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Journalism University studies in Spain: a curriculum analysis

Estudios universitarios de periodismo en España: un análisis curricular

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Abstract

This article shows the results of a quantitative and qualitative study that analyses the Journalism curricula of seven Spanish universities, both public and private, with the highest academic reputation, research impact and employer reputation, according to the international indexes: QS World University and Shanghai Ranking. The competences, thematic groupings and types of subjects are analysed from the curricula of Journalism degrees for a total of 518 subjects. The study notes the lack of subjects on technology and technological skills to balance the curricular content which is often more theoretical than practical. The ethics and deontology of the profession should also be key for future Journalism professionals, together with the necessity to transmit work which is as truthful and as objective as possible.

Resumen

Este artículo muestra los resultados de un estudio cuantitativo y cualitativo que analiza los siete planes de estudio sobre periodismo de siete universidades españolas, tanto públicas como privadas, con mayor reputación académica, impacto de investigación y reputación del empleador, según los índices internacionales QS World University y Shanghai Ranking. Se analizan las competencias, agrupaciones temáticas y tipos de asignaturas a partir del método de enseñanza de los grados de periodismo de un total de 518 asignaturas. Las conclusiones del estudio señalan la falta de materias sobre tecnología y habilidades tecnológicas que permitan equilibrar unos contenidos curriculares a menudo más teóricos que prácticos. La ética y la deontología de la profesión también deberán ser claves para que el futuro profesional del periodismo se forme con la idea tan antigua como necesaria de transmitir un trabajo veraz, honesto y los más objetivo posible.

Keywords

Journalism; University; Curriculum; Technology; Deontology

Palabras clave

Periodismo; universidad; planes de estudio; tecnología; deontología

1. Introduction

The Internet has surely been the greatest disruptive innovation in the last century (Christensen and Raynor, 2003), and still is today. The new technocultural environment created with the appearance of new technologies has not only transformed ways people related to and communicated with one another, but also models of organization, production and marketing of almost all professional sectors, especially those linked to information, communication and culture, with special regard to journalism (Campos-Freire et al., 2016).

The "network of networks" has forever changed the business models for journalism, but has also significantly transformed the way in which journalists work (Wahl-Jorgensen et al., 2016). Widespread dissemination on social networks and the range of "participative platforms" today more than ever, due to the historical context we are in, shows it has become a truly public good. It is no longer the exclusive domain of a "clique" of professionals, but also potentially involves the whole of the general public (Fuchs, 2008; Tejedor-Calvo and Cervi, 2017).

Just as stated by the one who came up with the concept, Clayton Christensen, when "disruptive innovation", appears then organisations must be agile enough to adapt to this new reality (Christensen and Raynor, 2003). For this reason, some authors such as Deuze (2006) deem journalism as we know it "to be dead in the water", and has even become a "zombi institution". To this must be added the fact that researchers on this topic still speculate on the "end of journalism" (Deuze, 2006).

In a similar vein, we can see that training in journalism is undergoing a critical situation, if we confine ourselves to the traditional parameters in which this professional discipline has moved until recently (Humanes-Humanes and Roses-Campos, 2014).

Although media systems and journalism cultures can be very different (Hallin and Mancini, 2004), the changes and challenges journalism training faces all over the world are quite similar to a large extent. This can be demonstrated by the fact that universities clearly intend to adapt to innovations, whether these be technological, or the changes the sector has undergone. In fact, the best example of both approaches is the addition at the turn of this century, of all that regarding cyberspace and its use in the study plans for students of communication at university.

From this premise, this article uses two previous studies as a reference (Tejedor-Calvo and Cervi, 2017; and Tejedor-Calvo et al., 2020). They studied the best universities in Europe and the world and analysed 7 universities (out of an initial sample of 10) which provide a degree in journalism in their programme and which occupied the top positions in the *QS World University* and *Shanghai rankings*. In this research the kind of skills and how the syllabus and subjects are organised are explored in response to the following research questions: 1) How are the study plans in Spanish universities which offer degrees in journalism structured? 2) What skills are nurtured and what objectives are set at the universities which are under study? 3) How are the subjects we have found in these degrees classified? 4) What vocational curriculums appears in the study plans?

From these questions, this work focuses on 2 objectives:

Objective 1. To analyse the correspondence of journalism studies with the acquisition of practical skills including producing contents and training in technology.

Objective 2. To observe the real balance between journalism theory and practice with a technical and professional vocation in the study plans of the Spanish universities analysed.

