Press freedom and Journalism Education
WJEC 2022 Online Conference

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There is no democracy without press freedom, which enables the news media to provide citizens quality information and a forum for deliberative communication. Without freedom to express pro and con views, to argue for "heretic opinions" or "wrong views," winners of political elections will be able to silence oppositional voices. Furthermore, press freedom is the main prerequisite for investigative journalism, which helps to hold those in power accountable.

This stream discussed challenging questions of how professional journalism should be defined and press freedom interpreted in contemporary digital societies and what the biggest challenges for journalism education are in supporting press freedom within digital media and communication environments.

The main point of departure for discussion was that journalism is more than ever a crucial actor in a new information and knowledge ecosystem, marked by growing controversies, falsifications, polarization and multiple disruptions. The global pandemic and most recent geopolitical conflicts, rivalries and tensions have triggered and accelerated infusion of disinformation, manipulative propaganda, conspiracy theories and hate speech into public discourse. The weaponization of information has become an influential tool for the authoritarian regimes around the world, imposing media restrictions and strategic narratives to pursue their political goals.

With its key mission to expose what is true and what is important for the public, the social role of journalism is becoming critical in today's world. Hence, more emphasis on the fundamental issues of the changing nature of journalism, as well as the normative approach to journalism as public service, is needed.

On the other hand, our stream members pointed out that various states have their specific media systems and journalism cultures, including different political, economic and social realities that should be taken into account while teaching journalism. During the last decade, there has been a dramatic deterioration in global press freedom (Reporters without Borders, 2022). Hence, the role and value of professional journalism is different in democratic and autocratic regimes, as well as in the Global North and Global South.

Participants also expressed their concern about safety issues regarding journalists. In 2021, 293 reporters were in jail for their work and the numbers have been climbing, showing the growing intolerance of independent reporting worldwide (Committee to Protect Journalists, 2021). How do we teach journalism students in such an environment, which is hostile to press freedom and professional journalism? How can we be good journalists, fair and unbiased reporters in such circumstances, when personal safety of journalists is at stake? There are different ways to react to the limitations of media freedom in teaching journalism. One of them is to engage students in civic activism movements to support imprisoned journalists around the world by sending out letters, collecting information and sharing it with the general public. "Journalism is not a

crime" is a solidarity movement initiated by the Dutch institutions, and hopefully it will become an international one.

Journalism education is facing common challenges around the world not only in countries where press freedom is restricted, but also in countries which have been relatively safe for journalists. For the younger generation who have grown up with social media, it's becoming difficult to identify and differentiate between journalism and other types of communication. Based on their experience of social media, their understanding of journalism is different than that of older generations, who appreciate unbiased journalism based on objective information, truth and accuracy. Therefore, when training young journalism students ethics, those who have grown up using social media since childhood, the importance of differentiating between objective truth and strategic communication has never been more crucial.

The participants also shared their experiences of teaching journalism and agreed on the value of hands-on learning by producing actual publications, video reports, podcasts and engaging with the society. Although this is an important way of gaining practical skills, there is an additional dimension of building understanding of the importance of press freedom, public service, media accountability and human rights issues. And in this, there might also be optimism and hope for a new generation of engaged journalists.

Recommendations

1. The normative values of autonomy and journalistic independence, as well as the notion of journalistic professionalism, have been challenged by political, socioeconomic and technological shifts, and therefore need to be integrated into journalism education.
2. Professional ethics should be an essential curricular component in journalism education. Ethical practices could be used as a discussion tool about different student experiences due to their own cultural backgrounds.
3. A widening gap between the Global North and South should be included in journalism training to improve future journalists' understanding of the cultural implications of journalism practice and the value of professional journalism in different contexts.
4. **Safety and digital safety of journalists should be integrated into their education. Discussions about the need for gender sensitivity are also important, as female journalists are disproportionately facing digital, psychological and physical safety threats.**
5. It is important to clearly define the difference between journalism and other types of communication. These challenging questions should be addressed while teaching journalism.
6. Everyday democracy is based on well-informed and empowered citizens who are aware of their civic and communication rights and are capable of exercising them in a responsible way. This is the best structure for societal resilience to information disorders and communication disruptions.
7. Media literacy is a useful concept by which media could be better understood and appreciated by different stakeholders. Journalism students should be trained as knowledge brokers and mediators of media literacy to the general public.
8. **Students must be active participants in the knowledge community so that co-creation of knowledge strengthens the content of their education, promotes in-depth learning and builds moral awareness and responsibility.**

Conclusion

Disintegrating media environments and professional journalism are in the process of multiple disruptions, and education systems are going through major changes. Thus, at this transformative moment we need new ways of thinking about the future of journalism education in response to challenging times for press freedom, professional journalism and democratic society. The normative approach to professional journalism remains central and requires new deliberations and conceptualizations. To deal with new realities, contexts and challenges there is a demand for shared moral responsibility and increased collaboration in order to identify and to better understand the preconditions for journalism education in times of flux and deep uncertainties.