

**Professional Journalism Education in Algeria:
Reality and challenges**

تعليم وتكوين الصحافة المهنية في الجزائر
الواقع والتحديات

Yakoub Badji¹, Yevhen Tsymbalenko²

^{1/2}Taras Shevchenko National University, Ukraine

Mail : yakoubbadji@hotmail.com

Mail : e.tsymbalenko@knu.ua

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Abstract:

This paper intends to examine the educational system of journalism in Algeria as the academic curricula adopted in universities to prepare students for successful careers and professional journalism practice. The study highlights the stages of the development of journalism curricula as the accredited teaching and training models. For this reason, the survey method was used as a tool to collect data. Academics in the field of media and journalists were considered in order to assess: the role of practical training and the curricula of journalism implemented in higher education institutions. The study findings prove the following hypothesis: the systematic curriculum and high-quality internships play a fundamental role in forming professional journalists in Algerian academic settings.

KeyWords: Algerian media; journalism education; journalism curriculum.

الملخص:

تهدف هذه الورقة الى دراسة النظام التعليمي للصحافة في الجزائر وكذلك المناهج الأكاديمية المعتمدة في الجامعات الجزائرية لإعداد طلبة مؤهلين وصحفيين محترفين للمهنة. كما تسلط الدراسة الضوء على مراحل تطور التدريس الاعلامي والنماذج المعتمدة في التدريب في الجامعات الجزائرية. لهذا السبب، تم استخدام طريقة المسح كأداة لجمع البيانات على مجموعة من الأكاديميين في مجال إعلامي والعديد من الصحفيين من أجل تقييم: المناهج المطبقة في مؤسسات التعليم العالي و النشاط التدريبي للطلبة الصحافة. أثبتت نتائج الدراسة الفرضية التالية: المناهج التعليمية عالية الجودة والتدريب الداخلي تلعب دورًا أساسيًا في تكوين صحفيين محترفين في الأوساط الأكاديمية الجزائرية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الإعلام الجزائري؛ المناهج التربوية؛ تعليم الصحافة.

Introduction:

In many countries, the discourse about journalism education is tightly bound to the idea of strengthening democracy. For the existence of a democratic society, pluralism of media is considered as a crucial element; therefore, pluralism is seen to be vital in the education systems as well. A high standard of media education is fundamental because of citizens' strong need for reliable information from professional journalists about daily changes and their involvement in the underlying decision-making process. Even media owners have accepted the fact that journalists should be properly trained and expected to have learnt before entering the media industry.

For a young country as Algeria which has new changes after the popular revolution in 2019, the media sphere witnessed several violations and infringements through some journalists that opened the way to many

questions about their professionalism, competence, scientific and educational level, or the way they have been selected to be employed. The questions raised a deep debate about the quality of Algerian higher education universities and the effectiveness of educational curricula for journalism students. Without losing sight, the time allotted for training and development of skills and carrier acquired during each semester of the educational, despite the numerous reforms for education system undertaken by the Algerian state since the independence in 1962 to promote education, yet it faces many challenges in order to increase the level of students.

The research takes a stand by the hypothesis that the Efficient Educational curriculum and high quality internships are the foundation of formation for a professional Algerian journalist. To examine this hypothesis, we came up with following research questions:

RQ 1. Does the Educational curriculum in the Algerian universities help students to improve journalism skills?

RQ 2. To What extent journalism internships are important for influencing professional skills to journalism students?

RQ 3. Is there any link between the internships and the career success jobs of journalism students in Algeria?

The aim of this study is to analyse how Algerian universities prepare students of journalism for successful careers and professional practice.

To achieve this aim; there have to be done the following tasks:

1. To consider the existing Education curriculum and approaches professional journalism in Algeria.

2. To study and assess the best methods of study of Algerian universities.
3. To analyse how Algerian universities support the idea of preparing students to successful careers in professional journalism.

2. Research Methods

One of the main aims of this study is to find out how Algerian journalism education supports the idea of preparing students for successful careers and skills in journalism sphere. For this reason, we conducted an online survey through social media “Facebook” for teachers in the media and communication field and journalists across the universities of the country and journalists; regarding how they evaluate the role of education and practical trainings during the university education in Algeria. The type of e-surveying was web-based survey “generally “Jansen et al” (2007) defined as “an electronic survey as "one in which a computer plays a major role in both the delivery of a survey to potential respondents and the collection of survey data from actual respondents. The method of electronic surveying was selected due to its main features:

- 1) Ease of data gathering (Google Forms templates were used to create a questionnaire);
- 2) Automation in data input and handling, flexibility of design (the responses are automatically stored in a survey database, providing hassle-free handling of data and a smaller possibility of data errors);
- 3) High reliability, validity and generalizability (including high level of privacy and anonymity of respondents (Jansen, 2006:1-8).

