

Challenging Neoliberalism: standing up for the 'academic' in the study of journalism

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In this era of 'post-truth' and neoliberal ideology, it is more important than ever that those involved in journalism and journalism education keep returning to the fundamental questions of 'what is journalism for?' and 'what is its role in society?' (Zelizer, 2018).

We live in an age where journalism is being co-opted to disseminate ideology, propaganda, distortions, disinformation and outright lies. While it can be argued that it was ever thus, we need to recognise that the rules of engagement have changed and that there is a battle for ideas and truth where journalism can play either an honourable or dishonourable role. While recognising that journalism education will not be able to address all aspects of a disrupted public sphere, where trust in politicians and the news media has led to fractured publics and a lack of confidence in the news media's ability to inform and educate audiences on the important issues in society (Edelman, 2018), the de-legitimisation of liberal democracies and mainstream media along with the rise of the alt-right (Bennett and Livingstone, 2018), it still has a useful and necessary role.

Education must provide a forum for highlighting and debating the widest societal issues, and for considering methods of 'resetting' journalism (Zelizer, 2018), challenging the normative practices of Western journalism that have failed to deal with iconoclasts like Trump and Putin, who do not play by the 'journalistic rules'. As Gregorian (2008) rightly asserts, journalism is indeed a 'vital profession', which requires its practitioners to possess the knowledge and skills required to hold to account the powerful in society and, as such, requires an educational framework that facilitates this. Furthermore, it challenges us as journalism educators to understand the wider role of the discipline, as Berger and Foote (2013, p.9) state: 'The ultimate goal of journalism education... is to empower not only the student but journalism itself... the quality of journalism education is supposed to have an impact on the quality of citizenship and society. Journalism education educates not only practitioners but the public as well.'

This paper asks if journalism education is being enabled to do that successfully.

Not only is this recognized within the academy but more widely; indeed according to UNESCO (2007, p.9)

Newsrooms that are staffed by well-trained and critically minded journalists are likely to positively influence the processes of democracy and development in their societies ... A quality journalism education is a guarantor not only of democracy and development, but also of press freedom itself.

Today journalism degrees are offered at more than 60 UK HE institutions (UCAS, 2019) and this illustrates the changed shape of how journalism training and education is happening within the UK, driven by both a political culture, which has espoused higher education for all, and by a news media whose business models have changed in response to technological advances that have impacted on news creation, delivery and consumption.

We can now say journalism education's place in the academy has been assured for several decades in the UK, far longer in the US and other countries, and quite rightly so. As Gregorian states: 'Journalism, the quintessential knowledge profession, deserves the best-educated and trained practitioners' (2008, p.4).

To help achieve this, the journalism education curriculum needs to ensure spaces for teaching students about the landscape and structures of news media, their technological, economic and ideological drivers, and the media's relationship with power and elites. This requires any study of journalism within the academy, with its concomitant skills of critical thinking and analysis, to be central to higher education journalism programmes. Furthermore, an underpinning principle in the design of journalism education is the need

to design degrees that teach practice-based skills but which, as Gregorian (cited in Connell) suggests, 'are [places] where students would acquire not only skills but the intellectual depth and curiosity and the commitment to honesty and high ethical standards they will need to uphold the core values of this vital profession' (2008, p.2).

It is this 'academic' component of the curriculum that we believe should be protected, even prioritised, despite other demands on the curriculum. With ever-increasing technical and specialist skills required in the news and communications industry it can be all too easy to squeeze out critical study and analysis of the news media in an already crowded timetable. While the question of 'what journalism is for?' remains pertinent, those delivering journalism education within higher education must further ask 'what needs to be included in the journalism curriculum?' and 'what is journalism education at university level for?' It is evident that there needs to be a greater shared discourse between the academy and the news media in respect of both issues. But this remains challenging terrain, not least because of the rather hostile environment in which journalism and media courses are provided, and viewed by the industry. As Skinner *et al* state: 'Media owners and managers do not generally welcome critical perspectives on media practices, especially if they are contrary to commercial considerations' (2001, p.35).

