

# Journalism education at Universities and journalism schools in Portugal\*

By Manuel Pinto and Helena Sousa  
Universidade do Minho

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The current media system in Portugal and the recent political history of the country are deeply ingrained. One cannot fully understand the current state of affairs in both the national media system and in journalism studies without considering the political dictatorship (1926-1974), the 1974 Revolution and the subsequent social and political instability.

During the dictatorship, attempts to develop Journalism Studies were halted. The first academic Media programme was set up in

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1979; today there are around 30 higher education programmes with a journalistic focus. This enlargement does not however mean that the communication/journalism field is a well developed scientific area. Indeed, due to its novelty, most programmes lack human and financial resources.

In Portugal, there is no close relationship between academic qualifications and journalistic performance. Most professional journalists have no academic training and only a few have specific journalistic training. Still, the situation is changing and it is gradually more common for media organisations to recruit people with a university background. Traditionally, journalism has been a low pay, low prestigious career but the instauration and consolidation of democracy has created the necessary conditions for a progressive renewal of the profession.

## 1 National Media: Looking Back into the Past

During the political dictatorship, frequently known as Salazarism, the press in Portugal has been under institutionalised pre-censorship. Restrained in content, with poor

distribution facilities and readership,<sup>1</sup> the press lost its Republican<sup>2</sup> vitality. Indeed, there was a steady decline in the regional press: 'from 210 papers in 1926, to 170 in 1933, 80 in 1944, and to a mere 17 by 1963' (Seaton and Pimlott, 1983:94). At that time, national press was virtually non-existent. Most city newspapers were family businesses whilst in towns and villages papers were mainly controlled by the Catholic Church. The press was generally underfunded, with very low or non-existent profits .

In terms of the electronic media, the first relevant intervention by the Salazar regime was the creation of the government station *Emissora Nacional* (EN) (now called *Rádiodifusão Portuguesa* - RDP). EN resulted from the incorporation of almost all existing private stations and began transmitting regular broadcasts from Lisbon on short and medium wave on the 1st of August 1935. Nevertheless, due to the country's overall underdevelopment, 'it was not until 1955 that some 80 per cent of the population were technically capable of listening to radio broadcasts, and not until the second half of the 1960's that the country came anywhere near a full nation-wide coverage' (Optenhögel, 1986: 240).

Recognising the importance of the new medium, the Catholic Church - with a traditional involvement in the regional press -

<sup>1</sup> Illiteracy figures throughout Salazarism:  
1930 - 61.8% of the population over 7 years old.  
1940 - 49.0%  
1950 - 40.4%  
1960 - 31.1% (Serrão e Marques (1992), Vol. XII:476). Currently, 10% of the population is still illiterate.

<sup>2</sup>The Monarchy was abolished in 1910 and from then on up until the implementation of the dictatorship, the press was quite diversified and free.

also set up its own radio station, *Rádio Renascença* (RR) which started broadcasting in 1937. *Rádio Renascença* and *Emissora Nacional* were clearly the most significant radio stations<sup>3</sup> whose importance has grown not only during Salazism and Marcelism<sup>4</sup> but after the 1974 revolution as well. The so-called radio oligopoly was only challenged in the 1980's with the explosion of illegal radio stations and with the subsequent attribution of frequencies to local and regional stations.

If Salazar did not oppose to the development of radio broadcasting, the same did not happen in relation to television. 'Salazar felt at ease with radio but deeply mistrusted television' (Louro, interview<sup>5</sup>:12.01.95). Although television was set up - in the mid-1950's - by a more liberal faction of the Salazar regime, the same repressive mechanisms applied to television as to any other medium.

After the 1974 coup d'état, the media endured major convulsions. Pre-censorship was immediately abolished whilst a ferocious confrontation for the control of the most important media had just started. Very different factions co-existed within the so-called 'winners' of the revolution. No consensus would be easily achieved as to what role the media should play in a post-dictatorial society and a chaotic situation could hardly have been avoided.

<sup>3</sup>In addition to RR and EN, there were a few local radio stations and *Rádio Club Português*, a radio station owned by the Botelho Moniz family, a traditional ally of Salazar and Marcello.

