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JOURNALISM, REPRESENTATION AND THE PUBLIC SPHERE

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New challenges for journalism education. A contribution to UNESCO politics

Bertrand Cabedoche

Abstract

Never before in the world's history has the need for worldwide journalism education been so pressing as it is now as we enter the third millennium. Already in the 1980s, the explosion of Asian media and the corresponding increase in commercial media had created an increased demand for certificated courses in journalism. In the course of the 1990s, it was primarily the Middle East and Africa that demonstrated such needs. And by the year 2000, courses in journalism education had extended over the entire planet, with spectacular growth rates in China and India.

Keywords: journalism, education, centers of excellence, UNESCO policies

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Against the background of the increasing demand for journalism training worldwide, many countries have begun to consider how to develop journalism education further. In so doing, journalism has been confirmed as a legitimate field of research, and interest has also focussed on the theoretical dimensions of journalism education (Miege, 2006; Cabedoche, 2009; Banda, 2013). These developments were also highlighted in the findings of a report published in October 2005 by the Brazilian National Council for Scientific Research and Development (Banda and Schmitz Weiss, 2013).

In Singapore 2007, The First World Congress on Journalism Education confirmed the preferred direction of development:

Journalism should serve the public in many important ways, but it can only do so if its practitioners have mastered an increasingly complex body of knowledge and specialised skills. Above all, to be a responsible journalist must involve an informed ethical commitment to the public. This commitment must include an understanding of and deep appreciation for the role that journalism plays in the formation, enhancement and perpetuation of an informed society.

Two years later, that analysis was reinforced during the second World Congress on Journalism Education in South Africa:

“Journalism education needs to draw on, interact with and contribute to other forms of knowledge in the University” (Nordenstreng, 2010).

UNESCO has played a significant role in these developments, particularly in its support of programmes in journalism training in Africa.

1. UNESCO as a promoter of responsible journalism

In what ways can journalism education continue to develop? This question has continued to be debated within UNESCO, especially in the years following the UN decision in 2007 to create a specialized agency to foster centres of excellence in journalism training in Africa. As a result of this initiative, thirty national schools of journalism were approached, with a view to them forming a ‘pool’ of excellence. UNESCO played a further role in this development by providing a training guide with course outlines. These were quickly deemed essential, especially since it was felt that journalistic education should not simply be reduced to a practical training issue, but should be extended to include the promotion of human rights and societal values.

In addition to the African countries that have spearheaded the UNESCO programme to create new course contents or to further develop existing courses, the programme has steadily attracted more followers. The latter have all been inspired by a curricular model which could form an important resource

in the reconstruction of their own educational programmes. In 2011, a large number of journalism institutions in Afghanistan, China, Guyana, Iran, Jamaica, Lesotho, Mauritius, Mexico, Mongolia, Pakistan, Rwanda, South Africa and Tanzania, either adapted, or were in the process of adapting, this model. Gabon, Congo, Uzbekistan and Myanmar had also expressed interest in participating in this initiative. At the end of the programme in 2012, UNESCO was involved in some seventy journalism training institutions in more than sixty countries, all of whom professed that the model provided suitable training in multiple linguistic, social and cultural contexts. By 16 May 2012, the website of UNESCO had recorded 12,223 downloads of its publication via platforms in the following languages: Spanish, Nepali, English, Arabic, Chinese, French, Portuguese and Russian (Banda and Schmitz Weiss, 2013).

In 2012, UNESCO came up with a further recommendation - one that was made jointly by three representatives of Orbicom, the world Network of UNESCO Chairs and the UNESCO think-tank responsible for communication issues. The recommendation was that a more inclusive and holistic developmental approach should be adopted, after the discovery that so many promises had been broken by the so-called School of Development (Lafrance, Lulan Rico Sotelo, 2006). Since 2001 there has been a huge demand for the programme from many other countries, including new journalism training centers in Afghanistan, China, Guyana, Iran, Jamaica, Lesotho, Mauritius, Mexico, Mongolia, Pakistan, Rwanda, South Africa and Tanzania.