As the survey was online and could be taken from any computer with Internet access, participation was confidential and offered no risk to the participants. Outliers and cases with missing values were removed prior to the analysis, leaving the study with a final sample of 25 participants. Their average age is between 29 and 65 years old, the majority has working experience in journalism filed more than 10 years (up to 5 years – almost 52 percent, from 5 to 10 years – about 48 percent). No gender related information were taken into consideration while analysis.

3. Problem Definition and Literature Review

The idea of achieving better journalism by giving journalists a college or university education was born in the United States in the second half of the nineteenth century (Loffelholz, 2008: 49). Since then, journalism education and training programs have expanded exponentially at all universities around the world; especially in democratic systems, which are characterized by great a digital revolution ; as they seek to form professional journalists who must involve an informed ethical commitment to the public and for the profession. 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. This has been emphasized by UNESCO, its foreword to Model Curricula for Journalism Education for Developing Countries & Emerging Democracies States (Curran, 2005: 5). *“That journalism, and the educational programmes that enable individuals to practice and upgrade their journalistic skills, are essential tools for the underpinning of key democratic principles that are fundamental to the development of every country.”* Improving the quality and skills of journalists can only be achieved through professional education

by teaching a professional in an educational curriculum that allows the development of their skills. It is perceived as the “*one way in which society can intervene to influence the development of journalism*” (Curran, 2000: 3-8). In other words, the type of education that journalists receive during their course is a picture of their career and professionalization in their future. Ivor Shapiro’s essay, for example, explicitly questions whether the main goal of journalism programs is, or should be, to prepare students for careers as professional journalists. “Journalism is an approach to knowledge, not just a job,” he writes, “and journalism education is therefore about teaching a distinctive epistemology that enjoys broad professional utility.”

Furthermore in the First World Congress on Journalism Education in Singapore 2007 confirmed that 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(Nordenstreng,2010:5-7).to illustrate this cause ; We can say the journalism education It is a process that aims to prepare the knowledge and technical competencies and qualifications for the learners; Through educational curriculums offered at universities, Provided that they are professionally practiced in the field, the duration of these training or formation shall be four years or more.

3.1 Algeria journalism education experience:

Algeria is one of the leading Arab countries in the field of journalism education. However after the independence in 1962 from French

colonization, directly in 1964 witnessed the creation of the first National Journalism School in the capital of Algeria; which had seen the first courses of media at the beginning of the teaching in the sphere of journalism. the school has experienced an era characterized by the existence of a political system that adopts the socialist orientation; it had worked under the banner of the socialist state, Which is one of the most important features in the media field is the subordination of the media to Algerian state .this trend is in the milestones of the media policy that coincided with the issuance of the document "National Charter" as it indicated the strategic role of the media in serving development goals; It also called for the necessity of issuing laws and legislations that properly define the role of the press, radio, television and cinema in media sphere, and attention to training in the field of journalism, as this Charter called the needs for legislation to define properly the role of the press, radio, television, cinema and pay interest in training in the field of media ; providing the necessary media cadres to keep up with the development plan and satisfy the various needs of the masses objective and professional media.

This period was distinguished by a few numbers of students with the resorting of Ministry of Information initially to a group of foreign and Arab competencies educators as France, Belgium, even from some Arab countries. This explains the distinction between the first courses in journalism; which was distinguished by a high and good composition; which later becomes leadership responsibilities in various media institutions and various sensitive positions in the Algerian state (Shatah, 2012: 131-143).

The teaching system in the National School of Journalism was distinguished between learning and training course. However the

circumstances of that stage have helped, especially in view of the high needs of Algerian media institutions for journalism cadres, which had made many students since the first year; studying and working in Media Company. Today this situation does not excite as the state of saturation that characterizes in media industry and the changes that have taken place in the media profession as a result of the remarkable development of communication and information technologies.