<sup>4</sup>When Salazar became ill in 1968, Marcello Caetano took power but the regime would not last for much longer.

<sup>5</sup>Soares Louro was formally chairman of both *Rádiatelevisão Portuguesa* and *Rádiodifusão Portuguesa*, and is a long-standing member of the Socialist Party.

Arguably because of the dangerous 'reactionary forces', leftist elements within the *Movimento das Forças Armadas* (MFA) contended that the media would have to be controlled during the revolutionary period. There was a clear contradiction in the MFA programme which contemplated both the 'abolishment of censorship and previous examination' and the creation of an 'ad hoc committee to control the press, radio, television, theatre and cinema' in order to 'safeguard military secrets and to prevent disturbances which could be provoked in public opinion by ideological aggressions from the most reactionary sections of society' (quoted in Bruneau and MacLeod, 1986: 165-166).

This ad hoc committee transformed itself enormously, according to which faction was more powerful within the MFA movement and within the *Junta de Salvação Nacional*. First, radical leftist media were censored but, with the removal of the more conservative General Spínola, after the 28th of September crisis, the leftist wing gained progressive strength and the ad hoc Committee concentrated its activity among the rightist/conservative press. From the 6th of September 1974 to the 28th of February 1975, 28 publications were suspended whose majority was close to the Catholic Church (Mesquita:1988:89).

The battle for media control right after the revolution and, particularly, after the 28th of September, was far from being fought only within the ad hoc Committee which had powers to suspend and punish newspapers which were out of the leftist 'revolutionary' line. Elements close to the MFA movement were appointed to leading posts both in radio and television. By early 1975, the panorama in the electronic media was percei-

ved as being chaotic. This highly volatile situation got even worse with the installation of the communist provisional governments of Vasco Gonçalves, after the 11th of March coup.

During this revolutionary period, the press which was still in private hands was 'transferred' to public ownership. Important sectors of the economy such as banking and insurance were nationalised. Because many leading newspapers were owned by strong economic groups and banks, they became state property. 'From the important dailies, only the *República* in Lisbon and *O Primeiro de Janeiro*, in Oporto remained in private hands' (Mesquita et al., 1994:368). The nationalisation of the press was never explained as a political option. 'It was presented as an indirect consequence of the nationalisation of the banking sector' (Mesquita et al., 1994:368). But behind this option was clearly the will to control what was left out of government's direct influence. Significantly, the nationalisation process was not reversed with the removal of the communist prime minister, Vasco Gonçalves, in November 1975.

What is remarkable about the media development in Portugal is that laws drawn up during an exceptional period shaped the media until the 1980's. This aspect suggests that the authoritarian nature of the provisional leftist governments suited the newly created democrats. Despite the 1976 Constitution, with its impressive display of civil liberties, no elected government was prepared to grant freedom to the press. Generally, following the political measures introduced during the revolutionary period, politicians from all affiliations have not openly designed media policies but have merely taken the necessary

steps to ensure that the nationalised media would be favourable to those in power.

Given the nature of political, economic and technological developments in the mid-1980's, changes in the national media were bound to happen. At a regional level, the European Union was developing its policies for telecommunications and television broadcasting. Conservative governments in the UK, Germany and France (not to mention the US) persuasively argued for liberalisation of markets and privatisation of state property; and last but certainly not least, important technological advances - mainly the development of satellite and optic fibre and the subsequent convergence of distribution technologies - had enormous implications. The proliferation of European satellite TV channels, for instance, started being used as an argument against the national *Rádiatelevisão* (RTP) monopoly. RTP's critics argued that, once one could receive international private TV channels, there was no reason why one should not have national private channels.