2. Theoretical framework

2.1. The ever-present dilemma

Traditionally, faculties and schools of journalism have always strived to remain up-to-date, and to keep up with changing trends in the profession of journalism (Mensing, 2010). Different authors (Acosta-Damas, Costales-Pérez and Rosales-Vicente, 2016; Martínez-Nicolás, García-Galera and Torregrosa-Carmona, 2018) remarked that there was a disconnection between the ideals of professional journalists and their everyday work. They stress the lack of correspondence between journalism studies and the new professional setting.

At the turn of this century, Skinner, Gasher and Compton (2001) were already claiming that the debate on journalism studies, dominated by an American focus, had ground to a halt in the eternal dichotomy between theory and practice. Those who traditionally have thought journalism was a craft, that is, a kind of vocational calling, think that true talent does not lie in an academic setting since journalism is a vocation and one that cannot be taught (Solkin, 2020).

Moreover, authors such as Deuze (2006), Anderson (2014) or Gillmor himself (2016) champion professional journalism which establishes a common conceptual basis which is used to establish some standards inherent to the profession (Anderson, 2014).

Now, in the second decade of the twenty-first century it seems little has changed. In research carried out just over a decade ago, in which 35 journalism researchers and teachers in 16 countries were consulted, Claudia Mellado (2010) stressed how this dichotomy between those who deemed journalism to be a profession based on mastery of technical skills and those which supported the professionalisation of the sector persisted. In both cases, far from this professionalism-orientated studies waning, nowadays it is kept as a trump card so that future students choose a career in journalism precisely in order to work in the media or at companies dedicated to communication (Álvarez-Nobell, Castillo-Esparcia and Ruíz-Mora, 2022).

Moreover, the rise of the Internet seems to have created a kind of split between those in favour (Pavlik, 2013) and against technology (Ferrucci, 2018; Creech and Mendelson, 2015). Patrick Ferrucci (2018), to be precise, found that recent journalism graduates are far more skilled in handling technology -which still holds sway in current study plans for journalism (Sánchez-García and Tejedor, 2022). However, they seem to lack training in traditional journalism skills such as interviewing, producing information, etc.

As Harvey (2007) stressed over a decade ago, prioritising technical skills and technology at the expense of a commitment to critical thinking could reflect a broader neoliberal mindset whose aim is to erode journalist rights and, in turn, our democracy. Whatever the case may be, multimedia and digital training in degrees in journalism at university is now an established reality in the second decade of the twenty-first century. In Spain, in particular, it has become "ever more technical and specialized" (Masip et al., 2022).

In recent years, this debate is far from over, although the "Teaching hospital" model (Newton, 2012) may provide a space for reconciliation. This term has been applied to many experiences, but precisely defines the potential industry and the academic world have to collaborate so that students work as if they were in a real editorial setting (Solkin, 2020). This model seems to provide a mixture of technical skills and a conceptual and ethical basis (Creech and Mendelson, 2015: 153) which can harmonise the clash between theory and practice.

Lastly, different authors (Baines and Kennedy, 2010; Casero-Ripollés, Izquierdo-Castillo and Doménech-Fabregat, 2016; Gillmor, 2016; Martínez-Nicolás, 2020; Baladrón-Pazos, Correyero-Ruiz and Manchado-Pérez, 2022) stress the importance of teaching business skills to future journalists so that they can be self-sufficient in an ever more competitive, but uncertain market.

2.2. What approach do the top universities in the world have?

Different studies have analysed the syllabus designs at different universities and contexts. Tejedor-Calvo and Cervi looked at the best universities in the world (mainly in the USA), according to the QS *Ranking*, and concluded that their study plans focus more on the human side of communication than on technological or professional skills. Over 50% of the obligatory subjects in the degrees analysed were dedicated to communication theories and methodologies. There was also a stress on general knowledge in the field of social sciences. In both cases, audiovisual and journalism techniques as well as technological skills and technologies did not surpass 20% of the obligatory subjects (Tejedor-Calvo and Cervi, 2017).

From an analysis of the top European universities in this ranking, Tejedor-Calvo and Cervi (2017) observed many similarities, but one fundamental difference: in America general knowledge studies which were not specific to the field of communication accounted for 51% of the total, while in Europe this figure was only 5%. This shows the difference between North American and European universities, since the former have an approach which is more general, people-centred and less specialized. However, the best universities in the world mainly tend to focus on theory courses, research methodologies and in nurturing a critical outlook rather than adopting an educational model based on professionalisation and learning to use tools and technologies.

