


Why journalism education matters


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Why journalism education matters

- Journalism education – its development in the academy
- Influencing factors
- Survey of graduates & employers
- Looking forward



Why journalism education matters

“Journalism, the quintessential knowledge profession, deserves the best-educated and trained practitioners.”

Vartan Gregorian (2008)
President, Carnegie Corporation

Why journalism education matters

Responsibility on journalists is great – our role as journalism educators is to produce graduates who can do so much more than produce and present original, creative journalism.

Journalists need a deep understanding of society and their role in it.

Costera Meyer summarises this responsibility as: ‘informing citizens in a way that enables them to act as citizens’ (2013, p13).

This means prompting students – creating journalism education programmes that explore the role of the news media in more conceptual ways.

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Hermann & Chomsky (1988) describe the role of the news media as presenting citizens with a 'tolerably realistic view of the world', as such students need to understand its roles and responsibilities – as well as its practices and processes.

In 2007, the WJEC gave us a set of principles:

- journalism is a distinctive field of study that quite rightly has a home within the academy

What is clear is that journalism education has at its core an accepted set of principle:

- Teaching professional, practice-based skills
- Underpinning this with development of theory-based knowledge
- Together fostering and encouraging criticality of thoughts and actions

Why journalism education matters

There is much discourse in the academic literature on the role of journalism education within the academy:

'(journalism education)...should nest comfortably within the intellectual and academic culture of the university and be invigorated by it.'

UNESCO (2007 p10)

Zelizer (2013) says that educators and scholars are well placed to be able to offer practitioners a place where the complex world in which they operate can be made sense of.

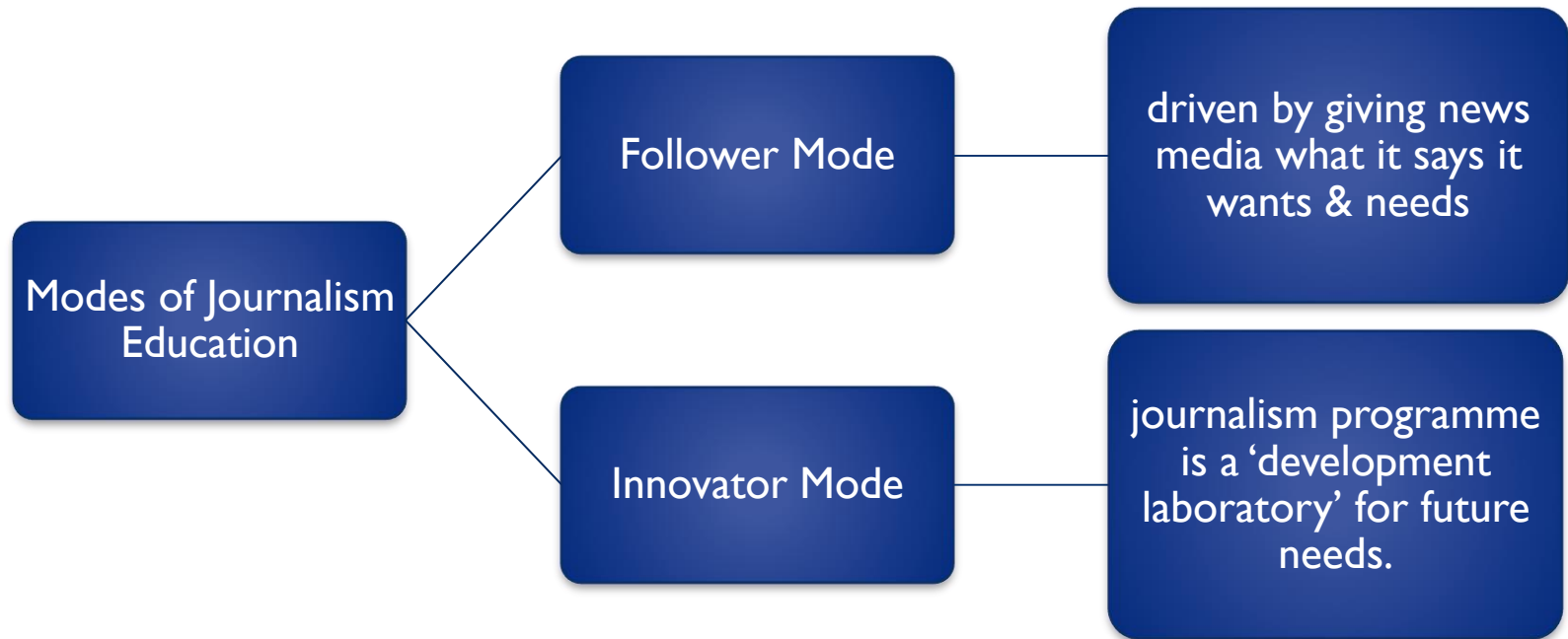
'The purpose of a degree is not to make people adequate employees but thoughtful citizens and potential contributors to the intellectual and cultural life of the society.' De Burgh (2003, p9)