At a national level, important changes were also taking place. Up to the mid-1980's, the political instability in the country was so acute that any comprehensive set of political decisions was hard, if not impossible, to implement. In 1987, one year after Portugal joined the EEC, the first majority government was elected since the 1974 revolution. At that time, the country's economy was booming that being the main reason for a substantial rise in advertising revenue which had increased, in total, from around £52 million in 1986 to around £400

million in 1994.<sup>6</sup> In this economic circumstances, relatively unconstrained newspapers such as *O Independente* and *Público* were set up and their existence seriously impaired the government's ability to suppress politically damaging material. In addition, the climate of opinion was turning against the concentration of the media in the state's hands. The Cavaco Silva's government itself believed that if Portugal was to be seen as a truly European partner, changes in the economy, and consequently in the media market, had to be introduced. A pro-business approach was taken and the liberalisation of the media market and privatisation of a substantial share of state media was imminent.

In this context, the two Cavaco Silva's majority governments<sup>7</sup> undertook the most comprehensive changes in the media system since 1974-75. The first set of measures directly related to the structure of the media concerned the re-organisation of the radio broadcasting sector. By mid-1980's there were so many illegal radio stations operating that the government could no longer ignore that reality. Nevertheless, it was only in 1989 that 310 local frequencies were allocated. In the following year, two regional frequencies were attributed: one went to *Rádio Press*, part of the Lusomundo group and the other to *Correia da Manhã Rádio* which belonged to the Carlos Barbosa group.

In 1991, the two most important state ow-

<sup>6</sup> These figures were estimated, utilising data from Sabatina and the opinion of several experts in the field.

<sup>7</sup> The first majority government since 1974 ran the country between 1987 to 1991; the second majority government was in power from 1991 to 1995 (these were respectively the XI and XII Constitutional governments).

ned newspapers were privatised. The government had been following a wide privatisation programme and there were no grounds to justify the maintenance of *Jornal de Notícias* and *Diário de Notícias* under state control. The government was in a dilemma between its interest in controlling those newspapers and the ideological and political belief in privatisation. In a controversial process, both were bought by *Lusomundo*, one of the most important multi-media groups in Portugal, perceived - at the time - as having close links with the government.

The opening up of TV channels to private ownership has been on the political agenda throughout the 1980's but it was materialised in 1992/93. Three candidates bided for the two TV national channels which would be set up to add to the existing ones: RTP1 and RTP2. One channel was granted to *Sociedade Independente de Comunicação* (SIC), a company led by the former prime minister, Pinto Balsemão, an historic member of the Social Democrat Party (in power at the time); the other channel was attributed to *Televisão Independente* (TVI), a company made up of entities and individuals close to the Catholic Church.

Currently Portugal has four national terrestrial TV channels: two private/commercial channels and two public service channels. In addition to terrestrial television, throughout the 1980's the most well-off were able to receive dozens of foreign television channels mainly from Eutelsat and Astra satellites. Cable TV is a more recent development. The first licenses were attributed by the government in 1995. Several companies are now operating in the most affluent urban areas of the country.

It is estimated that around 200 thousand households are connected to cable networks (*Expresso*, 13th June 1997).

Both the radio broadcasting sub-system and the press are far more diversified than television broadcasting. With the exception of small local radios and local/regional newspapers, the media in Portugal are in the hands of so-called multi-media groups (v. *Diário de Notícias*, 13th April 1996). The state itself owns, in addition to RTP and RDP, a number of magazines and 50% of the unique national news agency, LUSA. The Catholic Church is a major player in the media scene. *Rádio Renascença* is the most popular national radio and the Church owns more than 600 publications. Besides the state and the Church, the most important multi-media actors are: Impalagest, Lusomundo, Presslivre, Impresa and Público/Sonae.

## 2 The Long Wait for Journalism Education

If there is a close relationship between the overall media system in Portugal and the political/historical development in the country, this connection is particularly obvious in the way journalism education has developed. Indeed, the political dictatorship has had a strong negative influence in the cultural arena in general and in education in particular.

In cultural terms, the Salazar regime was dominated by an elite who believed that people should be educated to be passive and non-participatory in political life. The authoritarian and centralist regime did not favour the development of Social Sciences and Humanities in the country. People was to be

indoctrinated by the cultural/political elites, led by Salazar. 'Due to the lack of equilibrium in the human spirit, order is not spontaneous; someone must command for the benefit of all' (Salazar, 1945:138). In these circumstances, there was not no point in providing journalists with superior education or professional training which could bring them public recognition and/or intellectual tools that might put at stake the ideological apparatus of the regime.