3. Methodology

In order to carry out this study the top ten Spanish universities from two of the most renowned classifying tables in the world were selected in order to compare journalism studies in their faculties of communication. We have just chosen "journalism" because the purpose of these studies implies, above all, dedicating oneself to a professional activity which consists in searching for, interpreting and broadcasting written, audiovisual and graphical information.

The sample used is based on the *QS World University* index from the category "Communication and Media studies", and the *Shanghai Ranking*, from the category "Communication Studies". The period in which the field work in this study was carried out was the first semester of 2021, so the sample corresponds to the indexes that year.

On this point, we must add that there are different studies (González-Riaño, Repiso and Delgado-López-Cózar, 2014; Blom, Davenport and Bowe, 2012) which indicate that most national and world rankings are far from perfect. Moreover, there is little scientific evidence to support how they come to their scores and thus their rankings. However, they are accepted by most countries and universities use them to promote their degrees. In addition, they use them, so that students and businesses can have a clear criterion for choosing the best university. In fact, despite all the criticism received, these classifications meet the demand for transparency since they provide comparative world data which governments and institutions can seldom furnish (Olcaý and Bulu, 2016).

Therefore, this article is based on the analysis of those journalism degrees which are best classified internationally as a previous step in this process. This has become ever more influential in decision-taking in all areas, including public and private ones (Moed, 2017).

The selection of the *QS World University* and *Shanghai Ranking*, at the expense of recognised national indicators such as the newspaper "El Mundo", is justified by the need to use international indexes which enable comparison with other broader contexts and different ones at the same time (Tejedor-Calvo et al., 2020).

Among the five international indexes which provide comparative data based on the same criteria (ARWU, Leiden, THE or QS), we must stress that ARWU and Leiden focus respectively on North America and Asia (Moed, 2017). Therefore, they are not suitable for our research. Likewise, the THE world classification also does not bear in mind the quality of education and the teaching staff, which are two fundamental points of our research.

The universities were first chosen for being in the top positions in the rankings chosen for this study: Complutense University in Madrid (UCM), the University of Navarre (UNAV), the Autonomous University of Barcelona (UAB), Rey Juan Carlos University (URJC), Pompeu Fabra University (UPF), Catalonia Open University (UOC), the University of Seville (US), the University of Salamanca (USAL), the University of Barcelona (UB) and the National University of Distance Learning (UNED). The latter three in particular were discarded because the first of them only offered degrees in Audiovisual Communication and Audiovisual Creation, and Information and Documentation; the second because it just offered degrees in Audiovisual Communication and Advertising, Public Relations and Marketing; and the third because it just offered master's with a specialization in audiovisuals. The other universities, despite their differences, shared one thing in common: they all offered degrees in journalism, apart from the UOC, whose degree is called "Communication, Design and Digital Creations" albeit it offers a specialisation in journalism.

The sample chosen accentuates even more, if possible, the value of the syllabus, since these very universities appear in the previous rankings of the two indicators chosen: specifically, from 2018 to 2020. Only the public university in Castellón Jaime I enjoyed a good position (up to fourth place) in the 2020 *Shanghai* ranking and below that in previous years, but it disappears in 2021, which is why it has not been included in this article.

Table 1. Table of universities with their corresponding rankings and degrees analysed

Spanish university	Position rankings QS /Shangai	Studies/ Degrees	Type of university	Autonomous communities or chartered community
Complutense University Madrid (UCM).	51-100 /-	Journalism	Public	Autonomous Community of Madrid
University of Navarre (UNAV)	51-100 / 201-300	Journalism	Private	Chartered community of Navarre
Autonomous University of Barcelona (UAB)	101-150 / -	Journalism	Public	Autonomous Community of Catalonia

Spanish university	Position rankings QS /Shangai	Studies/ Degrees	Type of university	Autonomous communities or chartered community
Open University of Catalonia (UOC)	- /101-150	Communication, Design and Digital Creations: Mention in Journalism	Public service of private management	Autonomous Community of Catalonia
Pompeu Fabra University (UPF)	101-150 / 151-200	Journalism	Public	Autonomous Community of Catalonia
Rey Juan Carlos University, Madrid, Spain.	201-300 / 201-220	Journalism	Public	Autonomous Community of Madrid
University of Seville (US)	- /201-300	Journalism	Public	Autonomous Community of Andalucia

Source: prepared by the author

The 7 universities which underwent analysis belong to 3 autonomous communities and the only autonomous region in the country which is also a chartered community. The most remarkable among these are: the community of Madrid, with 2 centres and the community of Catalonia with 3 centres all of which have a study load which is the same in all the single honour degrees analysed.

