2011; Sant'anna, 2009; Pereira, 2006; Marcondes Filho, 2000), a debate marked at times by a confrontation between a professional ideology based on a purity associated with journalistic practice (and that tends to view commu-

nication as a distinct, almost adversary field) and a more pragmatic discourse that underscores the historic and legal position of this professional group in Brazil, defining journalists as people who possess a degree in journalism (and the corresponding professional registration) irrespective of the practice they engage in or the institution they work for.

Finally, the students proved to be far less divided on the items concerning the qualification offered for teaching journalism ("Defend the joint teaching of journalism and communication studies within the journalist's educational curriculum:" 80.6%) and for journalism research ("Develop academic research:" 71.1%), seeing both as possible fields for professional engagement. This last fact suggests that there should be a greater effort on the part of Brazilian universities to integrate the undergraduate and graduate programs.

The third and last point concerns the comparative differences detected. While responses for most of the questionnaire items showed a relative congruence between the local and national samples, more variation was noted in three items in particular. In the first, "Prioritize practice as fundamental within journalism education," respondents from the six Brazilian universities studied in this paper gave positive answers (74.6%), a far higher percentage than that of University of Brasília's students (51.2%). This difference could be linked to the characteristics of UnB's journalism course structure, the structure of the teaching body (70% have PhDs), the existence of a postgraduate course (Master's degree and PhD), or the students' profile (their social origin and parents' educational levels, potentially reducing the need for formal education and diminishing pressure to find employment). These results can be checked against a study undertaken by Mellado (2011) on the profile of journalism professors in Chile, where only 10% of teaching staff hold a PhD. According to the author, criteria such as qualification titles and publications help to shape a professor profile that is oriented more towards academic culture, rather than professional culture. In line with the author's rationale, these oscillations in university culture make it possible to define higher education institutions as realms of knowledge production, as well as establishments that contribute to the professionalization of journalism.

Returning to the discussion of the results, it can also be inferred that the practical side of training and qualification is being addressed by the trainee schemes, and thus students feel less inclined to demand more technical qualifications from universities. Such inferences are based primarily on how active journalists assess the role of universities and internships in professional training. Indeed, some qualitative studies on the careers of Brazilian journalists (Pereira, 2014; Pereira, Lima, Oliveira, Travassos, & Oliveira, 2013; Pereira,

2013) and French journalists (Le Cam & Pereira, 2012) show that in certain cases, journalists consider internships a more important learning curve than their time at university. Internships also enabled students to better understand the structure of the jobs market and plan their careers more effectively.

The correlated questions “Conceptually validate public relations/corporate communication as part of the journalists’ field” (22.9% for the Brazil sample and 46.6% for the UnB sample) and “Validate only work in news media as the professional practice of journalism” (27.3% and 15.5% respectively) also show considerable variation. In this case it would be the characteristics of the local labor market that explain the differences. As Brasília is the federal capital of Brazil, many of the posts in the field of public communication and press advisory services are concentrated there (especially as compared to the two other great labour markets in Brazil: Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo) (Sant’anna, 2009). Thus, it may be that UnB students are anticipating the reality of their local labor market and are attenuating the negative image they would otherwise have of corporate communication.

Discussion

In order to comprehend the results of questionnaires, this article has discussed the relationship between teaching, the jobs market, and journalistic culture on two levels. First, in terms of the complexity of the relations between educational establishments and the professional domain, which result in dynamics of cooperation, conflict, and mutual transformation between the two realms. Second, regarding the way the context in which journalism is taught and practiced (including the specificities of the course offered and structure of the local jobs market) participates in the process.

In the first case, the data appear to reinforce a certain ambivalence concerning the teaching of journalism. On the one hand, the emphasis on the role of educational training as a means of preparation for the jobs market does not necessarily entail the exclusive defense of technical learning as the main attribute of higher education institutions. Indeed, students also appear to expect “academic” training from journalism schools, involving the transmission and production of knowledge that cannot be applied practically in daily journalism. This suggests that the university experience reproduces a part of journalistic culture but with a strong component from academic culture.