Disinvestment in training by news organisations over the last few decades has coincided with the rise in what can be loosely called 'vocational degrees', with a rapid expansion in journalism degree programmes as part of the marketisation of universities, but also as a means for the news media to find its new entrants.

The reduction in training programmes within news organisations over the last 20 years also coincided, in the UK, with the introduction of tuition fees for students, meaning students are now effectively paying a high price for their own training and education in a field where jobs are becoming more precarious. The increasingly competitive market in which universities operate also means programmes can fall prey to what is popular with stakeholders rather than what is required (Poerksen, 2010; Deuze, 2006), a prime example of the free market encroaching on the field of education, long held as a treasured public service and civic responsibility in the UK.

For many UK students university involves massive debt, therefore public debates about 'value for money' and the 'employability' of graduates are prominent. Furthermore, government bodies and league tables exert pressure by assessing institutions' performance by criteria that include employability rates for academic programmes.

It is important to point out that the 'academisation' of journalism – now largely delivered in the UK and other countries as a degree subject (Deuze, 2006) - has presented both opportunities and challenges for universities across the world (Zelizer, 2013). On the positive side, it provides room for those in the academy with the opportunity to analyse and critically think about journalism, its role and influence, issues of standards, quality and ethics. However, for the most part many academic programmes have been driven to meet the needs of an industry transformed, and at times overwhelmed, by the technological changes imposed upon it. That is not to say that these changes have not brought positive change and development, they certainly have, but they have also emphasised the turbulent, and still evolutionary, journey that journalism is on in the 21st century.

While the UK news media was happy to shift the burden of the cost of training to individuals paying for their degrees, many in the industry continue to be vocal about what they believe should be in the curriculum, despite disinvesting in training costs. Academic knowledge was not always welcomed by everyone in the industry or accommodated by industry accreditation bodies. There was – and still is – a lack of recognition of the way universities work, what they are for, and what studying for a journalism degree entails.

Some universities aimed for industry accreditation in order to stand out in a crowded 'market', even though the emphasis here was on narrow skills training. Thus, some parts of the industry and their representatives in accreditation bodies continue to dictate and, at times, disparage what universities teach and research, with the emphasis falling inevitably on practical skills' development rather than on critical and analytical thinking. It could be argued that accreditation further embeds the notion of neoliberalism into the fabric of journalism education with a focus solely on collapsing education and training into each other with a view to how commercially successful both students and programmes will be - it thus reduces the basis of education to the commercial transactions that sit at the heart of neoliberalism.

This drive to satisfy industry expectation, or perhaps more broadly stakeholder expectation, is well exemplified by this drive for professional/industry accreditation. This appears to be a key objective of many universities, particularly those categorised as the post-92 universities, in part because it is believed that this illustrates the importance of having the programme content scrutinised by industry professionals (despite the fact this industry consultation customarily takes place as part of any validation of any new degree

programme) and that it offers assurance to the markets, and the programme stakeholders, that the course content is meeting the standards and expectations of the industry. However, independent research into the value of professional accreditation and its impact on recruitment and employment for students has rarely been undertaken (Canter, 2015) which makes it challenging to prove or disprove its worth. Given that most accreditation bodies largely focus on the practice-based elements of programmes, with most critique around non-practice being restricted to areas such as law, politics and ethics, it does raise issues around the necessity for accreditation beyond a hallmark that is driven by market demands and the desire of recruitment and marketing departments to have this tick of approval.

In our experience, accrediting bodies serving the industry are far more interested in universities teaching technical skills, not producing thoughtful employees who may question 'why things are done in the way they are done'. It could be argued that slavish adherence to meeting the needs of commercial accreditation bodies is at worst anti-intellectual and at best unimaginative in terms of how we perceive, understand and create journalism education within the academy.