For this purpose, an initial preparatory workshop was organised, which took place on 8 August 2012 in Chicago at the Convention of the Association for Journalism Education and Mass Communication. This was followed by the meeting of a specific UNESCO panel concerned with universalism in journalism education. This took place on September 21, 2012 in Istanbul, during the fourth European Conference on Communication of the European Communication Research and Education Association (ECREA). As confirmed in 2010 during the World Congress on Journalism Education in South Africa, the general principles that had guided the first programme from 2007 to 2012 again characterized the spirit of the new programme that would run from 2013 to 2017: the aim would be to combine theoretical and practical training issues in the most objective way whilst raising the general level of excellence. The construction of the 2007 model was indeed part of the expectations of 96 international journalism schools, including the Journet, Theophrastus and Orbicom networks and also African academic experts. All felt it necessary to go beyond corporatism, rather than to follow the advice and suggestions provided by media professionals, whose meta-discourse is so often overly prescriptive and obsessively concerned with the production of "little soldiers of journal-

ism". Following the publication of the first draft, journalists themselves were consulted and asked to assess the feasibility of the programme and to propose possible adaptations to the proposed training programmes.

In 2013, in an attempt at further consolidation, a new plan was developed, intended to provide a revised structure to the programme. This was the result of an international project which involved researchers from Australia, Benin, Bulgaria, Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Ghana, India, Lebanon, Morocco, Qatar, Singapore, South Africa and United States. Following these discussions, a number of more specialized skill requirements were identified. The aim was to put learners in a position to understand global issues such as: 1) how to meet the challenges of the content industries, since their links with the communications industries are no longer as obvious as they once were and 2) how to stimulate public debates and participate in the establishment of a social public sphere that would be stripped of exacerbated mediacentrism. An additional need identified was that of encouraging more analytical thinking which placed greater emphasis on ethical issues (Claussen, 2012).

Finally, the 195 member states of UNESCO agreed on a set of minimum standards, ones that would be likely to develop the critical ways of thinking necessary to combat certain forms of exploitation and injustice in the world and to make them more visible. Ten courses have been selected, ones that incorporate fundamental emerging issues. This will lead to the drafting of ten curricula in the new programme which will adopt multidisciplinary approaches. These will include media sustainability ("concerned with the factors needed for independent media to develop, flourish, and endure so they can make contributions to the benefit of society"); data journalism ("considered as a highly specialized branch of investigative reporting but it can also be put to good use in every journalism"); intercultural journalism ("alerting journalism against the patchwork of a mosaic culture"); community radio journalism ("a counter-movement for community-based media, created by the commercialization of media across the globe"); global journalism ("concerned with the principles and practice of journalism on a global platform, and in local cultural contexts"); science journalism ("incorporating bioethics with its recent developments over the past three decades in science and technology, classic biomedical problems, environmental issues..."); gender and journalism ("analyzing the way strategic gender analysis can be enlisted in journalism production"); humanitarian journalism ("introducing critical debates on the media and the political economy of humanitarian interventions involving state and civil society actors"); reporting human trafficking ("the awareness of journalists as one of the first steps to be taken in the fight against it"); safety and journalism ("a help for journalists to identify potential risks, including digital risks and learning safe protocols"). Each one of these is written by a well-known researcher who has been selected for his or her knowledge of the subject area in question. The

contributions reflect the disciplinary and geographical origin of a specific socio-cultural point of view, in a project aimed at unifying these perspectives and sharing a journalism education programme design¹. Those who contributed to this programme had to obey strict specifications and there was a clear determination that everything should have a sound academic foundation, particularly in the field of Humanities and Social Sciences. More specifically, the materials had to provide a stimulus for further reflection, rather than act as a rigid model. The specifications required the integration of local case studies, which were to be expanded beyond their original context in order to touch on issues of globalization. What was also required was a readiness to respect gender issues and to make texts widely accessible: to journalism educators, to media professionals, to policy makers and to members of the general public. Finally, there was the need to introduce some consideration of theoretical issues, with a strong educational commitment, rather than just present a prescriptive list of dos and don'ts ("We do not know how far the comparison can work").