Why journalism education matters

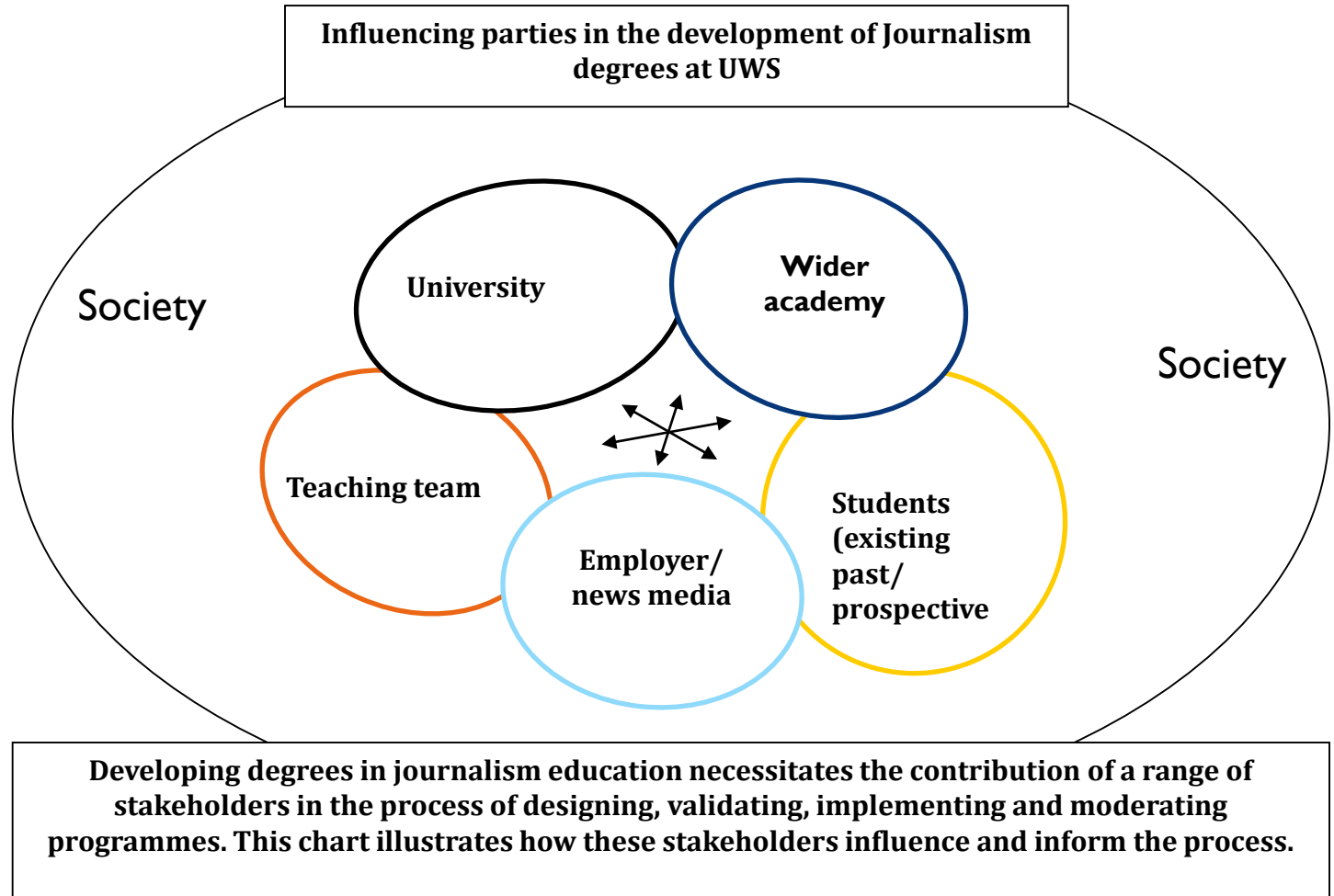
What is clear are the challenges inherent in creating journalism degrees that meet the needs of a range of competing demands and stakeholders:

'Journalism education and its curriculum are overwhelmingly influenced by 'externally derived conditions'. Stephens (2000, cited in Bromley, Tumber & Zelizer (2001) p252)

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Survey: Eight employers were contacted and four responded.