This is set against a broader debate among UK politicians and the news media that fuels criticisms of educational institutions and educational professionals (from schools to universities) in a number of ways that are seemingly contradictory: those leaving education are not sufficiently equipped with the skills that a modern workforce need - sometimes these are said to be hard skills, especially in journalism education, and sometimes, ironically, the lack of soft skills, or intellectual skills such as critical thinking and analysis. In other words, employers frequently contradict what they say they want from graduates. With regards to media studies, Laughey (2010, in Bennett and Kidd, 2017, p.164) also found that criticisms are frequently contradictory, with the media describing the subject as both too theoretical and too vocational, as well as anti-intellectual and politically too left-leaning.

By far the dominant narrative – expounded in the UK media - is that any programmes designed to study the media (including journalism) are 'Mickey Mouse' courses. In the first instance, we are going to be talking about what is termed 'Media Studies' here, because critics often use this term in an all-encompassing way to sneer at the study of all aspects of the media, including news media. As Professor James Curran pointed out in a keynote speech to the MeCCSA (Media, Communication and Cultural Studies Association) conference of 2013 defending the study of the media, one British newspaper declared a degree in media studies to be 'little more than a state-funded, three-year equivalent of pub chat', while a well-known BBC journalist, John Humphreys, stated, 'The idea of three years at university doing journalism is utterly barmy' (Curran, 2013).

A detailed empirical study about the reporting of media studies demonstrates that this goes well beyond some isolated quotes from the press: Bennett and Kidd (2017) carried out a study about the representation of media studies in the British press over a five year period (2010 to 2015). Over half the items mentioning media studies (61%) framed it as a 'soft' or 'Mickey Mouse' subject and that the right-wing press in particular was responsible for promoting it negatively, stressing it was a subject with little educational value that provided poor employability prospects.

This reveals ignorance – or wilful ideological misinformation - about studying the media and journalism. It also reveals the very real tensions that exist between the academy and the news media. Nor is this peculiar to the UK; Deuze (2006, p.21) provides a body of evidence demonstrating this antagonism is keenly felt in many countries offering degrees in Journalism, with 'Dennis calling the debate between profession and education "a dialogue of the deaf"' (1988, p.4, in Deuze, 2006, p.21).

These tensions can become even more acute when academics publish research on the news media, particularly if it is critical of the industry. Much of the early research into the news media was very much of a qualitative nature (Tuchman (2008), often focused on media effects, but generally carried out by social scientists very much examining the media from the 'outside'. But, as Harcup (2010) has noted, teaching and research posts in journalism education have since been gradually occupied by former journalists. The personal experience of former journalists provided an opportunity to be more reflective of the profession. Gormally and Coburn (2013) assert that this acknowledgement of having practice-based expertise alongside a theoretical understanding of a field enables academics to have 'a position of strength from which to undertake research'. (p.1) Basically knowing about and understanding the field can lead to meaningful research within and about the world of news and journalism.

But research involves risks. There are colleagues whose research challenges the work of powerful media interests and derision has rained down on them. Josephi (2009) also points to the problem of students exploring and critiquing the field. She stated, 'the relevance of the inquiry into the nature and rituals of journalism has been questioned, in particular by future employers' (p.49).

Students are faced with the challenge of risking future employment by contesting current practices/behaviour/mindsets.

Several academic commentators note the surprise of working journalists that the academy should be so interested in its practices, noting a level of distrust/fear/scepticism between the academy and the media. Firth and Meech (2007, p.141, cited in Harcup, 2010) go as far as to say journalism appears to be the only field 'in which practitioners believe that the study of what they do is irrelevant to the practice'.

Whatever the industry believes, it is incumbent on all of us as journalism educators to reach back into what might be termed as 'hostile territory' to advance our own field of study and how it informs journalism education programmes and our students about the issues they may face working in the news media, as well as equipping them with a knowledge set that adds to their employability.