At the end of the essays, two proposed training modules were assessed by experienced media professionals. Given the success of the formula, UNESCO is now arranging for the material to be translated into several different languages, following the appearance of the first English version (Bamba, 2013). We also arranged for the production of a French version, approved in early 2014.

In addition to recommendations for the training of facilitators, we believe it desirable to combine this aspect of the work with some thoughts on the possible future course of research into journalism: for example, an assessment of the final report in 2014 of the European Science Foundation (European Science Foundation, 2014), and our contribution as key note speaker at the first forum of the Arab Association on Communication Science, AACS, in Beirut, 5-6 December 2014.

2. Future research should focus on the education of journalists

Focusing on the education of journalists should be considered an obvious issue. As some recent contributions have reminded us, it is possible to speak of a very close link between questioning the public sphere and focusing on media representations. It is arguably the case that without free media, the public sphere would not exist, therefore the state of media should be considered *ipso facto* to be in effect an assessment of the public sphere and of the debates which are set in train by its existence. In European democracies, but also in many other forms of government, the public sphere is often closely associated with the activities of the printed press. (Miège, 2010).

There are, in fact, - in addition to the theory of agenda setting – many other theories which confirm this point (McCombs and Shaw, 1972). For example, as the journalist and academic Timothy Garton Ash, the Director of European Studies at St. Antony's College (Oxford University), has claimed, it is journalists who produce the first draft of history. Noting that “more and more researchers believe what they read in the papers,” Garton Ash writes that he is actually working to end the absurdity of a supposed Cold War between the two worlds and rehabilitate each. Responding to postmodernism and assuming a positivist theoretical position, the author draws a clear boundary between, on the one hand, Literature, and History, as an academic discipline and Journalism, on the other hand; i.e. between Truth and Untruth, fiction and non-fiction (Garton Ash, 2001).

I have already discussed this assertion in an earlier contribution (Cabedoche, 2003), that provides some criticism of mediacentrism (Schlesinger, 1992). We already have a good idea of what is meant by the construction of a so-called generalized public relationship model: namely that in the process of increasing ‘informationalization’ in which our contemporary societies are actually developing, more and more social actors are producing public information out of traditional media.

However, the media are at the core of each of these different models: The Opinion Press model; The Commercial Mass Media model; The General and Audiovisual Media model; The Generalized Public Relationship model. Each of these models involves some specific type of audience/citizen relationship and of a relationship with media (Miège, 1996: 166). Even with the Social Media model, the mainstream mass media are still regarded as setting the agenda, because they try to encompass everything that could be socially shared, and provide an opportunity to produce information. It is therefore easy to understand why managers of established mainstream media are constantly seeking to exploit all the latest technical innovations, in order to control, manage and organise (Miège, 2007: 116). The same phenomenon was observed with respect to the digital press in the late 1990s, when the objective was both to prevent a proliferation of offers and to implement editorial forms that were close to the print press (Salles, 2010). Especially in the case of the audiovisual media, it is the mainstream media that have continued to define the agenda. Television is often regarded as the primary definer in western (Casanova, 1996) and in southern societies (Cabedoche, 2013), because of attractiveness and genuineness effects of journalist discourses (Charaudeau, 1997), and the screen sanctification (Dayan and Katz, 1996). The phenomenon of fragmentation of the public sphere has not really changed the situation, but has merely confirmed the long-standing observation that the emergence of a new Information and Communication Technology never leads to a replacement of the previous ones. In fact, media studies has always mobilized search, even in lands

where there is not a tradition of axiomatic grouping in terms of media studies. (e.g. in France, where most researchers do not want to be defined by the object but by their concepts and theories).

Consideration of the media is one of the characteristics of the various theoretical schools, beyond the radical opposition they have shown: an empirical functionalist school with Lasswell developed the propagandist role of the media in the promotion of democracy (Lasswell, 1948); a diffusionist school with Lerner demonstrated the role of mass media in the appropriation of modernization behaviors in Turkey, Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, and Egypt (Lerner, 1958); the theory of cultural imperialism, as defined by Herbert Schiller tried to explain “[...] the sum of processes by which a society is built into the modern global system and how its dominant élite is attracted, pushed, and sometimes corrupted, forced to model social institutions, for they adopt, or even promote, the values and structures of the dominant center of the system” (Schiller, 1976). Herbert Marcuse focused too on media to rehabilitate the Marxist concept of alienation (Marcuse, 1963). With Cultural Studies, the focus moved to the issue of reception, and strategies people use to negotiate with mass media (Ang, 1985). Mediation theories provided a profoundly dialectical reading of the interactions between mass culture, popular and national public and social relationships (Martín-Barbero, 2002), etc.

