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Journalistic innovation and digital society: An adaptation of journalism studies

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Abstract

Introduction: This article offers a comprehensive state-of-the-art review of journalistic innovation, summarising the approaches that structure such research, defining the main concepts and proposing new avenues for research. **Methods:** To achieve these objectives, the article examines the main areas of scientific research developed around the tensions and research objects within the system, based on descriptive approaches. The study also involves the review of the agendas of the International Journalism Festival, held in Perugia since 2006, to identify the bridges between the traditional journalism industry, technological operators and university centres. **Results and conclusions:** The research responds to the need for a journalism degree programme that is adapted to the digital society and the transformation of the profession, undergraduate studies and journalism research, that requires its own agenda, an adequate research language and evidence of collaboration between the journalism industry and the university.

Keywords

Innovation; news making; undergraduate studies; journalism; profession.

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Translation by CA Martínez-Arcos (PhD, University of London)

1. Introduction

The structure of journalism is undergoing a paradigm shift accelerated by the agendas of innovation and digital transformation (European Commission, 2014). Structure is understood as the discipline that studies communication systems (policies, economics, administration and law), their agents (companies, audiences, advertisers) and the relationship established between the media and informational messages (journalistic professions, publics, minorities). The objective of this article is to carry out a state-of-the-art review of the economic, political and social aspects of the journalistic reality, to be able to understand the journalistic messages produced in a given media system. The technological dimension is also taken into account, but it is important not to saturate journalistic innovation studies with a focus on the latest social network (Küng, 2017) or the online versions of certain journalistic projects (Salaverría, 2015: 224), disconnected from the spectrum that makes up the distinguishing features of journalism (Casals, 2006) beyond its media platforms. These distinguishing features also involve a way of acting that is “committed more strongly to the norms of the profession than to political ideas” (Hallin, 2005: 153). Schudson points out that such features are shaped by the inexorable relationship between journalism, the political system and citizenship:

Journalism serves democracy in many forms: it provides citizens with information focused on current politics, offers political analysis, produces investigative reports, presents social stories with empathy that -often with such human interest- inform citizens about the problems in their neighbourhoods and communities that they might not know or understand, facilitates a space for public conversation, explains how representative democracy works, and mobilizes citizens for political life promoting candidates, public policy and points of view (2013: 167).

This type of journalism, regardless of the platform on which it is disseminated, responds to ethical standards of conduct and a professional production process.

In this context of transformation, it is important to examine the redefinition of the journalistic profession within the structure of media and communications. Lewis (2010) believes that the paradigm of the newsroom has determined the type of professional profile and skills that are valued by the industry, which has ignored other skills related to the digital transformation and the media economy. However, the newsroom is not the main space for employability (Usher, 2014) nor the decisive word in the self-definition of the professional profile provided in the Dictionary of the Royal Spanish Academy (Salaverría, 2018). According to the Madrid Press Association, PR companies, social network content creators and generic communication activities have multiplied job offers for journalists (Asociación de la Prensa de Madrid, 2018), while journalists have embarked on new ventures and specialised projects (Manfredi, Rojas, Herranz, 2015). Zelizer (2005) has already warned us about the risks of using the generic definition of “communication” on the subjectivity of journalism.

In this context, we are witnessing the weakening of the curricula of journalism degree programmes (Folkerts, Hamilton and Lehman, 2013) and the tension between teaching and research (Gaitán, Caffarel, Lozano, Piñuel, 2018), despite the expansion of university centres that offer undergraduate and graduate journalism degrees. It is not easy to introduce innovative subjects and approaches, despite developments in the industry, in general, and the profession, in particular (Hewett, 2015).

Faced with this combination of industrial and academic change, the theoretical and practical foundations of journalism have renewed journalism theory and questioned the meaning of the profession within the framework of open societies. The meta-study carried out by Steensen and Ahva (2015) suggests that the theoretical construction of journalism in the digital society has expanded and improved in qualitative terms, and has overcome the empirical stage to focus on the journalistic ecosystem, the configuration of new actors -social networks-, the impact of the tech giants, the informative uses of the audience and innovation.

The objective of this research is to carry out a state-of-the-art review of journalistic innovation, summarise the approaches that structure research, define the main concepts and propose new avenues of research. In the face of the ongoing curricular reform, this research contributes to the demand for a journalism degree that is adapted to the digital society and the transformation of the profession, undergraduate studies and journalism research, that has its own agenda, an appropriate research language and evidence of collaboration between the journalism industry and the university (Franklin, 2014). The study is guided by the following hypotheses:

- 1) Digital transformation has accelerated the pace of change and its impact. However, it has focused more on effects (more audience, more trend technologies) than on processes (design and distribution of journalistic content, satisfaction of readers). Such isolated innovations slow down the abandonment of the journalistic model of the industrial economy and are oriented to the *in extenso* maintenance of a collapsed model. The economic model is oriented towards the repetition of strategies of a value chain that no longer exists. The new business models have not yet been consolidated, compared to the traditional mix-revenue model based on broadcast and advertisement investment (Cerezo, 2017). There are many journalistic initiatives of an entrepreneurial nature that mimic the vices of the journalism industry and are not sustainable in the digital economy.
- 2) News consumption, as the epitome of journalistic production, has become blurred. News are read more than ever before, but not in the same formats, devices and paces (Amoedo, Varas-Miguel and Negrodo, 2018). Such a decision of the audience affects journalistic production cycles. Journalists present on social media are often seen as if news were not produced in the newsroom and were the monopoly of the reporter who writes, designs, photographs and shares on social networks.
- 3) The dilemma of university centres is recurring. All the contents do not fit in 240 ECTS credits and it is necessary to choose, prioritise and discard specific subjects. Universities can adopt a teaching-hospital model, in line with medical studies, and underpin the profession with an increasing orientation to technology and daily practice in the newsrooms, or a school-based model, which teaches the values and objectives of journalism and promotes the knowledge of the social sciences. The literature reflects that journalistic ethics need substantial reinforcements in terms of information uses and practice. Journalists, if they want to regain their mediating role and their power to shape social reality, must raise their ethical standards, equip themselves with instruments of professional protection and escape the fast-click culture.

The research work is organised according to the three dimensions, which are listed below to facilitate reading, and ends with a reflection on the validity of the paradigm of new journalism. With regards to the methods, this paper reviews the recent literature, relying on descriptive approaches and dismissing the bibliometric review, points out the tensions of the system and announces new research

objects. It examines the agenda of the International Journalism Festival, held in Perugia since 2006, to investigate the bridges between traditional journalism industry, technological operators and scholars. The exploration of research challenges aims to open new avenues that cease to consider innovation only in its technological or digital dimension. This approach has generated a huge nostalgia towards a media system that will never be the same again. The expected results include the orientation of research in the journalistic field, the analysis of the innovation landscape and a global view of the industry and the university.

2. Innovation anchored in the news production system

The Internet, mobile devices, social media and new media make up the new dominant information ecosystem, which through “the introduction of new ideas, methods and technologies allow journalists to experiment with new narrative forms, in a broad framework of institutional and organisational change” (Cornia, Sehl, Nielsen, 2017: 7). Therefore, we cannot speak of “the media of the future” and similar formulas when it comes to the dynamics of transformation of journalism. There is no such thing as isolated digital journalism or as a by-product of the traditional industry, even if it is a common strategy in the industry. Posetti (2018: 9) points out that “the risk of continuing with a strategy that amounts to committing ‘random acts of innovation’ without a clear set of research-informed goals and objectives include the ‘shiny things’ obsession that unnecessarily distracts from core journalistic functions, can lead to burnout and fatigue, and risk stagnation or innovation paralysis”.

And, despite audience data (AIMC, 2018) and revenue data (InfoAdex, 2018), there is a certain paternalistic view towards native journalistic production in the digital realm, as if it were still a lower-ranking industry. To mention two cases, in Spain, the government does not consider digital newspapers in the same range as conventional newspapers when handing out institutional aids and advertising without providing a strong argument (see the position of [eldiario.es](https://www.eldiario.es/temas/publicidad_institucional/) as an affected party in https://www.eldiario.es/temas/publicidad_institucional/). This communication policy undermines the news media market and slows down the transformation of the industry. Secondly, the industry does not favour the entry into the industry of new actors on equal conditions. Until 2017, the association of Spanish newspapers editors had not been opened to other media organisations, “whether paid or not, digital native or printed”. The creation of the *Asociación de Medios de Información* (“News Media Association”) to replace the Association of Spanish Newspaper Editors (AEDE), founded in 1977, reflects the business vision of the new competitive environment.

The conservative orientation of the decision of public and private entities is explained to the extent that innovation is a complement to the main activity and not the axis that structures the processes, the economic models and the initiatives of journalistic companies. The view of digital transformation geared towards audience effects and technology is dominant. It consists of the acquisition of mass audiences and the use of technologies in the market for overproduction, but also of gaps in journalistic and informative quality. This approach affects the journalistic structure, because it ignores that in platform-based capitalism platforms have taken over the role of gatekeeper and have replaced newspapers as gateway for news selection and reading. Nielsen and Ganter (2017) estimate that in the long-term, relationships with platforms will generate new identity problems for journalistic companies and will strengthen dependence on large operators, while in the short term they do not solve their revenue problems based on operative and audience results. Newspapers and magazines cannot compete for audience volume, despite the existence of digital marketing strategies and click-baiting. The

technology at the service of clickbait is embodied in communicative practices based on spectacularisation, controversy and even non-informative headlines. In a nutshell, the future of the industry in the short term, in three or five years, depends on its connection to platforms and algorithms, and it does not seem that the journalistic company knows exactly what is its mission, innovation path or relationship with tech giants (Whittaker, 2018).