Journalism courses are seen by students who answered the questionnaire as an unsatisfactory experience, not only because they do not meet their ex-

pectations¹⁸ but also due to the way they are constantly complemented by other realms of negotiation from journalistic culture. This is true of internships, which appear to play an important role in training¹⁹ and in the way students assess and anticipate the jobs market and careers. For instance, this applies to the perception held by students from Brasília of the possibility of working in the various fields of corporative communication and public relations following graduation.

On the other hand, excepting a few cases, the local context in which courses are offered seems to be less important in constructing the profile of journalism students in Brazil. This is surprising in view of the heterogeneity of the local and educational contexts that make up the universe of the study. We worked with institutions located in big cities where the labor market for journalists lies mainly in the private sector, as is the case with Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo. There are other cities where work posts are limited to the regional communication media (for instance, Curitiba and Natal) or in which the greater part of the employment opportunities lies in the public sector (Brasília). The study also embraced the city of São Borja in the interior of the state of Rio Grande do Sul, where the possibilities of new employment positions for journalists are very limited. The same diversity appears in the characteristics of the educational institutions involved in the survey: some are recognized as important research centers (UnB, UERJ, and UFRN universities), while others direct their main focus on the qualification of professionals for the labor market (FIAM university, for example). In turn, the UTP university not only conducts research but devotes itself to qualifying and upgrading the qualifications of professionals already engaged in the field for the labor market.

In this case, there are two other important types of factors that would explain this absence of variation. First, the possible stability of journalistic culture, the idea that there are indeed “structural” elements (Hanitzsch, 2007) explaining the way journalism is viewed socially. The second refers to socio-historical issues concerning the constitution of the journalism teaching structure in Brazil.

The first explanation emphasizes the processes concerning the circulation of images and discourses about journalism, the role played by collective imagery with regards to journalism, which tends to produce and reproduce a structuring discourse founded on an apparent homogeneity and stability of the professional group as a whole. This discourse therefore has an amalgamator effect, making it possible to reduce antagonisms and conflicts within

18. This explains the relatively negative assessment of academic training.

19. Further data are needed to verify this assertion.

the professional group (Ruellan, 1993). It reinforces features of journalists' occupational ideology (Deuze, 2005) and enables professionals from different contexts (both national and local) to recognize one another as members of the same group.

The singular aspect in this case would be the appropriation of such culture by the student, who then experiences a feeling of belonging to a single embracing professional community: Brazilian journalists. In this case, the idea seems to have been partially incorporated within educational establishments, despite the concerns of the academic world in deconstructing this normative discourse about the profession.

Another order of explanations lies in the socio-historic sphere involving the development of education policies implemented in Brazil from the 1970s and onward.²⁰ Indeed, up until 2002, one of the Federal Government's main concerns and activities in this regard was to standardize the curricula. This minimizes the autonomy of Brazilian universities and the potential variations produced by local contexts in student training, even though the document establishing curricular directives seeks to value regional diversity in journalism teaching. Thus, journalism curricula should, for instance, emphasize the role of ICT or the involvement of journalists in the "Information Era" (Ministério da Educação, 2009), regardless of whether the course is situated in a cosmopolitan city like São Paulo, the state capital, or in a small town such as São Borja in Rio Grande do Sul State, where media systems are often limited to low-circulation newspapers and a few radio stations associated with political groups.

Within this effort to standardize journalism teaching, it is also necessary to highlight the diversity of spaces that exist in the field of Brazilian journalism for exchanges among professionals, professors, and students. We can mention two important national entities that bring together journalism teachers and researchers in Brazil: the Brazilian Journalism Researchers Association (*Associação Brasileira de Pesquisadores em Jornalismo* – SBPJor²¹) and the National Forum of Journalism Teachers (*Fórum Nacional de Professores de Jornalismo* – FNPJ²²). There are also journalism research groups within the scopes of the two large national associations in the area of communication research: the Brazilian Society for Interdisciplinary Communication Studies (*Sociedade*

20. This is the period immediately following the enactment of mandatory higher education qualification for journalists and the rapid growth in the number of journalism degree courses in Brazil.

21. www.sbpjor.org.br, SBPJor website.