Interestingly enough, decades before the implementation of the dictatorship, in 1898, Lisbon hosted the 5th International Press Conference and one of the resolutions was precisely the recognition that journalism schools had to be set up. Still, according to the available data,<sup>8</sup> it was only in 1940 that a first attempt in terms of journalistic training was made by the National Journalists' Union (*Sindicato Nacional dos Jornalistas*). The Union was set up in 1934 and its first president, António Ferro, later became the Head of the Government's Propaganda Department.

The Journalists Union' project was a two-year course that could be attended by candidates to the profession with a minimum of nine years of schooling (four years of elementary school and five years of secondary grade school) or to journalists working in a company for at least one year. The studies plan included theoretical matters in the journalistic area and practical journalistic exercises. Although this project was fully developed and the programme had actually been scheduled, it never materialised. 'The pro-

<sup>8</sup>The information about the topic is scarce because historical research about the media and journalism is just starting.

gramme did not get the indispensable official support', states the Journalists' Union bulletin (November, 1968, n<sup>o</sup> 8).

Both the objectives and the content of this training programme were novelties which were possibly seen as a danger for a regime concerned in maintaining the status quo. Furthermore, the lecturers invited by the Union to teach the different study areas were not all devoted supporters of the regime. Some, such as Marcello Caetano, certainly were but others, such as the priest Abel Varzim, clearly diverged from the regime's views. This diversity certainly compromised the viability of the programme. In 1942, in a veiled criticism, the journalist Luis Quadros wrote: 'whilst the Portuguese mental aristocracy has been dignifying the liberal professions (...) conferring them academic degrees, the most delicate activity in a nation - the orientation of the public opinion - has been devoted to an incomprehensible ostracism' (quoted in Marcos, 1986:282).

Apart from the regime's lack of interest in the development of journalism studies, a considerable number of journalists did not recognise their training as a priority. As a prestigious journalist put it: 'the newcomers were instructed not to become professionals but to follow the rules of the book' (quoted in Correia, 1995a). Still, the Union continued voicing the need to train its members. In 1967, for example, the Union's bulletin *Jornalismo* published several articles about the importance of journalistic training in the country.

In 1970, with Marcello Caetano already in power, the Journalists' Union presented another consistent proposal. At that time, there was a belief that the regime would open up and therefore this would proba-

bly be good timing for another attempt. A new union leadership - relatively independent from the political establishment - set up a commission whose task was to develop a project of superior studies in journalism. This commission brought together prestigious journalists in the country and professionals with journalism degrees from foreign universities.<sup>9</sup>

This new project, approved by the Union's General Assembly in late 1970, contemplated a five-year programme with theoretical and practical courses lasting 24 hours per week. Overall, there were predicted 60 semestral courses distributed in the following manner: in the first three years, the students would have general Social Sciences studies (e.g. History, Languages and Literature, Political Science, Economy, Public Opinion, etc.); during the last two years, the focus would be on journalistic/communications topics. It is interesting to note that this programme included highly sensitive courses such as Contemporary History and Research Methods in Journalism and Social Sciences.

At that time, there were high hopes about the future of this graduate programme. On the one hand, the regime was preparing a wide educational reform, led by the Education Minister, Veiga Simão; on the other hand, the Union's project, submitted to the government, was the result of deep research

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<sup>9</sup>The foreign universities 'represented' in this commission were: the Superior School of Journalism of Lille, the French Press Institute (University of Paris), the Journalism School of Madrid University, the Journalism School of Navarra University (Spain) and the International University Pro Deo (Rome). Important names, in the journalism scene, were associated to this project: Silva Costa, António Reis, Cáceres Monteiro, Oliveira Figueiredo, Jacinto Baptista, among others.

and prolific dialogue amongst a great number of actors. It was believed that the conditions had been met to initiate journalism studies in Portugal. But once again politics determined otherwise.

According to the then President of the Journalists' Union, Silva Costa, the programme did not receive the go ahead because too many people were interested in the tutelage of journalism studies (Costa, 1983). At least three government departments were said to be interested in 'supervising' this initiative: **the Education Ministry**, the Corporations' Ministry and **the Media Office**. This reveals not only political fights within the government but also its inability to solve internal contradictions.