The research applied a mixed, quantitative and qualitative methodology. The data was processed on Excel spreadsheets, by means of a database which included a description of the subjects, as well as the number and type of credits. The subjects were grouped into topical categories and there was a univariate and bivariate descriptive analysis of frequencies and percentages. Therefore, the first stage of analysis was implemented qualitatively and to analyse the subjects a quantitative methodology was used.

The variables for this quantitative analysis are: number of credits, type of subject (option or obligatory) and topic. This was in line with previous work by Tejedor-Calvo and Cervi (2017) and Tejedor-Calvo et al. (2020) -in which for each university an analysis was made of the data, study plans and objectives, professional opportunities, contents and skills learnt in the subjects, and student profiles. Also, a content analysis by groups for the topical areas in the "main subjects defined in the study plans in Journalism and Communication degrees was carried out. The topics in this research were classified into the following categories:

1. Theory, structure and history of communication.
2. Research methodologies.
3. Theory and structure of journalism professions.
4. General knowledge (Social Sciences, Humanities...).
5. Company and business models.
6. Specialised journalism (sports, literary, economic, etc).
7. Audiovisual expressive techniques (audiovisual language...).
8. Expressive writing techniques (Internet, multimedia...).
9. Journalistic genres.
10. Technology and technological skills.

4. Results

4.1. Degree structures

In this analysis, observing how each university selected structured their degrees was a crucial task not just for understanding the social aspect of each centre, but also for identifying what elements defined their curricular structures and why some credits were given at the expense of others in the degrees provided at each university. All these consisted in 4 academic years of study and 240 ECTS credits.

Madrid Complutense offers traditional degrees in Audiovisual Communication, Journalism, and Advertising and Public Relations, but not joint honours. All subjects in Journalism award 6 credits which are distributed over 8 semesters and six basic training modules (60 credits), obligatory subjects (108) and optional ones (66) and the end-of-degree thesis (6). There is no obligatory fieldwork in the study plans.

The degree in Journalism from the University of Navarre is structured over 4 academic years with subjects awarding between 3 and 6 credits, apart from the end-of-degree thesis for which 9 credits are awarded, distributed over 2 semesters per academic year. The option is distributed over 2 semesters and the subjects, which are essentially fieldwork, consist in 3 credits for each of them. There is no obligatory fieldwork in the study plans.

The Autonomous University of Barcelona provides the previously stated traditional degrees. In the first two years of the journalism degree Basic Training credits are awarded (42 and 18 respectively) as well as obligatory credits (18 and 42). In the 3rd and 4th years there are options for which 12 and 36 credits are awarded respectively. In the 3rd year 48 obligatory credits are awarded and in the 4th year there are 12, which correspond to obligatory fieldwork. Finally, 12 credits are awarded for the end-of-degree thesis.

Rey Juan Carlos University groups a significant number of specialised degrees in Communication from the three traditional single honours degrees and other joint honours (5 academic years). The training itinerary for the degree in journalism is made up of obligatory subjects and optional ones, for all of which 6 ECTS credits are awarded. They are divided into 8 four-month periods with five subjects in each of them for the first three years except modern languages in the second year which is calculated on an annual basis. The fourth year has a different composition: two obligatory subjects (one for recognising credits) and three options in the first semester; and two annual ones which correspond to the end-of-year thesis (6 credits) and obligatory external fieldwork (24 credits). There are very few optional subjects: 5 in total.

Pompeu Fabra University, apart from Journalism, offers Audiovisual Communication and Advertising and Public Relations. Most subjects are calculated on a termly basis. Journalism is made up of 64 basic training credits, 138 obligatory subject credits, which includes fieldwork (14 credits) and the end-of-degree thesis (10 credits) and optional subjects. 38 credits. There is a wide range of optional subjects: 32 are from plans for traditional communication, but there are also some in Political Sciences, Economics, etc.

The Open University in Catalonia, better known as the UOC, does not offer a Journalism degree as such, but does provide one in Communication. This enables students to specialise in 4 areas, among which there is a "mention" in Journalism. This degree is divided into basic subjects (60), obligatory (114), optional ones (54) and the end-of-degree thesis (12). All subjects are six-monthly and award 6 credits, except for the in-company Practicum for which there are 12 ECTS credits. Students may choose 21 optional subjects with a practical and professional orientation.