In terms of employability, much of the criticism of media courses is unfounded. Figures from the Office for National Statistics (July – Sept 2017) show that degrees in the field of media had an 89% employment rate (one of the higher rates, and higher than 11 other fields of study, including Law, Biological Sciences, Technology, Education, Languages, Social Sciences and Humanities). Transferable communication skills are – unsurprisingly in this digital communication age - in demand by many employers, despite the negative press.

In addition, studying media theorists such as Bourdieu and Barthes demonstrates that this is no subject for the intellectual slouch. On most programmes, students learn research skills and carry out their own research projects in the final year - no easy task. They are required to consider philosophical and ethical issues, and to question our normalised assumptions about mediated messages and agendas, as discussed earlier. Furthermore, in this technological and mediated world, the subject is highly relevant and students must be capable of embracing aspects of other disciplines. As Byrne writes in the *Times Higher Education* (2017),

Today, more than at any time since the invention of the first truly mass communication technology in the early 20th century, media are having a profound effect on our social, political and economic lives. As a result, media studies frequently takes an interdisciplinary approach to its enquiry, embracing politics, economics and psychology, as well as law and ethics. While some may see this as a flaw, in our frantically interconnected world, perhaps it should be acknowledged as another strength. The very fact that many other disciplines now embrace media in their own enquiry attests to their growing significance.

Social media, where employees may have no theoretical/intellectual/moral basis to reflect on working practices beyond limited notions of 'free speech' and 'consumer demand', have demonstrated that this can end with the circulation of child pornography and the live streaming of mass killings in mosques. A more academic understanding and critique of journalistic power and influence and the questioning of current practice – Journalism 101- could 'reset' journalism (Zelizer, 2018) by providing a framework to address how 'censorship' needs to be applied in a liberal democracy, but this will need an interdisciplinary approach to ensure that we produce graduates who are equipped with the knowledge to challenge existing power structures and elites, to 'speak truth to power' in informed and confident ways. Indeed, this cross-discipline aspect of journalism education was recognised by UNESCO in 2007 when it produced a significant piece of research, aimed in large part at journalism educators in the developing world and emerging democracies, providing a model curriculum for journalism education. Within its curriculum outline, UNESCO (2007, p.6) stated:

[Journalism education] should teach [students] how to cover political and social issues of particular importance to their own society through courses developed in co-operation with other departments in the college or university.

Not surprisingly UNESCO's work highlighted that journalism education 'should nest comfortably within the intellectual and academic culture of the university and be invigorated by it' (p.10). This reinforces the sense that as journalists we need to understand the complexities of the world and as such our journalism programmes need to provide students with knowledge that will enable them to understand complex societal issues and to have been supported in their learning by experts in these fields from across the breadth of the university. As Gregorian (2008) states: 'It is also important to see whether the program is drawing on the talents of the entire university faculty and not just "parked in the outskirts of the university."'

Journalism education needs to reach beyond the borders of its own field to ensure that it can further embed itself into the academy and benefit from the breadth and depth of knowledge within it. This could then have the result of changing the negative perceptions that do exist around studying the media:

The academy, too, has traditionally found it hard to see beyond the idea of an impostor subject with a limited theoretical base and an obsession with the popular. Media studies is indeed often concerned with

the popular, but that is one of its strengths. It is firmly grounded in society, in the communication, cultural understandings, concerns and sometimes even manipulation, of the mass of ordinary people. (Byrne, 2017)

One reason for these antagonisms may be linked to the expansion of higher education and a snobbish and elitist reaction to new universities, new curricula and fields of study, and widening participation. Andrew Crisell, emeritus professor at Sunderland University who taught on one of the first communications degrees, believes the key to media studies' image problem lies in the association with leisure: "Traditionally media have been associated with recreation, and there is a general assumption that watching films or television involves less intellectual effort than reading a book." (in Rustin, 2016).