Another factor which might have influenced the halting of this project was the parallel development of another journalism education project in the private sector. An important economic group, *Grupo Quina* - with interest in the media and owning the newspapers *Diário Popular* and *Record*, and the magazine *Rádio-Televisão* - decided to set up a Superior School for Media Studies, the *Escola Superior de Meios de Comunicação Social*. This potential link between the interests of this economic group and the failure of the Union's project has yet to be researched. In any case, neither the Journalists' Union nor the government were the architects and founders of the first journalism programme in the country. It was the *Quina* group that, in 1973, laid the foundation of superior studies of journalism in the country. However, this programme would not last long because the economic private groups close to the authoritarian regime were dismantled right after the 1974 Revolution and the journalism programme of the *Escola Superior de Meios de*

*Comunicação Social* was closed down as a result. A very small number of current professional journalists have been trained in this school.

Considering what has been said so far, it is quite clear that it was mainly amongst the Journalist's Union members that the need for academic training has been felt and has consolidated throughout the years. Even if the initiatives were unsuccessful, the union made an effort to develop journalism studies. For political reasons, the government and the academia did not take any initiative in this study-area.

Indeed, higher education was far from a priority to the regime. From 1927 up until the Veiga Simão reform, in 1973, higher education did not get any serious attention (Carreira, 1996a). The regime was particularly concerned with making of primary education an privileged space for political/religious indoctrination. As minister Carneiro Pacheco would put it in 1937, it was less relevant to 'teach the alphabet' than to 'model souls' (quoted in Carreira, 1996b:14).

The university population was therefore very small. In 1960, for example, amongst the 18 to 22 years old group, only 3,9% were attending university. When the 1974 Revolution took place the percentage was still around 10% (Carreira, 1996a).<sup>10</sup> It is also relevant to our case the fact that, in 1960, among the entire university population, only 6,4% were studying Social Sciences.

<sup>10</sup>Percentage of population in higher education in the 18-22 year old population:

1960 - 3,9%

1970 - 8,5%

1980 - 11,7%

1990 - 23,0%

Source: Official data quoted in Carreira, 1996a.

In 1970, this figured augmented to 11% and after the Revolution it has been around 20% (Carreira, 1996a).

After the revolution, important changes took place in the academic world. More students were allowed to enter higher education and new programmes were developed. Once the previous regime was so opposing towards the expansion of Social Sciences, the new democratic regime, despite the initial instability, has certainly created the necessary conditions for a fresher approach towards various study-areas, namely journalism. The implementation and development of journalism degrees was made possible by a new political and social climate.

### 3 Competing Perspectives in Journalistic Training

In 1979, five years after the Revolution, the first university Communication programme in the country was set up. The initiative was taken by the Faculty of Human Sciences of the *Universidade Nova de Lisboa*. Duarte Adriano Rodrigues, who got his Ph.D. in the Catholic University of Lovain (Belgium), developed the programme and became the Head of the Communication Department. In the same drift, other Communication programmes were developed in the *Universidade da Beira Interior* and in the *Universidade do Minho*.

Rodrigues (1985) explains the philosophy behind the programme structure as such:

- students have to have a philosophical background which helps them understanding the historical trends and contradictions;

- a special attention should be given to language sciences in order to prevent journalists from being manipulated;
- a sociological and political knowledge is needed so that journalists can understand their strategic role in the social/political arena and the conflicting interests they will have to deal with;
- technical expertise should go well beyond the mere handling of tools; it should provide means to understand its limits and possibilities (for more, see Rodrigues and Miranda, 1989).

This university project has a strong theoretical basis. The emphasis is clearly on broad communications issues rather than specific communication areas such as journalism, advertising or public relations. It might therefore be argued that in the early beginnings of communication higher education, technical expertise was not on the top of the university programmes' agenda.