The University of Seville offers, among others, a degree in Journalism, which is distributed in the following way: 60 Basic Training credits, 120 obligatory, 54 optional ones and an obligatory 6-month practicum for which no credits are given, optional fieldwork in companies for which 6 credits are awarded and an end-of-degree thesis for 6 credits. All the subjects are six-monthly and are made up of 6 credits.

4.2. Objectives, skills and curricular milestones

The objectives and competences in the 7 study plans analysed in Journalism degrees at the 7 universities selected identified 10 curricular milestones in the subjects in their study plans. The most recurrent ones concern training for specific professional tasks which students will carry out, as well as producing journalistic contents, technological training and professional deontology. We will gain a detailed insight into these by following a criterion from the most to least relevant:

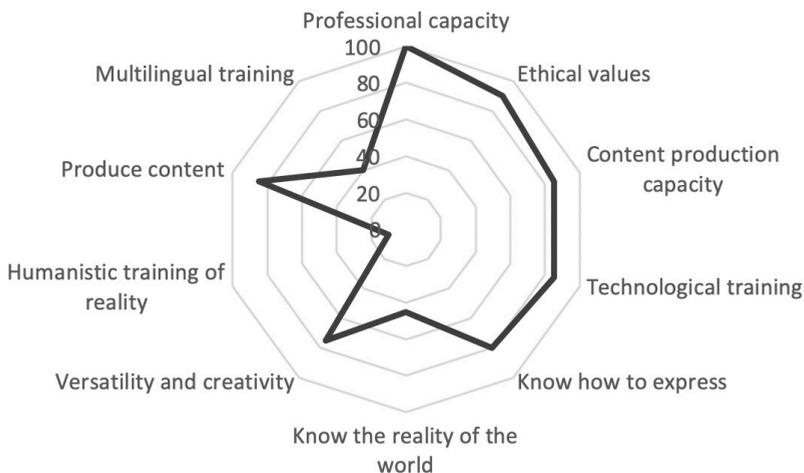
- Training for specific professional tasks. Acquisition of skills for exercising the different professional job specifications in journalism.

- Production of contents. Acquisition of skills for searching, identifying, selecting and gathering information in any of its written and audiovisual forms.

- Technological training. Acquisition of specialised tools and technological knowledge for journalism in order to adapt to new ways of broadcasting information, knowledge and opinion to society.
- Awareness of ethics and deontology. To be aware of and value the communicative act by journalism deontology in order to provide the reader, listener or viewer with rigorous and true information.
- Expressive capacity. Acquisition of skills for expressing oneself coherently and clearly, both in written form and verbally in order to share knowledge with society.
- To have a wide range of professional and creative skills. To develop versatility and creativity in journalism in any communicative product from the ability to work in a team, self-learning, being self-reliant and showing leadership, talent and negotiation skills.
- Training to have a people-centred approach to perceiving reality Acquisition of broad knowledge on different disciplines such as history or philosophy in order to equip information professionals with a more comprehensive and accurate outlook of all their surroundings in order to convey this to the public later on.
- To have a critical and analytical comprehension of reality. To study the current reality rationally and critically in order to convey this to the public in an understandable way.
- To have a solid grounding in the social reality of communication. To analyse and understand the basis for all communicative processes in the comprehensive and interdisciplinary training of future journalists.
- Multilingual training. Acquisition of knowledge about the official and coofficial languages in the country, apart from a third foreign language as way of working professionally.

The 11 most typical competences in the syllabuses of these universities are reflected in the following graph, albeit the most recurring ones are: professional capacity, deontological values, capacity to produce journalistic contents, technological training and that the student knows how to express oneself both verbally and in writing.

Figure 1. Main competences in study plans



Source: prepared by the author

4.3. Types of subjects: credits and fieldwork

From the 7 study plans, a total of 518 subjects were analysed in order to observe the type and credits in the subjects and whether the fieldwork in the syllabus was obligatory or not. In table 2 there is a breakdown of obligatory subjects (258) and optional ones (260) at the universities. This figure is very similar between them, although there is a patent gap in the options if we compare those at the URJC (5) with the UPF (102). As for the obligatory subjects, the figures are more balanced among universities (around 30), except for the University of Navarre (43) and, especially, Pompeu Fabra University (65). This may be explained by the number of credits in the subjects. The UNAV offers many subjects for which 3 ECTS credits are awarded, and the UPF mainly awards 4 and 5, whereas the other universities organise their subjects from 6 credits onwards.