22. www.fnpj.org.br, FNPJ website.

*Brasileira de Estudos Interdisciplinares da Comunicação – Intercom*²³) and the National Association of Post-Graduate Programs in Communication (*Associação Nacional dos Programas de Pós-Graduação em Comunicação – Compós*²⁴). We can also mention a student organization that brings together communication students from all over the country, the National Social Communication Students Executive (*Executiva Nacional dos Estudantes de Comunicação Social – Enecos*²⁵), in addition to many media criticism sites and projects (including *Observatório da Imprensa – OI*²⁶ and *Rede Nacional de Observatórios de Imprensa – Renoí*²⁷), and research networks and groups with varying degrees of institutionalization. Then there are the frequent exchanges that take place between the academic, professional, and labor union spheres in Brazil. It is quite common, for example, for journalism teachers to also play an active professional role in the labour market or to be part of the labour union organization. It would be interesting to conduct a study of the formal and informal modes of interaction among the actors in this segment of the journalists' world and the role of such interactions in the construction of their representations of the higher education and qualification being offered.

Conclusions

In this paper we have sought to analyze the students' profile and their own assessments of the qualification offered by their journalism degree courses. We have compared the results of a questionnaire that was administered in six Brazilian higher education institutions with similar data obtained from students of the University of Brasília. At the outset of the research, the idea was to gain an understanding of the extent to which local contexts influence the education and qualification of Brazilian journalists in-the-making.

Based on the research undertaken, it is generally possible to register some central trends in the profile of journalism students in Brazil, which can later be substantiated by drawing on a national sample. Clearly, journalism students in Brazil are mostly made up of women,²⁸ people of a centre-left political persuasion, and people from middle-class families in which parents have a

23. www.portalintercom.org.br, Intercom website.

24. www.compós.org.br, Compós website.

25. www.enecos.com, Enecos website.

26. www.observatoriodaimprensa.com.br, Observatório da imprensa website.

27. www.renoi.blogspot.com, Renoí website.

28. This reinforces the trend of the feminization of the country's press.

reasonable level of education. They consume news chiefly via television²⁹ and chose journalism out of their affinity for the profession and writing.

The students surveyed defend the need for a journalism degree to exercise the profession, in line with the 40-year experience whereby university degrees have in effect been a requirement to be a registered professional. On the one hand, they have reservations about the quality of academic training currently offered by higher education institutions. They tend to value theoretical learning as much as mastery of journalism practices. Further, they do not rule out the possibility of working in other sectors, such as journalism teaching or communication offices, though they remain rather suspicious of the legitimacy of these activities and their link to the field of journalism.

The results suggest that in the realm of journalism teaching, academic culture tends to absorb some of the conventions and values from journalistic culture, including the way it oscillates between a technical dimension which is perceived to be able to be taught, and a humanistic dimension which depends more on factors like practical experience, talent, and vocation. This leads to an apparent contradiction: in forestalling aspects of journalists' professional culture, universities end up adopting part of the criticism that the journalism realm makes of educational establishments. This would explain certain ambivalences noted in the students' answers: they value the academic training but criticize its quality; they expect training that will meet the demands of the jobs market, yet they believe that it should value knowledge production and critical thinking.

If academic training is underpinned by characteristics from journalistic culture, it is also molded by dynamics that define the teaching and practice of journalism at a national level. In this sense, there are variations between students from Brasília and those from the five other Brazilian universities analyzed in terms of teaching and expectations regarding the profession. The inferences made here emphasize the importance of the context surrounding the constitution of a national higher education system in Brazil and the way journalism itself tends to highlight the idea of a homogenous, professional community that exercises its practice independently of local contexts.

Finally, this study makes a contribution as much to journalism teaching as to journalism research. In the former case, it opens the way for more qualitative investigations of the process of negotiating a series of values and visions among students during the course of their professional education and training – that is to say, an investigation of how important the university is in the construction of a professional identity which still seems to be tangential

29. Television is the main means of disseminating information in Brazil.

to the technical and intellectual aspects of journalism. How much do interactions with other students, teachers, non-teaching staff, and staff involved in the trainee schemes participate in the construction of that representation?

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