In the communication field, the gap between university education (generally with a theoretical basis) and polytechnic education (mainly concerned with practice) became increasingly evident. In fact, these two perspectives about the education of media professionals can be identified since conditions were met for public debate. Obviously a yielding discussion had not been possible before the 1974 coup d'état and immediately after the revolution there was still a highly volatile political climate. Therefore, only a few years later these two viewpoints became clear and started producing different initiatives.

In parallel with university projects, more technical ones were also being developed. In

1983, the *Centro de Formação de Jornalistas* (CFJ) was set up in Oporto and two years later this centre produced a Polytechnic school, the *Escola Superior de Jornalismo* (ESJ). The ESJ results from combined efforts of a group of journalists and a group of professors from Oporto University, *Universidade do Porto*. With the outgrowth of ESJ, CFJ redefined its role, being now mostly concerned with career development of professional journalists whilst ESJ provides mostly academic degrees to young candidates to the profession.

In 1986, in the same line of thought and action, it was founded in Lisbon the *Centro Protocolar de Formação de Jornalistas* (CENJOR). This centre which might be seen as a replica of CFJ results from combined efforts from the government (namely the Employment and Career Development Agency and the Media Office) from the Journalists' Union and from Press owners associations. Currently, CENJOR is developing specific programmes for professional journalists and is giving special attention to local and regional media professionals.

The work developed by CFJ and CENJOR, with a greater technical emphasis, has evolved in tandem with university Journalism education. If, in the early 1980's, the university Communication/Journalism programmes were indeed very few,<sup>11</sup> things have changed dramatically in the second half of the 1980's. Mário Mesquita, a former journalist and prestigious journalism professor has ironically called this phenomenon the 'the miracle of multiplication' (1995a).

<sup>11</sup>The first one was, as we have seen, set up by the *Universidade Nova de Lisboa*, in 1979 and the second one was set up in 1980 by the *Universidade Técnica de Lisboa*.

Currently there are 27 higher education programmes with a focus on journalism issues, even if their denominations vary from 'Communication' to 'Journalism'. Another 30 university programmes are related to communications but do not have predominately a journalistic focus. Typically, these degrees are called 'Public Relations', 'Entrepreneurial Communications', 'Advertising', 'Institutional Communications', among others.<sup>12</sup>

This expansion can only be understood within the overall expansion of superior education in Portugal in recent years. The growth has been particularly significant in the private sector as the public sector, although growing considerably, could not absorb a great number of candidates to higher education. Under pressure, the government has facilitated the creation of private universities and schools mainly in areas with few laboratorial needs such as Social Sciences. Being now relatively easy to set up a media programme and considering the 'media-chic' phenomenon, there is a risk that a par with the multiplication of programmes, there is also the 'multiplication of fraud' (Mesquita, 1995a). In general, most communication programmes in the country have very limited financial and human resources.

Despite the great number and diversity of university programmes and the increasing number of students looking for a journalistic job, it should be noted that there is only one university degree specifically called 'Journalism'. This programme started in 1993 in the *Universidade de Coimbra* and is led by Mário Mesquita who, in addition

<sup>12</sup>These figures were advanced by Mário Mesquita in a Public Debate about Journalism Education in Portugal, *Auditório da Reitoria da Universidade do Porto*, 18 October 1997.

to his long journalistic career, lectured journalism in a Polytechnic School (*Escola Superior de Jornalismo*) and in a University (*Universidade Nova de Lisboa*). This is the only programme in the country with a specific focus on journalism, although Mesquita does not see 'Journalism Studies' in a narrow perspective of professional/technical expertise, apart from critical analysis and research (1985d:11).

The increasing number of university programmes does necessarily mean that there has been an increasing number of communication/journalism students. Currently, it is estimated that 500 per year start their academic career in the public sector and one thousand per year initiate their studies in private universities and schools. Obviously, not all students finish their courses and not all try to enter into the journalistic job market but competition for a place in newsrooms is already fierce.

So far, it has not been possible to overcome the dichotomy between practice and theory. There are still strong controversies about the best way to prepare journalists. On the one hand, there is an ongoing debate about newsroom practice and technical programmes versus Media/Journalism higher education. A considerable number of professional journalism still believe that one becomes a journalist in the newsrooms and do not trust journalism schools. On the other hand, there is - within higher education - a somehow adversarial relationship between university and polytechnic programmes. In general, universities believe that polytechnic schools have been proliferating for political rather than academic reasons and that these schools have been set up in a light-hearted way.