The orientation towards the processes starts in the design and distribution of journalistic information, which ceases to be a product to become a service for readers. The service economy is characterised by the increasing value of intangible assets, the personalisation of supply according to the interests of the user, the perishable nature of the demand it covers and the inexorable mixture between production and consumption. In journalism, the intangible is the result of both the personal brand of the journalist who disseminates the information and the newspaper that promotes it (Amoedo, Vara-Miquel and Negrodo, 2018: 71). The circulating product -be it a news story, an interview or a television programme- is shared between peers through mobile devices, with the advantages of the economy of scale. Personalisation refers to the selection of the contents to be read, listened to or shared: there are no two unique users following the same pattern. As a result, the indiscriminate broadcast and supply model loses effectiveness in the face of the emergence of personalised analytical response and individual demand. As for the ephemeral nature, it refers to the vagueness of what it means to be informed or not. This issue is personal and varies according to demographics, political situation or context: there is no stock of necessary news, but innovation allows for variable consumption.

At this point, it is convenient to broaden the reader's perspective, the renewal of audiences as an active part of the innovation process. Digitisation has accelerated the fusion between production and consumption, so that readers have become users and intermediaries in their communities, both geographical and digital. When a news story is shared, is it a matter of the newspaper or the reader? Both answers seem correct, as both encourage, or not, the conversation with a very limited degree of interactivity. The most interesting thing here is not the newspaper-reader dialogue, but the emergence of new influencers in the agenda setting. Readers, identified by communities, introduce more easily conversational topics that affect editorial activity. The rise of information on equality, including the emergence of specialised editors within the newsroom, demonstrate how social demand has affected news making. This social innovation would not have happened in the same way without digital action.

The dynamics of the digital transformation affect the economics of journalism, whose traditional value chain has disintegrated. The news is the unit of measurement of industrial journalism, whose product is marketed and distributed through physical formats, through a network of points of sale. However, the logic of street-newsroom-press-kiosk-reader no longer reigns, but there are continuous interactions that force the reconfiguration of the final product and its star, the news story, as it will be shown in the following section (Amoedo, Vara-Miquel and Negrodo, 2018: 42). The journalistic company also deserves a thorough review of the models. The sustained drop in advertising investment has forced us to rethink diversity and the revenue formulas. For this reason, innovation and new journalism is not the integration of newsrooms or the dissemination of threads on Twitter, but the reformulation of the service for a reading community.

At the more substantive level, the debate is not whether to implement, or not, paywalls, but to consider what is offered to the reader behind them. The reader will pay for truthful, quality, public-interest journalistic information, not for a product that is very similar to free content out there (Arrese, 2015). It

is a question that relates more to the creation of a social brand (“I pay to read this newspaper because it is worthy of my trust”) than to a one-off news story. These issues shape the public value of journalism and consolidate the renewal of journalistic companies. The lesson of journalistic start-ups is that they have been able to adapt to the new economic environment, but their survival is constrained by the same threats faced by traditional journalism. In the economics of journalism, innovation goes through the promotion of projects that shape and affect the business plan. This matter is not exclusive of journalistic entrepreneurial projects but is essential for established companies.

In relation to employment, Coddington (2015) believes that it faces a quantitative shift caused by the growth of the networked organisation, the impact of big data and the openness of journalism to public activity. In short, 25 years of full-performance technology show a mature profession and industry, although it is still in the process of professional and academic redefinition (Salaverría, 2019).

The quality of employment and the conditions under which it is developed in this new framework is debatable. Political economy has developed a critical theory based on the increasing isolation of journalists, the freelance model as a source of labour precariousness and the general worsening of working conditions in the newsroom (Rottlilm, 2014; Cohen, 2015; Bittner, 2014; Asociación de la Prensa de Madrid, 2018). If the professional activity and identity are built on the newsroom, the transformation of work relations substantially affects how the profession is performed and how the idea of newspaper is understood. In the Madrid Press Association’s 2011 Annual Report of the Journalism Profession, Farias (2011:15) describes this idea of a sum of crises and identifies how in recent years the profession has moved from intrusiveness to work precariousness, and from precariousness to unemployment, until the current situation, in which stability and problems of independence are the main concerns for journalists. Successive reports of the Madrid Press Association demonstrate the validity of these observations: the general economic crisis, the reduction of fixed costs through layoffs, the lower investment on the quality of the product, the dependence on advertising funding and citizens’ changing consumption habits, the precariousness of the professional journalist, among other factors. These data are similar in other countries (Griego, 2018).

In short, the study of journalistic innovation calls for an integrated approach to different activities. Posetti (2018: 14) proposes eight basic indicators to visualise the degree of journalistic innovation: journalistic style and narrative, audience relationship, technology and product, distribution, business model, ability to lead and manage, organisational design and corporate culture and professionals. It is an inclusive approach to the dimensions of innovation as an institutional category, not as a final artefact or product.