Now, Media Studies is mobilizing research works with additional theoretical constructions: e.g. the Theory of cultural industries using the development of case studies, sector by sector; the focus of research works on the appropriation of ICTs; the discussion of public spheres, revealing the actors’ performance and the role of media, including TV. For example, Peter Dahlgren has developed a critique of Jürgen Habermas concept: speaking about the public sphere, there is now a tension between a unitary model and a plural model. The Swedish researcher argues for a dynamic and pluralistic conception of public sphere animated by the interaction between a dominant public sphere and multiple alternative public spheres, in order not to “marginalize and suppress the diversity of complex societies” (Dahlgren, 2005).

In recent years, the focus on the media has been accelerated by the development of institutional references and official reports on Media Education; Journalists Education; the Regulation of information; the Internet governance. In parallel, the development of academic education has opened new fields of debate. Some are methodological issues: analysis of the uses and practices in the sectors of information; content analysis; adequacy of tools, concepts, theories with regard to history and socio-cultural environments. Others relate to contemporary issues such as: Do we still require academic courses for the education of journalists?; What contribution does constructivism make to journalism education?; How should we understand the competition between classic and social media?; What is the role of ICT and transnational media

in social change?; What could be the place of the nation-state regarding the regional strategies and even continental strategies of operators in the field of audiovisual and telecommunications?; How can issues of copyright, cyber-crime and media coverage of terrorism be regulated? What new concepts can be developed that take into account the increasing interpenetration of public and private spheres? Do we need a new definition of transparency and corporate governance?

In other words, these questions also focus on the role of knowledge in our societies: What about the mosaic culture (anyone gets anything, anyhow, anywhere and calls it knowledge) of which Moles spoke some fifty years ago (Moles, 1967); or what about the role of pedagogy when some professionals try to impose their ideas on journalists' education against the knowledge and recommendations of academic researchers (Miège, 2007; Cabedoche, 2009).

Media studies is still important for an understanding of the fundamental processes of both society and, more generally, of the human condition. Recent societal characteristics are now changing very profoundly:

1. There is an increasing digitalization of figures, texts, sounds, images, and this provides a common technology platform for telecommunications, ICT and media.
2. There is an increasing media globalization, that this offers instant, immediate and interactive communication, and in parallel, needs to identify many different, complex processes, which are both technological and social processes. This warns against the temptation to develop general principles and deterministic explanations (e.g. the illusion of a Facebook revolution in Arab countries). Paradoxically, this reveals the increasing power of the dominant transnational economic actors, while also demonstrating the opportunities for civic engagement and participation, and for creative practices in content production and consumption of digital formats.
3. There is increasing merchandization when the main drivers of digitization and globalization of the media are commercial companies. If communication is both a human capacity and a generic need, its subordination to "market forces" worldwide presents the risk that the substance of our society will be subordinated to the global market place.

For these reasons, researching on social issues increasingly supposes that media processes be taken into consideration: the media define the framework for matters of public debate; the media interrogate culture, working life, identity; actors of political, economic, religious, cultural, scientific power internalize the media and journalists' logic, to legitimize their actions or increase their power. Finally, without falling into mediacentrism, an understanding of the media process and journalists' backgrounds is essential for an understanding of the ways in which societies and cultures are maintained and developed through intangible forms of production.