In time, the development and consolidation of the field will bring some consensus around a number of issues which are still highly polemical. In countries with well developed journalism studies, few argue that higher education is not desirable for a professional journalist, and probably few argue that a synthesis between a strong theoretical basis and technical expertise should not be attempted in an academic journalism programme. Still, it is feasible that there will always be space for more career-oriented programmes, with a strong connection to the professional world, and for research-oriented programmes, particularly concerned with critical analysis of the journalistic profession.

The novelty of journalism as a study-area in Portugal has naturally consequences in terms of post-graduate studies. Before the mid-1980's there were virtually no post-graduate studies in communication in general or in journalism in particular. The first Communication Master programme was set up, in 1984, in the *Universidade Nova de Lisboa*, and it has had a theoretical approach. Since 1996, this programme allows students to specialise, among other areas, in Media and Journalism studies. Apart from *Universidade Nova*, few universities have initiated Master programmes. The *Instituto Superior de Ciências do Trabalho e da Empresa* and the *Universidade da Beira Interior* are already running their Master Communication programmes whilst *Universidade do Minho* is, at this stage, developing its own.

#### 4 From Studies to Action: Who are the Journalists Today?

Journalism studies are, in fact, so recent that only a small percentage of professionals have a communication/journalism academic degree. In any case, formal education or the lack of it is bound to be one among other aspects which determine the journalistic outcome in the country.

In Portugal, various legal instruments regulate the profession and dictate its ethics. The Constitution and the Press Law draw the wider legal framework whilst the Journalist Statute, the Ethical Code of Journalists and the Profession Press Card Regulation deal with more specific professional topics.

The Constitution guarantees the freedom of press and identifies the role of the state in the media, namely concerning public service broadcasting. Fundamental rights related to the media independence and freedom of expression are, according to the Constitution, to be safeguarded by the High Authority for the Media (*Alta Autoridade para a Comunicação Social*). The Press Law deals not only with rights and duties of journalists but also covers judicial matters and organisational issues of journalistic companies. The legislator has referred to the Journalist's Union the writing up of its own Ethical Code and Statute.

The Ethical Code, approved in May 1993, states the rules of what is perceived as high quality journalism: objectivity, impartiality, identification of sources, non-discrimination, respect for privacy, among other attributes. The Journalist's Statute is more concerned with the accession to the profession. Basically one becomes a journalist when one has a contract with a journa-

listic company to perform journalistic tasks as his/hers main occupation. During the first two working years, the journalist is not considered to be a professional but a candidate to the profession. Apart from that, individuals older than 18 with high school education and no criminal record might become journalists. Professional journalists are identified as such by a Press Card. The Press Card is attributed by a special commission (*Comissão da Carteira Profissional de Jornalista*). This commission is an independent public entity led by a magistrate.

Basically these legal tolls tell us who might become a journalist, in what circumstances, and what are their rights and duties. But they tell us very little about those who perform journalistic tasks in Portugal. As we have seen before, the media underwent dramatic changes after the mid-1980's and these changes have had direct consequences in the profession. Political/social stability and economic prosperity created the necessary conditions for a substantial increase in the quantity of publications and broadcasting stations. In this context, the number of professional journalists has expanded rapidly. According to Garcia, before the Revolution there were 700 journalists in the entire country. From 1975 to 1980 another 821 joined the profession. By 1990, there were 2374 and currently 3850 (1994:69).<sup>13</sup>

The first attempt to characterise journalists as a group was developed by Oliveira (1988). More recent research (Garcia and Castro, 1993; Garcia, 1994; Garcia and Oliveira, 1994) has shown that most journalists work in the press (51,9%) whilst 13,8% work

in the radio sector and 11,4% on TV. Journalism is also a profession exercised mainly in Lisbon. 50,7% of the professionals work in the capital which is not surprising considering that Lisbon is the locus of political power and considering the country's overall asymmetric development. Although it is now more frequent for women to become journalists, journalism is still a profession dominated by men. Three quarters of all professionals are male. In terms of ages, it can be said that mostly young people are now journalists (70,1% have less than 44 and 23,4% are younger than 30). These aspects suggest that journalism is in deep change. It has young blood and a stronger than ever female participation.