Table 2. Distribution of obligatory and optional subjects, number of credits and professional fieldwork

Spanish university	Obligatory subjects	Optional subjects	Number of ECTS credits in the subjects	Obligatory fieldwork
Complutense University in Madrid (UCM).	29	30	6 credits	There is no fieldwork.
University of Navarre (UNAV)	43	59	3, 6 and 9 credits	No
Autonomous University of Barcelona (UAB)	28	25	3, 6 and 12 credits. 12 credits fieldwork.	Yes
Open University of Catalonia (UOC)	29	21	6 credits and 12 credits for media fieldwork	Yes
Pompeu Fabra University (UPF)	65	102	4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10 and 24 credits. 14 credits for media fieldwork.	Yes
Rey Juan Carlos University (URJC)	34	5	6 credits and 24 credits for media fieldwork	Yes
University of Seville (US)	30	18	6 credits. 6 credits for optional fieldwork.	6-month practicum for which no credits are awarded and optional media fieldwork
Total credits	258	260		

Source: prepared by the author

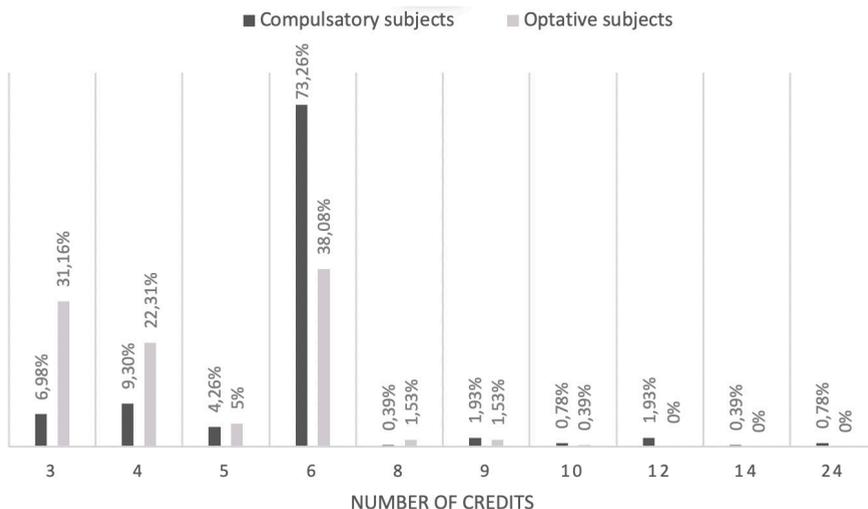
The flexibility of Pompeu Fabra University in training itineraries is the greatest, both in obligatory subjects and in fieldwork, whereas at Seville University and Rey Juan Carlos University, students have little capacity to specialise. The University of Navarre has the most balanced training routes.

Conversely, the performance of American and European universities, such as those in the UK and the Netherlands is remarkable. Options far surpass obligatory subjects: which are 399 and 143 respectively (Tejedor-Calvo and Cervi, 2017).

Concerning the number of credits in the subjects, the results show that for over 73% of obligatory subjects 6 ECTS credits are awarded, which is in keeping with data from the European universities themselves (Tejedor-Calvo and Cervi, 2017).

The optional subjects, however, are distributed in a more balanced way in terms of the number of ECTS credits. Although for most (38.08%) 6 credits are awarded, the next two highest percentages are those with 3 (31.16%) and 4 credits (22.31%). The results show that options concur with subjects that are the same or are shorter than the obligatory ones: 91.55% as opposed to 73.26%. This is in keeping with the other European universities. However, a different trend can be observed with American universities, where "large variations in credits between optional and obligatory subjects were not observed" (Tejedor-Calvo and Cervi, 2017).

Figure 2. Number of ECTS credits by obligatory and optional subjects in terms of percentages