3. Conclusion

All the researchers who, at the request of UNESCO, produced the curricular materials for the centres of excellence on journalism education, were united in a common attempt:

- to consider how to enhance opportunities for civic and informational interaction outside the mainstream media (communicative action), and not to fall into social determinism;
- to analyze how increasing informationalisation provides opportunities for social actors (strategic action) between classical mainstream media and social media, on national and transnational levels, including rigid political spheres;
- to identify uses and practices, for example, how common discourses re-integrate technological determinism (See the so-called Facebook revolution, in Arab countries), and to promote links between the media and academic research, Cabedoche, 2013);
- to identify market trends and media industries, and their impact on cultures
- to identify public policies and their autonomy when faced by the requests of the market and the territorial extension of the operators' strategies, for example, private actors' telecommunications
- to clearly distinguish research work from marketing approaches regarding media and consumer practices, and to put them in perspective with the construction of public policies.

To accomplish this, there are a number of convergent recommendations. First and foremost, priority should be given to *in situ* and *pro tempore* approaches. For example, the digital divide is also connected to one's own experience: this suggests that a distinction should be made between perceptions and "realities" of this divide. There should be a discussion about the relation between consumption and income. This means one has to distinguish between "interstitial man" (Hall, 1991), open to every culture and able to adapt, and "immobile man", flooded in liquid societies (Bauman, 200).

Secondly, communication researchers recommend not reducing social to communication: if this is not done, the risk might be to postulate an equivalence between communication and the social, as if the fact that communication exists everywhere allows one to conclude that everything is communication. Every aspect of social life presupposes the existence and the operation of complex communication systems - but this does not automatically lead one to conclude that it is possible to analyze social complexity just from communication (Miège and Tremblay, 1998: 11-25).

One still needs to focus on transdisciplinary approaches (Media Studies constitutes a field and not a discipline!), and to produce work that takes a longitudinal approach: promoting a historical approach over a longer period allows one to abandon short term opportunism (the domination of journalists news), and consider it impossible to understand objects of information and communication sciences without looking back at the past, including the distant past. This is in response to an epistemological requirement, i.e. to contest the apparent ‘normality’ of the present, and to examine the legacy of the past in the structuring of this present (Bautier, 2007: 197).

Finally, this presupposes a focus on comparative studies, in order to identify long term trends instead of reducing research work to a simple juxtaposition of case studies. And, of course, this needs international research collaborations (e.g. GDRI Commed; AACS; ECREA; ICA; AIERI; European Science Foundation; UNESCO, etc).

Note

1 We were the author of the Intercultural journalism curricula.

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Biography

Bertrand Cabedoche is Professor of information and communication sciences, UNESCO chair-holder on International Communication at the University of Grenoble, member of the executive board of ORBICOM (Montréal). Docteur d'état in political sciences (1987), graduate of the Higher School of Journalism of Lille (1978), Bertrand Cabedoche is now in charge of the international development of GRESEC, a well-known French academic research team in the field of information and communication, and responsible of the International development of the Doctoral School of University of Grenoble. He is member too of the board of advisors of the European Communication Research and Education Association (ECREA). In december 2012, proposed by Mrs Irina Bokova, General Director of UNESCO, he was nominated as the president of the global network Orbicom (UNESCO chairs in Communication). As a researcher, he has worked (1992-1996) on the representations of the European Union in the main member states' newspapers for FUNDESCO, Fundación para el desarrollo de la Comunicación (Madrid). He has also been working on media discourses on North-South relations since the 1970s on the field of international information (One of his first scientific works has been quoted in the famous UNESCO MacBride report end of the 70's). And for a more recent time, he has been working on the ways societies are constructed when they become the subject of public (polemic) debates (for instance in the case of energies; nanotechnologies; Cultural Diversity and Cultural; Information and Communication Industries; ICTs and social change), with the advantage of a long professional experience last three past decades as a journalist in France and Canada (chief editor), than as an international consultant for multinational organisations. Among numerous scientific publications (in France, Canada, UK, Germany, Spain, Romania, Brazil, Lebanon, Tunisia, Madagascar, DRC, Russia, United States and China), he is the author of *Les chrétiens et le tiers-monde. Pour une fidélité critique* [Christians and the Third World. Critics and Loyalty], Paris: Karthala, 1990 and *Ce nucléaire qu'on nous montre. Construire la socialité dans le débat sur les énergies* [The nuclear show. Building sociality on public debates about energies], Paris: L'Harmattan, 2003. Bertrand Cabedoche has been invited to organise seminars or give lectures in 50 universities, all over the world.

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