The system of study in the field of journalism and information was limited in baccalaureate level, and the prevailing trend was to teach students for the graduation of media cadres filling the vacuum in media institutions in particular and in the Algerian media scene, in general, that justifies that the National School of journalism was established under the Ministry of Information, which does not task of high-ranking and scientific research began to take attention for research and higher academic formation in the mid-1970s, when the graduate students began to receive postgraduate degrees abroad the country. Then the high school of journalism becomes the Institute of political and Media Sciences then the Institute of Media and Communication Sciences

After more than thirty years of media teaching at the high school of journalism, in 1990s witnessed the opening of institutes and departments for teaching mass communication and journalism in numerous towns in Algeria. the beginning with the University of Annaba, which cared in public relations and communication, then opened a department at the University of Oran, University of Mstaghanem, then department of information and communication at University of Constantine. statistics today's indicate that there are more than 15 departments of information and communication

sciences at various Algerian universities, as well as a national high school of journalism and media science, which opened in the current year (2010/2009)(Nadia,2018:84-86).While private schools are beginning to teach students special courses in mass communication and journalism sphere.

Due to the differences that have been in the old system of study as structures and organization of institutions, and at the Pedagogy and scientific level of formation(Munis,2018: 20).furthermore the academic problems ; the higher education was faced such as the failure of students to succeed, and the difficulty of the system of assessment, transition, and the reduction of quality and efficiency of framing as well as the lack of necessary knowledge integration between scientific units; Algeria has adopted a new reform strategy, drawn from Western experiences, represented in the new higher education system “ LMD ” (Bachelor, Master, doctorate) it is a global project that claims for competition in the acquisition of knowledge by offering qualitative composition which allows the universities to open up to the dynamic and changing economic periphery for students by adopting quality standards in composition through linking universities to economic institutions and company .the new system LMD as an alternative to the classical system of information and communication science education under the Executive Decree dated 371-04 in 21 November 2004,(Official Journal: 2004).This system allows the student to choose the typical course; And the acquisition of a general cultures, individual or group projects,Learn ways to collective work . And how to use documentation resources, as well as control over for foreign languages (MHES, 2013:03)moreover the Algerian system of education now supported a national curricular framework as The duration of study in Bachelor's degree are 06 semesters it contained a

common 04 semesters, in one of the following specialties: Institutional contact, audio-visual, written press, public relations, communication. This level is crowned by the Bachelor's degree (baeki, 2011:30-28).

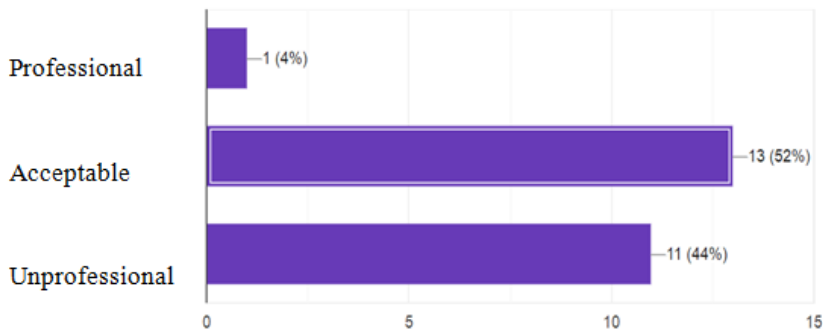
This is provided in the article N° 16 from the LMD system by the following text: "Training routes to obtain a bachelor's degree are organized into 06 semesters, which includes three stages:

- *The first stage represents: the learning, adapting, and discovering the university life and the Primary principles for the specialization of information and communication sciences.*
- *The second stage represents: the depth, consolidation of knowledge and gradual direction*
- *The third stage represents the specialization: It allows for the acquisition of knowledge and qualifications in the specialization of information and communication sciences.*

As well as the duration of the formation of a Master's degree: is 04 semesters in one of the disciplines mentioned in the Bachelor's degree. Then the time of study in a doctorate degree is 06 semesters ending in a discussion of a thesis in one of the previous specialties (Pedagogy Guide, 2012:20-24).