1. Do you think journalists need a degree? Yes/No

“Yes and no”

“Yes...but”

“Yes”

“No”

2. Do you think journalists need a journalism degree? Yes/No

“Yes...but”

“Yes and no”

“No”

“No, journalism is a trade and doesn't require specialist academic knowledge”

3. Would you like to be consulted when journalism degree programmes are being designed? Yes/No

Yes – 100%

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4. If yes, in what way would you like to be consulted about the design of a journalism degree programme?

(For example, be asked about content/sit on an examining panel/provide some professional input to the teaching?)

“Definitely be asked about course content and provide professional input to teaching. The industry is moving so fast, it is almost impossible for educators to keep up. Involving a range of professionals will help keep journalism education real-world relevant.”

RESPONDENT A – MAGAZINE EDITOR/PUBLISHER/EDITORIAL CONSULTANT

“It would be useful if editors were consulted about content, particularly in a fast-moving digital landscape, to ensure that the skills being taught are as up to date as possible for the industry. Providing more access to working industry professionals would also help students grasp the nature of the industry and how to approach their careers.”

RESPONDENT C – NEWS EDITOR NATIONAL SUNDAY NEWSPAPER

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5. Given that journalism is now taught at many universities, what do you think needs to be included in the degree content?

“Journalism degrees must be able to provide very practical elements as well as academic. There must also be a strong focus on news production. Journalism graduates, of those seeking work experience while studying, often focus more on feature content rather than news. I have found that they are often still unsure about how to generate news stories rather than follow them up.”

RESPONDENT C – NEWS EDITOR NATIONAL SUNDAY NEWSPAPER

“The social aspect of the job should be made clear in degree courses. The first element of a story requires speaking to people, building relationships with them. Using Google and emailing questions to relative strangers is not the most effective way to do the job. Journalism is not just a writing job, and I have found students in the third and fourth years of their studies often find it difficult to nurture contacts.”

RESPONDENT D – EDITOR ONLINE NEWS WEBSITE

Why journalism education matters

5. Given that journalism is now taught at many universities, what do you think needs to be included in the degree content?

“Shorthand; Law for journalists; How to be compliant with IPSO; Interview and news writing skills, how to develop contacts, carrying out research online and using social media: Digital skills such as using web publishing software and video equipment.

A study of how all types of media are created - from print to online - and the skills required.”

**RESPONDENT B NEWS EDITOR NATIONAL DAILY
NEWSPAPER**

Why journalism education matters

6. What **knowledge** do you require of journalism graduates who come to work with your news organisation?

“As above...”

RESPONDENT B NEWS EDITOR NATIONAL DAILY NEWSPAPER

“Ability to understand audience, publication position and mission. Knowledge of the publishing process also useful.”

RESPONDENT A – MAGAZINE EDITOR/PUBLISHER/EDITORIAL CONSULTANT

“Possessing a degree in journalism is not necessarily an automatic qualifying factors. Many hopeful journalists, in my experience, have completed the academic qualification but have little grasp of a newsroom’s expectations. They are often taken by surprise at the intensity of news reporting and the speed at which journalists must work when covering breaking or developing stories.”

RESPONDENT C NEWS EDITOR NATIONAL SUNDAY NEWSPAPER

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7. What **skills** do you require of journalism graduates who come to work with your news organisation?

“Instinct for news gathering; Understanding of digital and social media; Ability to record and edit video/audio content and turn it around quickly; Good social skills.”

RESPONDENT C NEWS EDITOR NATIONAL SUNDAY NEWSPAPER

“As questions six... along with a portfolio of published work.”

RESPONDENT B NEWS EDITOR NATIONAL DAILY NEWSPAPER

“Ability to research, report, write and follow a brief.”

RESPONDENT A – MAGAZINE EDITOR/PUBLISHER/EDITORIAL CONSULTANT

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8. Please feel free to add any additional comments on how universities that teach journalism can help more adequately prepare graduates for the jobs market.

“Give them regular reference to current real-world case studies and examples; help them bring fresh ideas into the newsroom. Keep them realistic, they'll probably end up cutting and pasting at some point.”