Although media companies are progressively recruiting journalists with academic background, no degree is actually required. Therefore, there is an enormous variety of both levels of formal education and types of degrees. Garcia and Oliveira (1994) study reveals that 8,8% of journalists have primary education (these journalists joined the profession before high school was required), 18% completed high school, 45,2% have either a technical degree or high education frequency (did not complete their university programmes). Only 27,9% have a first degree in any scientific area (most frequently in Social Sciences and Humanities). The high percentage of journalists who have not finished their academic programmes suggests that journalism has created working opportunities for those who were not satisfied with their academic choices. Up to now no research has been conducted to find out the percentage of journalists with specific journalistic training.

Traditionally, journalism has not been a

<sup>13</sup>Updated figures are expected to come out in 1998.

prestigious profession. Censorship and the non-existence of specific academic qualifications, made it a low qualified and low paid profession. Although the situation has been steadily improving since the 1974 Revolution and particularly since the mid-1980's, journalism is still a poorly paid job. In terms of pay, Garcia and Oliveira (1994) study suggests that journalists are well below, for example, doctors and lawyers. The authors believe that journalists' income might be compared with those of nurses and accountants. This is probably one of the reasons why a quarter of professional journalists have taken a second job as, for instance, translators or teachers. Within the class, there are obviously well paid journalists, such as news editors or TV news presenters, but these are clearly a minority.

The political dictatorship has clearly shaped the relationship between political power and journalists for a long period of time. Once the government had complete control over media content, journalists ended up reproducing state views or printing/broadcasting innocuous news. With the implementation of democracy, the situation was bound to change but it took quite some time for most media to achieve relative editorial independence from the political establishment. In any case, and despite obvious progress, journalists still lack autonomy as a professional group and their relationship with policy-makers is frequently ambiguous.

## 5 Conclusions

For historical/political reasons, there is no tradition of journalism studies in Portugal. The authoritarian regime did not recognise any interest in developing journalistic tea-

ching and research. In these circumstances, the Journalists' Union efforts to train its members were all fruitless and only a few years after the revolution did the first academic programme in communication start. Basically, before the mid-1980's there were no professional journalists in Portugal with specific academic training.

In recent years, the number of communication programmes has increased enormously. The vast majority of them are not 'Journalism Studies' *per se*; journalism is rather taught as part of broader communication programmes. The study-area is still poorly defined mainly due to the novelty of communication/journalism as academic degrees. Most programmes have deficiencies in terms of human resources and technical infrastructures. It follows that research is obviously in its early stages and the number of scientific journals dealing with communications issues is indeed very restrict. It is therefore too early to think about communication and/or journalism as an autonomous scientific area or research field.

The newness of communications studies naturally has implications in the relationship between the journalistic profession and academia. A considerable number of professional journalists still view with suspicion higher education in their field and are great believers in 'training-on-the-job' whilst academia perceives professionals (in general) as inadequately prepared for the role they are supposed to play.

A second level of fissure exists within academia itself. On the one hand, universities tend to be sceptical about the quality of training in polytechnic schools. On the other hand, polytechnic schools generally believe university teaching is too theoretical

and does not prepare students for the 'real world'. Implicit behind these splits, there are long-standing views about what is more valuable: some say 'theory', others say 'practice'. In the future, the development of the field should bring the debate to a more elaborate and intricate level of analysis.

As we have seen, journalism education in Portugal is recent and incipient. However, because media organisations and journalistic companies are undergoing enormous changes - which follow from economic and social transformations - attention should be given to new ways of thinking both the profession and work environment. The present ebullience of the discussions has an healthy semblance but it could also have some pernicious overtones: i.e. overlooking new technological developments or the increasingly multi-layered nature of the work market. Rather than measuring the comparative advantages of practice and theory, academics and journalists should concentrate on the evolving nature of the media and their ever changing role in society.

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