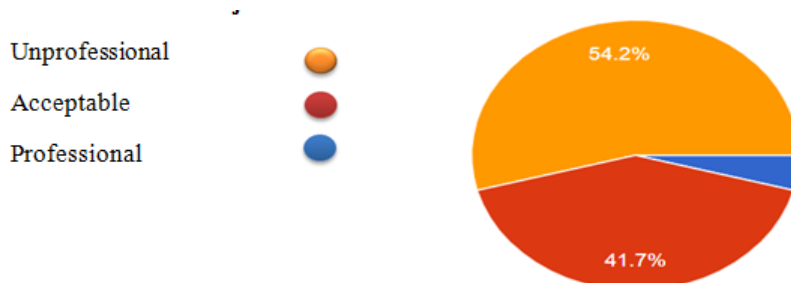
4. Results and Discussion

Fig 1. Summary of responses regarding how are the curriculum and educational programs for journalism students in Algeria.



Questionnaire respondents 52 percent expressed that the curriculum and educational programs for journalism students in Algeria are acceptable. While 44 percent of respondents see it as unprofessional. The reason for the convergence of these two ratios is due to the ambiguity that prevails over educational programs and Education curriculum demonstrating to not apply the recommendations and studies that show the shortcomings in the educational system. As 4 percent see it as Professional, but it does not fully reflect to the educational reality.

Fig 2. Summary of responses regarding if the contents of Education curriculum in Algerian universities help students to improve a journalism skills and successful job.



A Survey of 54.2 percent of respondents expressed that the contents of the Education curriculum in Algerian universities does not professional and not successful. Then 41.7 percent stated the contents of the Education curriculum are Acceptable. as the curriculum in Algerian universities is not enough without media training during the years of study, and the lack of internships has an impact on capacity of skills of students in the field of journalism capabilities makes the student incompetent and unprofessional ;and the majority they do not find work after graduation in journalism sphere. Other 4.1 percent think that the Educational curriculums in Algerian universities are professional. And the problem at the student's level.

Fig 3. Summary of responses regarding Teaching methods for journalism students in Algeria.



According to 68 percent of responses think that the Teaching methods for journalism students in Algeria are Unprofessional and are not successful to prepare a professional journalist that opens the way for questions about the effectiveness of these methods and their ineffectiveness in forming professional students in the field of media and communication If there are problems with teaching, how to reach the knowledge to students. While 28 percent see that the Teaching methods are Acceptable and the issue of this problem is the lack of attention of internships and formation side during the study. Other 4 percent see that Teaching methods are professional.

Fig 4. Summary of responses regardingis there any link between the internships and the career success of journalism students in Algeria



48 percent of Survey respondents expressed that there is a bit link between the internships and the career success of journalism students in Algeria This confirms that the recruitment of journalists in Algeria is being carried out illegally Without relying on professional competence and experience or on a curriculum vitae. While 32 percent see against that. Other 20 percent see that there is no link between the internships and the career success of journalism students here we need to open questions for employment modality in the journalism field in Algeria.

Fig 5. Summary of responses regarding if the internships in Algerian universities sufficient to create an effective practical performance and professional for journalism students in Algeria.



✚ Survey 64 percent of respondents generally expressed the idea that the internships in Algerian universities insufficient to create an effective practical performance and professional for journalism students .the reason for that the absence of training courses and private studios for students and the lack of media Clubs which promote professional career for students as well as to internships their knowledge in the field of journalism and communication while the External training is limited to just a few days during 3 years or 5 years of bachelors or master degree. While 36 percent see the internships in Algerian universities are acceptable to create an effective practical performance and professional for journalism.

✚ **5. Conclusion**

- ✚ According to the tasks set in this study, as a first aspect, the findings emphasize the importance of understanding the balance between theory and practice in the Algerian educational courses related to journalism. This balance plays a major part in the socialization of students' professional practice and competence. The second aspect is the general review of educational curricula which considered as a necessary cause that set up systematic approaches that are appropriate to Algerian students values with the increased attention to the internships side of students with the outside environment especially with the media companies; And provide all the necessary means to help students to improve their skills as studios, Audio-visual Clubs, With the extension of the time duration of training period in each semester to take advantage of experiences and have direct contact with the experts in the field.
- ✚ Also, we need to focus on formative courses, academic seminar days, meetings, and conferences to control journalism working mechanisms, from writing in journalism print to using digital technology. Realizing how to prove the material of public interest, how to defend their professional rights, and how to explain the special responsibility.
- ✚ Finally, Journalism education in Algeria should prepare graduates to work as highly informed, strongly committed practitioners who have high ethical principles and are able to fulfil public interest obligations who will be professional journalists in the future.

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