RESPONDENT A – MAGAZINE EDITOR/PUBLISHER/EDITORIAL CONSULTANT

“After emerging from a three or four year university course, they should have a basic level of ability gained through work experience, practical training, shorthand and a general understanding of law and IPSO and, most importantly, be eager to learn more on the job. There is a visible difference between those who come into the industry with those skills and those who don't.”

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“Up to date information about freelancing rates and what journalists should expect to earn would also be helpful. More and more journalists must rely on freelancing, and they need to know how to negotiate the best deals for their work. With traditional desk-job entry routes much harder to come by, new journalists may struggle to navigate their way around the field practically and financially. Journalism degrees must be able to provide very practical elements as well as academic.”

RESPONDENT D – EDITOR ONLINE NEWS WEBSITE

Why journalism education matters

Graduates were simply asked one question: In what way has undertaking a journalism degree impacted on your future employment prospects?

GRAD A (online & digital editor national newspaper)

I had a fantastic experience at UWS down to the design of the course, the carefully selected modules and the help and support of my course leader. The degree provided me with valuable skills that I have used throughout my career and X gave me, and the rest of her students, the confidence to believe in our abilities and take on challenging and successful career opportunities.

GRAD B (assistant news editor national newspaper)

The degree might prove I completed the studying and passed the exams, but it doesn't explain what this course equipped me with. I learned the skills needed to be the journalist I am today and, most importantly, was pushed to apply them in practice. I was taught about the industry and academic theories which can be applied to it. And I was instilled with principles about reporting and the job which I still hold today.

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GRAD C (PR/content marketing national organization)

Although the course understandably focuses on traditional journalism, there is an understanding that the industry is becoming increasingly competitive, and students are urged to broaden their horizons and use their transferable skills to look outwith journalism and think about careers in industries such as PR, marketing and communications.

GRAD D (PR manager international business)

With the dissertation in particular, the attention to detail and motivational words of my supervisor were essential. There are research and data analysis skills that were taught during these lessons that I still use today when creating monthly coverage reports for clients.

GRAD E (reporter national newspaper/PR national organization)

The Journalism course offered at UWS has impacted on my life in an enormous way. The core skills offered by the programme are, in my view, exactly what should be provided to those wishing to enter the media industry. Like the industry itself, this course has moved with the times and helped sculpt modern journalists who are able to adapt to their surroundings.

Why journalism education matters

Conclusions from employers:

- Skills seem to have higher profile/importance than knowledge.
- Understanding the business demands in terms of how it operates, is managed and how journalists fit into it.
- No sense of that deeper knowledge of how journalism influences in society/with readers is mentioned at all.

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Conclusions from graduates:

- They take away more than the 'taught' stuff.
- There is a great understanding of the transferable aspects of what they learn.
- The practice is important but so too was the theory (when it is done in an applied way).

Why journalism education matters

Good journalism education requires:

- a place where both knowledge and skills can be achieved
- where flexibility and resilience are built into both the programmes and its graduates
- striking the right balance between all stakeholders and interests

Designing journalism degrees is both an art and a science that requires a mastery of processes and knowledge of the content and operation of them.

It is a connected, complex process of negotiation, compromise and pragmatism.

Why journalism education matters


Looking forward:

Mensing (2010) challenges us to think about how prepare students for 'newsrooms many will never enter'.

Given recent events (Brexit, US Presidential Elections, fake news, alternative facts etc) concern among consumers grows over trust & impartiality.

Therefore it is more important than ever that journalism education examines deeply the role, purpose and responsibility of journalism – this is why journalism education matters.

An interdisciplinary approach is required.



Why journalism education matters

‘It is also important to see whether the program is drawing on the talents of the entire university faculty and not just “parked in the outskirts of the university.”’


Gregorian (2008)

Why journalism education matters

Journalism may be about instinct and news sense but it is also about reporting on lives lived in complex social, political, economic, organisational, technological and moral landscapes that are not always easily explained or navigable.

We need to teach journalism students that they have a responsibility to be able to contextualise what they are reporting and how they are doing this.

Interdisciplinary approaches (again!) can help.



Why journalism education matters


Creating spaces for shared discourse is key:

- Between journalism education & industry
- Between journalism education & other academic disciplines
- Between journalism education & university management
- Between journalism educators across the academy

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“The ultimate goal of journalism education...is to empower not only the student but journalism itself...the quality of journalism education is supposed to have an impact on the quality of citizenship and society. Journalism education educates not only practitioners but the public as well.”

Berger & Foote(2013, p9)



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THANK YOU