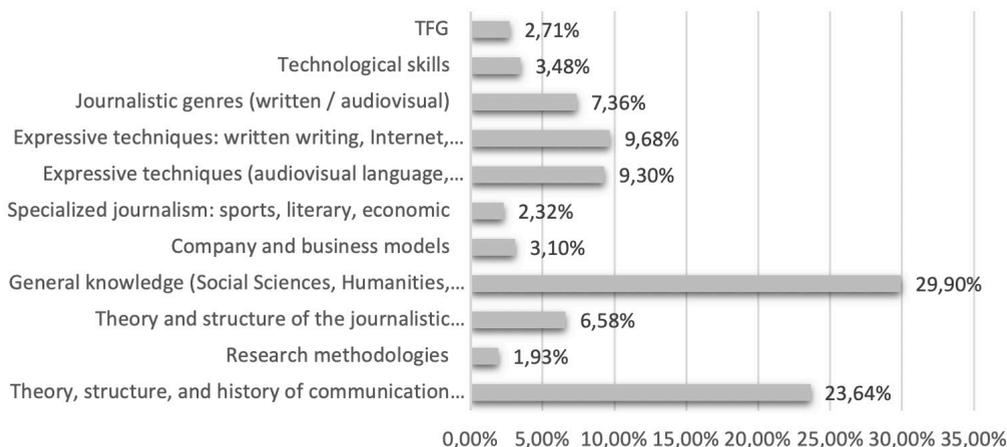
Source: prepared by the author

As for media fieldwork, it is obligatory at all universities in Spain for degrees in journalism, except at the UCM and the UNAV, which do not provide it and at the US, where it is optional or there is an obligatory practicum for which no credits are awarded. One must also bear in mind that universities such as Complutense understand that acquiring technical and professional knowledge is not exclusive to fieldwork; therefore, in the study plans at the UCM media fieldwork is not awarded credits, but, rather is seen as “extracurricular fieldwork at companies and institutions” for students. Thus, it comes as no surprise that at present this university has signed agreements with over 50 public and private institutions in Spain, mainly in Madrid.

Regarding the topics covered in obligatory subjects (graph 3), almost 30% correspond to general knowledge subjects and over 23% to theory, structure and the history of communication.

With percentages under 10%, subjects with a vocational slant can be seen such as expressive techniques in writing and audiovisual language, apart from written and audiovisual journalistic formats. These three subjects hardly account for 26% of the total.

Figure 3. Group of obligatory subjects by topic



Source: prepared by the author

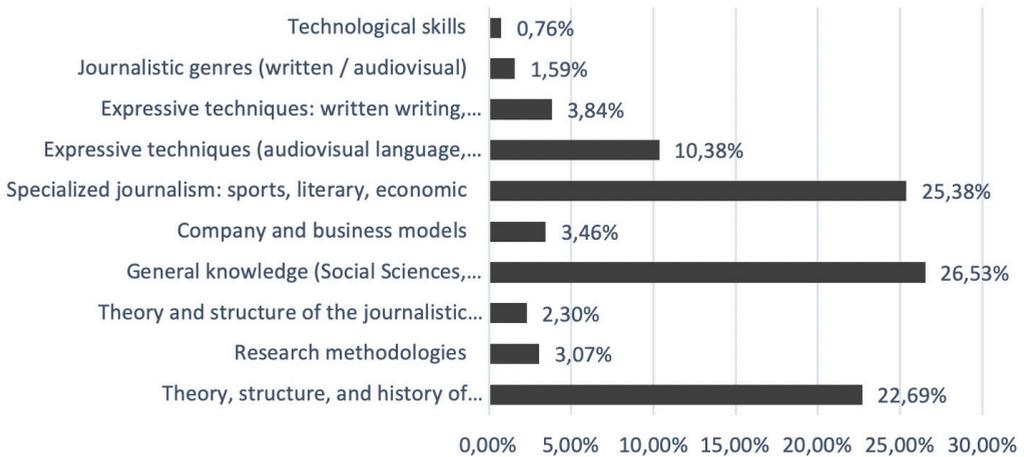
In the “general knowledge” area we can find all kinds of technical subjects such as: “History of Spain today”, “International Relations”, “Economic Principles”, “Introduction to Social Research”, and

"Creative Thinking". In a similar vein, the topic "Theory, Structure and History of Communication" aims to make the students acquire theoretical knowledge about communication in all areas: "Legal System of Communication" or "Communicational Law and Professional Deontology" although one must bear in mind that there are just 4 specific subjects linked to ethics and deontology: One of them is at the UCM, 2 at the UNAV and there is another at the UPF, all of which are obligatory. In both areas, the number of subjects at the universities analysed, both obligatory (138) and optional (128) are remarkable. Conversely, the subjects about technological skills, such as " New technologies and the Information Society", "Technological Fundamentals of Journalism" or " Technologies for the Journalism Management of Digital Information" just account for 3.48% and subjects about journalism "Research Methodologies" represent just 1.93% of the total number of optional subjects. The latter data contrasts with the 18.18% figure for British, European and American universities in terms of methodological subjects, according to a study by Tejedor-Calvo and Cervi (2017).