3. News making in the context of constant innovation

Digital transformation is present in the discourse of policies, industries and news media structures (Picard and Pickard, 2017). The recently deceased Jesús Timoteo Álvarez considered that between 1989 and 2004 the media society was configured based on the structure of the information and communication sector.

In the last twenty year, a combination of interests, coming from various classical economic and technological sectors, have converged around what until then had been a modest industry and a relative business: the media, the press, radio and television

(Álvarez, 2005: 53).

In this period, journalism studies have included items related to convergence, digitisation and globalisation. Díaz Nosty summarises the transformation of the journalism industry, which occurs thanks to the substantial modification of the media and cultural scenarios between 2007 and 2017. The consolidation of platforms as vehicles for the transmission and dissemination of news, the proliferation of fake news, the drop in advertising investments, the emergence of new audiences, the constant trial and error in the media and journalistic companies, as well as the growing work precariousness have confirmed the “in-depth mutation in the media system” (Díaz Nosty, 2017: 7). This logic appears in journalism studies, especially in its economic and political dimension. In short, a complex journalistic map has emerged, which has fragmented the audiences and definitively broken the oligopoly of large journalistic organisations in the field of distribution and production. The digitisation of processes, the fragmentation of audiences, the multiplication of the free-access offer through mobile phones and devices, the emergence of new audiences, among other dynamics, affect the production of journalistic messages. These trends are integrated into research works on the impact of big data on journalism (Arsenault, 2017), computational journalism (Vállez and Codina, 2018), platforms and algorithms (Just and Latzer, 2016).

The news story is the star journalistic genre (De Fontcuberta, 1995; Del Rio Reinaga, 1991; Grijelmo, 1998; López, 1995; Parrat, 2008). It is the mission of news organisations and is the unit of measurement of professional success. The whole journalistic imaginary revolves around the news, which thanks to technologies has reached a constant distribution. However, innovation has threatened its reign because it has changed the cycle of news and information production services, the distribution format, the consumption device and readers’ demand.

The media system is hybrid, with a confluence of digital initiatives and others that are typical of the industrial model (Chadwick, 2017), which has direct consequences in how the work in the newsroom is organised. There is no point in talking about the news cycle based on its temporal distribution (the morning, afternoon or evening news), when the user lives connected in a continuous cycle of information. Through the mobile device, the reader can be a news consumer, producer and disseminator (Flores Vivar and Cebrián Herreros, 2011). The conventional newspaper does not structure the conversation, although it serves as the main vehicle for epistemic communities. When read by pieces, it breaks the unitary meaning of the newspaper, as Umberto Eco (2015) satirically recalled: “It is not the news that make the newspaper, but the newspaper that makes the news. And knowing how to gather four different news stories means proposing a fifth news story to the reader”.

In relation to consumption, journalism is ubiquitous in nature (Salaverría, 2018; Aguado and Castellet, 2013), because the reader chooses when and how to access the news. Ubiquity has shifted one of the foundations of journalism, which is the selection and hierarchy of information. The increase in the diversity of newspapers or access platforms has devalued the value of journalism as a trusted aggregator and producer of contents of reference for public life. The journalistic brand has given in to the pressure of platforms and algorithms, which effectively controls the flow of news dissemination and consumption. The user perceives that the platforms organise the information and can access all kinds of news without the need to be loyal to a specific outlet. There is a greater offer in the news market, although the gateway has been driven into the oligopoly of Google, Facebook, Twitter and other technology companies that organise consumption. The user does not have to go to the physical

or digital kiosk to read the news, as they now “appear” on his or her mobile devices (Newman, 2018). Overexposure to news events requires some order, previously called an editorial criterion, which limits the reader’s understanding of the world. As *The New York Times* advertises, “All the news you can fit”. Oligopolies have replaced the editorial criterion with one that we call algorithms, whose functioning is unknown due to strict protection of industrial property. Overabundance does not correlate with quality or better knowledge of life and public affairs. Overabundance has removed entry barriers for low-quality products, which aim to fuel social polarisation and, directly, the dissemination of propaganda.

Given that it is not possible to compete with algorithms for mass audience, there is a risk of offering journalistic products that aim to shock the audience. Journalistic innovation will be the result of going back to the basic mission of journalism: give meaning, contextualise, and explain news events. The news genre lacks weight in an environment of overflow of information where readers have already been able to read, share and dismiss news. This possibility is alien to the journalistic tradition of selection and display of information that the reader should know. Instead, it raises a wide range of genres, formats and platforms to explain in depth the why of the news, their impact on social life, the economic consequences or the relationships between news and others. Journalistic content is not limited to the news genre, but will innovate in the platform-content relationship through transmedia narratives (Calvo, 2018), virtual reality and 360-degree video technology (Cantero, Sidorenko and Herranz, 2018), fact-checking to reduce the spread of fake news (Ufarte, Peralta and Murcia, 2018), podcasting formats and the growing prominence of the informed image, among other fields of action.