Fraser and Wardle suggest that part of the problem is that studying the media looks like fun, disrupting the 'common view of education ... that it does not do us any good unless it hurts'. (2013, p.4). Thus, we have a situation where 'journalism educators and scholars face similar struggles all over the world, having to defend their curriculum, methods and theories against industry-wide shared notions that the academy is not the place to teach students how to get a job in the media, and that journalism is not the place to thoroughly reflect on the roles and functions of news media in society' (Deuze, 2006, p.22).

For Martin, this is not accidental or neutral, but ideological: 'There is an excess in these attacks which reveals a depth to the antagonism far outrunning any worries about the usefulness or not of media studies' (Martin, 2001, p.209 in Bennett and Kidd, 2017, pp.165-166).

These sustained media attacks on the field make us ask why does the media – the UK press in particular - protest so loudly at a time when digital convergence, with its rapid and frequently unforeseen changes, alongside disruptions to political certainties, badly need informed debates, research and policy decisions about the media in general and news media in particular? As previously discussed, here we have an industry that 'cannot comprehend why it should be studied, let alone scrutinised' (Rustin, 2016), while, it should not be forgotten, continues to scrutinise and depict the rest of society.

It is rare for journalists to be critical of their own field (Nick Davies' 2009 book *Flat Earth News* is a notable exception, and more recently Jon Snow of Channel 4 News said he felt 'on the wrong side of the divide' when reporting on the Grenfell Tower disaster in his 2017 MacTaggart address) so there is an onus on the academy to help our students and the public understand the wider forces, unseen agendas and power structures that operate in the news media. It is worth re-stating what is obvious to academics in this field, namely that most of the information and messages we receive about ourselves, society and the world are in some way mediated and this endows the media, and news media in particular, with huge influence and places them in a position of power.

As such it is legitimate to question how well news media institutions are serving the public. In the UK we have a largely right-wing press – those newspapers that are most vociferous in their attacks on studying the media (Bennett and Kidd, 2017) – that have also continually attacked the Labour Party and the Labour leader (see LSE study 'Journalistic Representations of Jeremy Corbyn in the British Press: From Watchdog to Attackdog', Cammaerts *et al*, 2016, and Loughborough University's 'Media coverage of the 2017 General Election campaign', 2017 as summarised by Pearson-Jones, 2017, in *The Independent*) once there appeared to be a threat to austerity measures; that promoted lies (on both sides) during the Brexit debate without any real interrogation of what was being claimed by vested interests; a media that failed to investigate the decline of health and safety standards in our country, including blogs from Grenfell Tower residents highlighting concerns about fire risk; a media that for many years ignored the rise of poverty and inequality in our society, instead happy to go along with the 'we are all in it together' hypocrisy of Cameron and the 'need' for austerity. In his 2017 MacTaggart Memorial Lecture at the Edinburgh International Television Festival, Jon Snow warns that the media lack diversity and are far removed from ordinary people.

Grenfell speaks to us all about our own lack of diversity, and capacity to reach into the swaths of western society with whom we have no connection.....We have to widen both our contact with, and awareness of, those who live outside and beyond our elite. Our elite is narrow and deep, but the throng of those who have borne the brunt of austerity and not shared in the lives we have experienced is wide and even deeper.

This elite was also highlighted by journalist Peter Osborne (2007) who warned about the rise of what he terms the 'political class' who have co-opted powerful media. He argues that journalists present themselves to the public as independent while, in fact, owing their loyalty to factions within the political class. These client journalists share the assumptions and prejudices of the political class. Indeed, there is a blurring of boundaries between the media and politics, with journalists becoming politicians (for example, former Labour minister Peter Mandelson and former Prime Minister Gordon Brown both had backgrounds in TV; our current Environment Minister and Conservative Party leadership contender, Michael Gove, is a former journalist, and also married to a journalist, Sarah Vine, who champions him and his allies in her *Daily Mail*

column; and journalist and politician Boris Johnson, with a weekly column in the *Daily Telegraph* is now standing for the position of Prime Minister, or politicians becoming journalists (for example, the former Conservative Chancellor of the Exchequer, George Osborne being handed the editorship of the *London Evening Standard*, despite a lack of experience.) According to Osborne, politicians and journalists have each abandoned their proper function. Politicians have ceased to regard government or opposition as their primary activity. At the same time, journalists no longer report political events in a detached and fastidious way. Both pursuits have a common objective: the careful construction of narratives that maintain power.