The subjects with a vocational slant, such as production of news programmes on the radio, on television, audiovisual languages, journalistic writing, visual design, oral and written expression, etc are still a far cry from showing a mixed model, are more European than American. They combine theory and practice in equal measures in obligatory subjects, albeit in practical subjects a proportional amount of credits is established between the theory and practical part in each subject. Our view refers to the balance there should be between the number of theory subjects and practical ones which specifically include technical and professional knowledge.

In terms of optional subjects (graph 4), a similar situation occurs with the programme for theory, general knowledge and research methodologies, although the total percentage is slightly lower: together they amount to almost 55%. In contrast, there is a different trend with practical subjects, in which specialised journalism (25.38%) and expressive techniques (14.22%) account for almost 40% of the contents.

Figure 4. Group of optative subjects by topic



Source: prepared by the author

5. Discussion and conclusions.

In the analysis made for the study plans at these 7 universities with most tradition and renown in the field of Spanish journalism, it has been shown that, generally speaking, theory subjects make up most of the obligatory and optional subjects in Journalism degrees: around 60%, with practical subjects barely accounting for 30%. In this respect, we might say that Spanish universities are quite close to the American or European model, as remarked on by Tejedor-Calvo and Cervi (2017) and Tejedor-Calvo et al. (2020).

It seems, therefore, that journalism studies in the current study plans at the universities analysed do not entirely reflect this necessary balance between journalism theory and practice. Here, practice is understood as being everything that has a technical-professional purpose and vocation. Apart from this must also be added all that related to technology (Salaverría, 2016). Furthermore, precisely on this latter point, just as seen in this article, the gradual addition of technology and technological skills to Journalism degrees makes the need to review these subjects and their syllabuses ever more patent. Only nine obligatory and two optional subjects out of a total of 518 at present reveal a lag in this kind of topical knowledge at the faculties of communication. However, this lag clashes directly with the competences that these very universities deem a communicator must have on graduating: to be

capable of performing in different areas of journalism, producing contents in any written or audiovisual form, but who can also use the tools and have up-to-date technological knowledge so that they can broadcast their work swiftly because contents quickly go out of date. In this respect, and although they have a slight edge, the rest of Europe and the university market in the USA also lag behind in terms of the technological subjects referred to in Spain (Tejedor-Calvo and Cervi, 2017).

On a final note, concerning theory and practical subjects. We can see certain differences between the universities analysed: Complutense University in Madrid, the University of Navarre and the University of Seville had more people-centred approaches, based on general culture and a long tradition in which the discipline has drawn from sociology and political sciences, whereas Pompeu Fabra University (with options for up to 102 subjects), Rey Juan Carlos University (with obligatory subjects which fulfil the whole written and audiovisual spectrum of the profession), and the Autonomous University of Barcelona (with a specialised degree which contained up to 10 optional subjects), seems to provide the best balance between theory and practice.

In conclusion, in the near future it must be indicated that the study plans within journalism must, in any event, guarantee that students have a solid theoretical grounding which will equip them not only with knowledge but also a critical outlook. At the same time, they need to have a broad understanding of the online world from technology and be literate in using them. These are ever changing and short-lived as new ways of not just consumption, but also the media by which it is transmitted are constantly created. Therefore, they must know how to channel the consumption of information the consumer receives. It must also be remembered how important ethics and deontology are in journalism. This needs to be pivotal so that future journalism is shaped with such a traditional and necessary notion as broadcasting true, honest and the most objective work as possible. Therefore, we must deem that training in journalism should not subscribe to "follower" mode (Deuze, 2006), in order to train according to industrial requirements, but rather in "innovative" mode (Deuze, 2006), in which training in journalism becomes a laboratory for development in which students are prepared for a dynamic future instead of a static present (García-Galera, Martínez-Nicolás and Del-Hoyo-Hurtado, 2021). Moreover, bearing in mind the characteristics of this future, journalism training must provide students with the skills to "change their ideas into viable and independent ventures which can compete with the needs of media organisations" (Baines and Kennedy, 2010: 98). Therefore, there remains a long way to go in a constantly and ever-changing society.

6. Specific contribution of each author

Contributions	Signees
Conception and study design	Signee 1, signee 2
Search for documents	Signee 1, signee 2
Data collection	Signee 1, signee 2
Analysis and critical interpretation of data	Signee 1, signee 2, Signee 3
Draft, format, review and approval of versions	Signee 1, signee 2, Signee 3

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