Finally, it would be convenient to resume the study of the audience in its journalistic dimension. Quantitative studies (clicks) are not enough. In-depth studies are needed to understand what the audience understands by journalism, the audience’s contribution to transformation and social change (Aguilera and Casero, 2018), what the audience expects from the local journalism industry, how the audience brings meaning to the community, and how the audience explains global events. This recovery of the audience as an “epistemic community” that refers to the press as “our newspaper” is absent from the debate (Nielsen, 2016).

In short, journalistic production faces the challenge of permanent adaptation and change in three main areas. The first is the ability to adapt to the user, which operates in a digital environment and has enormous freedom of access to the consumption and dissemination of news. The news cycle, both in its political and citizen effect as well as in its corresponding business model, is surpassed by the rhythm of tweets and instant messages. Journalism does not have to be dedicated to tweeting events or creating stories. Journalists must be able to distinguish between catchy news and real, public-interest and community-service news. This approach leads journalists to the reduction of the daily number of news to improve their contribution to civic life and reduce noise, avoiding their participation in the constant game of “breaking news” and “exclusive news”, which governs social media activity. According to the initial reflections, the task of journalism is not to increase the likes, but to improve citizens’ quality of life.

The second area is the adaptation to mobile environment, be it a phone or a tablet. The mobile device, customised and connected 24/7, is the standard for the consumption and production of journalistic content. The news may not be the only journalistic genre that works in that ecosystem, but journalists will have to design screen-friendly interfaces (Serrano, 2018) and create and innovate new formats

available for mobile consumption. From a technological point of view, these requirements are accessible, while from a journalistic point of view they require an extra effort. A newsroom that is made up only of journalists is not enough. It is necessary for the newsroom to include information professionals specialised in a multitude of dimensions. In dwindling newsrooms, the replacement of journalists with social media managers aims to capture the audiences floating on relevant platforms and/or trending topics. However, it does not ensure the transversal approach to coverage, reconciliation with platforms or the elimination of news with no real added value in a context of hyper-connectivity. The effort must be oriented towards the third milestone: the promotion of the service culture to the detriment of the culture of the journalistic product in the logic of social habits and productive capacity.

The platforms, especially those used on mobile or tablet, have multiplied the options and are already used in all economic activities. The consumption of audiovisual products and services is carried out on on-demand and streaming platforms, with a decreasing acquisition of physical goods and products. The rise of Netflix, Amazon Prime and HBO is built on this logic of short-term lease, rental or access. The relationship between the news provider and the reader is not limited to the purchase at the kiosk, so it needs to include the ability to offer a mediated digital service in which the news acquire the category of “accessed content” instead of “content stored, printed and distributed on paper”. Noguera (2018) points out that this activity cannot exist without the active collaboration of users or audiences. Participation is part of the product itself and cannot be dissociated, although it is difficult to see how such enthusiasm can be monetised.

4. The future of journalism studies

Journalism studies are affected by the aforementioned economic, professional and ethical dynamics and, thus, it is necessary to review the basic contents, the research agenda, the profile of professors and the orientation of graduates. It is not a simple or agreed-upon question, insofar as there are different university models and different approaches to journalistic employment and to the very nature of the degree programme, more general or more specialised. The only consensus is the need to offer new solutions in the newsroom and other journalistic workspaces, the production and dissemination of content, the relationship with audiences and the management of journalistic projects (Drok, 2012). But there is no unanimity in how to achieve these learning goals. Marzal and Casero (2018:14) consider that “we suffer from a serious problem of identity” caused by the very interdisciplinary nature of communication and journalism. Pavlik (2013: 213) believes that “the interdisciplinary essence of journalism and media education needs to be expanded. No other field is more inherently interdisciplinary than journalism and the media”. The author identifies the ability to connect computing, business management, documentation, design, narrative, critical thinking, spatial and cartographic knowledge to visualise data and many other new tasks. There are no didactic tools to tackle teaching and prepare students for the new job positions. For Hunter and Nel (2011:10), it is “a challenge to the pedagogical identity” of the curriculum and the successive educational reforms because the new tasks in the newsroom resemble more closely the production of audiovisual and digital contents than the classic functions of writing and journalistic genres.

The examination of the university degree is structured in two areas: the curriculum and the university structure of the degree. The double challenge is justified by the transformation of the profession and the university itself: “The professional career (of the journalism graduate) will be more variable and will depend more on the ability to take initiative to create a structure of his own, different to the current

one, which is more based on the ability to fit into a position within rich and stable (journalistic) institutions” (Anderson, Bell and Shirky, 2014).