Franklin (2004) discusses the huge business behind the presentation of politics and politicians and this blurring of lines between the worlds of politics and journalism. He referred to it as 'packaging politics' and says it 'impoverishes political debate' because it simplifies and over-trivialises issues.

However, this does raise serious questions about democracy. Franklin (ibid.) asserts that rather than the news media hijacking politics, the notion that the politicians have attempted to hijack the media is closer to the truth: 'The relationship between government and media can become unduly conclusive, with the media acting as little more than conduits for government policy messages, drafted by press officers and special advisers but mistaken by readers and viewers as the work of independent journalists'. (Franklin, 2004, p.19)

It is these narratives and power structures that the academic study of journalism frequently lay bare: by examining media ownership and vested interests; by unpicking the constructs of news; by considering underlying agendas; and by looking at technological and economic developments in order to question what this means for the quality of information the public receives.

Few would disagree that the UK press is politically partisan and propagandistic; Tom Mills (2017) goes as far as stating that papers like *The Sun* and the *Daily Mail* use 'fake news' as a business model. But he argues that so-called liberal media institutions like the BBC are also losing the trust of the public, pointing to the dissonance between people's lived experiences and material conditions that are rarely reflected in broadcasts. Elitist recruitment practices at the BBC mean that correspondents are often socially removed from the majority of the population, focussing on action at the top that rarely translates into reflecting what this means for those at the bottom. For Mills' the BBC is simply not providing a fair and balanced account of the world or speaking to the conditions that people find themselves in. The BBC tends to reflect a narrow sector of political opinion, deferring to the state institutions and official politics in how it constructs stories. Mills argues that the actions of the media is helping to drive polarisation, with media institutions being part and parcel of what has caused public discontent and disaffection with the direction of society (2017). In other words, lack of trust with most of the mainstream media has a basis in reality.

The near consensus among reporters on Jeremy Corbyn's supposed unelectability, which turned out to be untrue, only feeds powerfully that belief. The sense of conspiracy should not be played down – the feeling of communities like those in Grenfell Tower being ignored, and of Corbyn having been deliberately maligned, are blended now in a thick soup of salty disillusionment, doled out on WhatsApp. (Hirsch, 2017)

The BBC's flagship agenda-setting news and current affairs radio programme, *Today*, lost over 800,000 listeners in 2017-2018. Mills (2018) points to disaffection over Brexit coverage and disaffection by Labour supporters.

There is scholarly research that supports the allegations made by the "Remoaners" and the "Corbynites", albeit indirectly. First, a number of recent analyses (Wahl-Jorgensen et al, 2016; Cushion and Lewis, 2017; Lewis and Cushion, 2019) have found that broadcast news tends to balance competing claims, rather than scrutinising their veracity. This leads, if not to "fake news", then at least to inaccurate or misleading claims – overwhelmingly from the right – appearing unchallenged, or even driving the news agenda.

Too often the BBC is wedded to old-fashioned notions of due impartiality which results in what it sees as 'controversial' issues being reported in a format that gives equal weight to both sides, even when one side's opinions are ludicrous, or simply false. This has been particularly true of coverage of climate change, with undue weight being given for years to climate change deniers.

Misleading reporting is reinforced by the tendency of government ministers to avoid appearing on programmes where their opinions and actions can be properly interrogated. Most no longer submit themselves to being interviewed about their policies and responsibilities unless it is an issue they want to promote. Thus, when the BBC does attempt to cover issues like the underfunding of education, or the latest report demonstrating steep rises in child poverty, presenters inevitably announce that 'no minister was available to be interviewed but they did issue us with a statement' - a statement invariably declaring that the government is spending more money than ever, or is looking into the issue - that is subsequently uncritically read out to the audience, blocking any further journalistic questioning of the veracity of the statement. But despite

this tactic by politicians, it is surely reasonable to expect BBC journalists to do more, for example, by interviewing the political opposition or experts in the field about their response to what government ministers or departments have stated, but this rarely happens.