At the foreground is the academic content and the subjects included in the curriculum. In practice, it means choosing and deleting subjects completely or partially, proposing the type of internships, accrediting technological and innovative knowledge on a recurring basis and setting new learning methods.

The university system has opted for the identification of professional skills, technological competencies and other knowledge indicators to provide specific services, the management of applications and ways and attitudes to face the challenges of the profession (Álvarez Flores; Núñez Gómez; Olivares Santamarina, 2018). Competencies are reflected in four levels: knowledge, know how, know how to think and know how to be (Schena; Besalú; Singla, 2018). The White Paper on Undergraduate Degrees in Communication Sciences, prepared by the National Agency for Quality Assessment and Accreditation (ANECA) of Spain, includes this classification. It is organised into four levels of competencies and distributes them as follows: disciplinary knowledge (13 items), professional competencies (16 items), academic competencies (8 items) and other specific competencies (3 items), making up a total of 40 items (ANECA, 2004: 192-221). All of these items aim to ensure the theoretical, technical and cultural training of graduates in journalism and, in a transversal way, the development of students as integral social beings. The White Paper, prepared between 2003 and 2008, is a starting point for building a new working document in the face of the new journalistic scenario.

The ideal version of the professional journalist is not an aggregate of technological skills, but it does seem appropriate to include or expand certain skills that are typical of the new newsrooms and the news media industry. The review involves analysing the competencies acquired in undergraduate studies, discarding some of them, and including new professional, academic and specific ones. The literature is extensive and has been reviewed. The European Journalism Training Association, which brings together more than 60 European schools, states that the ten core competencies are: 1) understanding the social role of journalism; 2) finding issues of public interest for their journalistic production in different formats and platforms; 3) organise and plan journalistic work; 4) collect information; 5) select essential information; 6) structure the information based on journalistic criteria; 7) present the information with an appropriate and effective language; 8) evaluate and account for the journalistic process and work; 9) cooperate in an editorial team; 10) be able to work for a professional organisation or as freelance (Drok, 2013). In the professional field, the Poynter Institute (2014) identifies 37 competencies that are necessary for the professional exercise of journalism and proposes a transfer model between the industry and educational institutions, which is summarised in two points: 1) the ability to collect and produce information for further distribution in journalistic formats and media platforms, and 2) professional values and attitudes, including curiosity, good judgment about current affairs and critical thinking. From the perspective of the economy of the journalistic company, Newman (2010) adds the management of the journalistic product as a skill for the execution of journalistic projects, whether entrepreneurial or as part of the newsroom. Journalistic production adds here certain basic skills for the digital environment, such as: 1) ideation and creation, entrepreneurship, implementation, and relationship with audiences; and 2) experimentation with new solutions and technologically based journalistic services, but not necessarily the latest social network (Artero and Manfredi, 2015).

Creech and Mendelson point to an interesting debate about the acquisition of technology-related competencies and code learning. “Code learning, then, is not a matter related to technical skills, but a way to learn and manage change in the industry. By developing coding techniques, journalists become familiar with language and production and, more quickly, understand the philosophy of the new businesses that guide technology industries” (2015: 154). This approach leads to the reorganisation of the subjects’ practices and the establishment of a different newsroom model. As McAdams (2012) points out, “before we can teach journalism students about code, we have to bring them to a place where they can appreciate what journalists use it for”. This proposal is linked to Emily Bell’s reflection on freedom of expression in a technological world (Bell and Owen, 2017). In an environment of a digital nature, the traditional division between engineers and journalists makes no sense. Both professions, and both university degrees, need spaces of coexistence to test formulas that contribute to a more robust freedom of expression.

In short, the degree programme should include the management of entrepreneurship, the mastery of technical skills, the use of transmedia language and narratives, as well as the naturalisation of technological developments that shape the environment where the profession and academic career are developed.

The rethinking of the teaching of Journalism departs from a digital premise: the division of subjects according to platforms (radio, press, television) cannot continue, when the newsrooms and, above all, readers have diluted the boundaries between media platforms, formats and languages. For this reason, the proposal is to include these competencies among the learning objectives in a cross-curricular and professionalising fashion. On the contrary, innovation is maintaining a subject for every concern or technological solution, a comprehensive learning process. Technology at the service of journalism is the ability to explore the right platform to narrate an event, write, contextualise and explain with rigor and truthfulness. For Beckett, the technological debate is false, because it separates knowledge and current understanding from the tools that are used to connect with society (2013).

Technological expansion connects with the need to reconsider the relationship between the economic and commercial area with journalistic content (Rafter, 2016: 140). The rise of journalistic initiatives highlights the need to add basic content in the field of culture and entrepreneurial skills, either through specific courses and seminars for graduates or through programmes open to any member of the university community. This second option seems more apt for journalists, who are often disconnected from business areas in defence of their work. In his study, Ferrier (2013) indicates that the motivation to include items related to entrepreneurship is found in the generational change that affects the profession and the newsrooms, the decrease in the number of journalists hired directly by companies, the recovery of the editorial sector by journalists, the reduction of barriers to enter the business and the consequent profitability of niches and specialised segments, among other arguments. The barriers to teaching the fundamentals of entrepreneurship are recurring: the lack of interest on the part of students, the scarcity of teaching resources and the lack of institutional support, whether academic or from the journalism industry itself.

In the background, ethics and professional deontology appear as a constant guide. It is one of the points mentioned the most in academic and professional studies, which insist on the value of critical thinking with regards to news making, the relations of journalism with power and economic interests. The

inclusion of ethics has a direct consequence: the journalist as an agent of change for media literacy, from school to television. This function corresponds to the vocation of service to citizenship, teamwork and critical spirit against powers. This proposed training is placed along the line proposed by Pérez Tornero (2016), which is to bet on digital and media literacy that guarantees a critical and responsible use of media and communicative instruments. The ability to function critically, analytically and ethically is the competence that is repeated the most in the set of curricula (Tejedor and Cervi, 2017). Díaz del Campo (2013), in a research carried out in fourteen countries members of the European Union (Germany, Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Spain, Finland, France, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Netherlands, Portugal, the United Kingdom and Sweden), notes that the inclusion of ethics is essential in a hypothetical curricular model for the degree of journalism. The author points out that the exercise of journalism requires the educational institution to provide professionals with an ethical awareness.

In the second area, it is time to review the internal structure of journalism schools, their organisational criterion, their relationship with other degree programmes, the offer of postgraduate studies and continuing learning programmes, the knowledge transfer and industrial activity. Growth and expansion have created tensions between theory, academic vision and basic research, the application of knowledge, the implementation of newsrooms in universities, the relationship with market operators and the function higher education. Journalism schools are facing a new strategic environment in which professionals must learn new skills and change their mindset, to adapt to changes in the industry and in the university itself. Digital society is advancing faster and without a fixed horizon, which further complicates the construction of mid-term educational scenarios.

Drok (2013) organises the dilemmas faced by the school of journalism into four groups: 1) the core of the activity can be directed towards journalistic specialisation or the generalist approach to communication; 2) expert knowledge can privilege practical skills or academic study; 3) the orientation of internships and teachings can be towards conventional journalism (press, radio, television) or future journalism (entrepreneurship, mobile, podcasting); and 4) the mission itself, that is, whether the school should focus on what current journalism is or on what it aspires to be.

This path, which has been taken in parallel with the journalism industry, will need an academic language adapted to change, new teaching materials for the subjects and learning objectives, the promotion of cross-curricular projects, the incorporation of teachers from other disciplines and the digital production of journalistic content over the four years that the degree lasts (Webb, 2015; Tejedor and Cervi 2017). For this reason, there has been a proliferation of educational initiatives that introduce manuals (Galán, Aguado, Caro and Manfredi, 2017), methodological proposals (Peinado, Fernández Sande, Rodríguez Barba and Ortiz-Sobrino, 2015), critical reviews of the technological training (García Santamaría and Barranquero, 2014; Sánchez, Campos and Berrocal, 2015; Tramullas, 2016) and the promotion of journalistic entrepreneurship in the university field (Manfredi, 2015; Casero, Izquierdo and Doménech, 2016).

Innovation in university journalism studies faces two organisational constraints. On the one hand, the administrative tradition of regulation and detailed coding (credits, competencies, learning outcomes) reduces the ability to test, practice and experiment in the classroom. Counterintuitively, innovation must be envisioned and bound to a specific subject. This Fordist view of ECTS as pieces that can be replaced by each other, but not by third-party contributions from other undergraduate programmes. The same particularity is found in the Anglo-Saxon market; the Accrediting Council on Education in

Journalism and Mass Communications (ACEJMC) sets the standards for the content and administration of the centres that teach Journalism. The standard, by logic, tends to reduce innovation and risk-taking.

Pavlik (2013: 214-215) criticises this approach: “the road ahead for journalism and media education is not about adding new programmes, adding new courses or leading interdisciplinary projects” that allow students to get ready for continuous learning and for placing innovation at the centre. Not even the growing bet on entrepreneurial journalism is a guarantee of innovation or change in university structures. For Naldi and Picard (2012), the teaching of entrepreneurial and innovative practices is structured on practices and experiences that are already successful and are recognised in the news media market. There is little focus on structural innovation that reveals a kind of “training myopia” that bases its success on expectations -like journalistic start-ups do- and experiences that have worked on other projects. The ability to adapt journalistic strategies and practices are essential for sustainability. This behaviour finds parallelism in the University, to the extent that the curricula, academic incentives and research projects privilege the experiences and proposals undertaken over the proposals for the future. Carlson and Usher (2016) estimate that journalistic start-ups innovate less than expected because they need to achieve profitability immediately and opt for classic models of journalistic activity.

On the other hand, the Humboldtian research tradition, in the field, with projects rather than isolated milestones clashes with the dynamics of quality assessment agencies. Once again, the principle of legal certainty rules here over experimentation, lab culture and the testing of new communication practices. Meanwhile, the user explores, tests and shares without concern about the canons of journalism. Professor Ramón Salaverría (2015: 225) argues that the challenge of education, research and the journalism industry is the ability to align interests to be able to “implement applied research projects, aimed at the effective transfer of knowledge from the university to the industry, and vice versa”.

The transfer connects with the traditional journalistic profession, not with university degrees. It advocates the aligning of subjects that conform to a kind of permanent newsroom, led by associate professors with experience in the selection, publication and dissemination of current news. This approach to the reality of writing requires, on the part of the industry, the multiplication of knowledge and technology transfer activities. The industry and the university need to listen to each other more and work on joint projects (Küng, 2016; Remler, Waisamen, Gabor; 2014), to improve journalism degrees and the attention to continuing training through formulas that are already known in other contexts: labs (García, Carvajal, Arias and De Lara, 2018), innovation ecosystems, support for start-ups and spin-offs, publication of dissertations, contests of ideas for new graduates, current-affair monitoring programmes, production of hybrid and transmedia contents, paid internships, among other measures.

Schools that offer the degree of Journalism must make strategic decisions that will influence their immediate development. Jan Schaffer (2016) summarises these dilemmas. They must balance the teaching of skills and technologies with the classic journalistic criteria. Certain contents must be removed because the curriculum is limited. Employability must be found, learned and promoted in new sectors not linked to news-making. Finally, journalism schools must encourage teachers to acquire many of these aforementioned competencies by themselves and to form mixed teams of teachers, researchers and professionals to help shape this new curriculum that is being demanded.

5. Discussion and conclusions

The research results have allowed us to achieve the objectives proposed initially, which were to review the state of journalistic innovation, summarise the approaches that structure the research, establish key concepts and propose new avenues of research. Journalism and the new journalisms are facing an accelerated challenge. The debate cannot continue to be anchored in the paradigm shift, the influence of digitisation and the arrival of the mobile. All these ideas already belong to the ecosystem of media production and consumption and, particularly, to the one related to news and other ways of doing journalism. Journalism is digital in its consumption, practice and execution. The longer it takes to take assume the new context, the longer people will be talking of “new journalism”, as if it had not already come into our lives. It is therefore preferable to come up with a dynamic in which innovation and digital transformation constitute a culture and a practice, not a regulation that must be complied with. A journalism that already talks about artificial intelligence, blockchain, smart speakers, virtual reality and augmented reality (Newman, 2019).

This article aims to contribute to the new journalistic agenda on two levels. At the professional level, the value of journalism remains the same: to tell truthful, public-interest and community-service stories. On these foundations, it is worth exploring new genres that allow us to shift the focus from news production to clickbait and bring those efforts back into a more leisure-oriented journalism (Drok and Hermans, 2015; and Craig, 2015). In an environment where artificial intelligence will take care of routine coverages (sports results, stock quotes) and data verification (Hansen *et al.*, 2017), journalism recovers its mission in society with a better service based on the explanation of the context in which the news is born, the investigation of new topics, the use of narratives based on the personal style of the journalist and the implications for society (Patterson, 2013).

In the academic sphere, it is appropriate to review current methods and to focus on the cross-curricular learning of competencies and skills. The epitome of educational transformation is the final course project: the dissertation (Noguera, 2015). It should be the cover letter of the student’s journalistic vocation, a kind of great report on a matter of public interest. The academic proposal resembles the creation of a digital portfolio -whether or not it has a subsequent analogue life- that allows students to incorporate their advances, their results, their class work and other continued education materials. The pedagogy that is needed considers innovation, entrepreneurship and technology as substantial elements of learning and not as stamps on a traditional teaching plan. It is necessary to understand innovation as a social process and not as the implementation of a technology or social network (Wagemans, Witschge, Deuze, 2016). In its connection with the industry, this subject has to catalyse innovation through the local and regional press, serve as a space for new narratives and the labs of the journalistic company, explore applications for journalistic purposes, promote connection with other disciplines existing at the University and promote the incubation of entrepreneurial projects, in the form of spin-offs.

To overcome these shortcomings, two tangible solutions are proposed. The first is to increase the number of elective subjects, while maintaining the core of the curricula, to facilitate the adaptation of contents and techniques without altering the functioning of university institutions. The second solution connects with the first, because it is the opening of such electivity to the idea of knowledge transfer, that is, the development of learning objectives connected with journalistic companies and

organisations. In short, in a system of 240 ECTS, it is unrealistic to find full consensus. Rather, this text seeks to point out some trends that could serve in the construction of a curriculum that is adapted to the new journalism and integrates technology and digitisation as a cross-curricular issue, not enclosed in subjects worth 6 ECTS.

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