Experience teaches us that tyranny thrives in spaces where it is unchallenged, therefore the news media rightfully retains its clichéd ‘speaking truth to power’ role in society, but this requires an ethical, political and social literacy among those who work within it. This goes beyond mere fact checking – either by people or by algorithms – it requires the deep knowledge developed as a student and enhanced by experience. It also requires an acknowledgement that poor reporting is often due to being mis-informed, producing work which is poorly researched and lacks the required rigour because deadlines press and commercial pressures dominate. It could be said this is another example of neoliberalism writ large in the news media, whereby the commercial transaction is at the heart of decision making in newsrooms. It is an uncomfortable truth.

Mills (2017) also points to research that the editorial culture of the BBC – which always tended to lean towards government and establishment perspectives anyway - has shifted further to the right over the past decade (Lewis and Cushion, 2017). Anxiety about appearing out-of-touch led to a conscious effort to engage ‘extreme opinion’ while the ‘left is still not being treated as a legitimate political force, despite electoral gains’ (Mills, *ibid*).

Guardian journalist George Monbiot (2019) has seen a similar trend, which he ascribes to an effort by broadcasters to grab attention and ratings. ‘The more disgracefully you behave, the bigger the platform the media will give you...On both sides of the Atlantic, the unscrupulous, duplicitous and preposterous are brought to the fore as programme-makers seek to generate noise.’

More insidious still, because it is invisible, is the lack of coverage or ‘news blackouts’ of issues that does not fit this right-leaning agenda. Hence, relatively small demonstrations against policies or rulers in countries our government does not agree with are elevated to news headlines, while hundreds of thousands marching against austerity in our domestic arena are given next to no coverage. What is it we are missing in everyday coverage that we do not know we are missing? And how do we as journalism educators imbue our students with the knowledge that something is missing and that they have a responsibility to address this?

Meanwhile, with the rise of digital media, we increasingly see power shift towards distribution platforms, which are even harder to regulate. Data from the 2018 Digital News Report from the Reuters Institute at Oxford University revealed that 72% of people across a sample of 21 EU countries did not know that algorithms select most of what we see on the Facebook news feed, concluding that increased media literacy around social media is required.

With the rise of Trump in the USA and debates around Brexit in the UK, Zelizer (2018, p.141) believes that the rules of engagement have changed in journalism and that the Anglo-American model of journalism contains ‘mindsets of the past [that] undo contemporary journalism’s ability to cover events of the present’. If we do not question how journalism is done, where does this leave the next generation of journalists facing the rapidly changing challenges for journalism?

Thus, critiquing journalism in an academic setting takes on the role of a ‘critical friend’, helping to reshape and inform new practice for journalists. For Deuze (2006, p.22) antagonisms between practitioners and the academy ‘can be resolved by dissolving the perceived dichotomy between theory and practice’ in the curriculum. There is nothing to fear from an academic curriculum or academic research that explores the reshaping of journalistic practice - indeed it is likely to help provide solutions to the disaffection and distrust surrounding the media.

For lecturers, it can provide ideas as to where there are gaps in the literature and where further research can be carried out; it helps produce not merely technologically skilled graduates, but critical thinkers with highly developed powers of analysis, sophisticated understanding of a complex world and clear communications expertise - transferable skills that should be welcomed in any workplace since all companies and institutions now need media and communications experts. Furthermore, it can contribute to wider media literacy in these disruptive and uncertain times. Overall, there is a strong case for academic study of the news media – we should be vociferous and vigilant in promoting and protecting that study against vested interests. As educators we must argue that while the business model proliferates in our education system, it needs also to embrace the role of journalism as a civic and social responsibility which gives agency to many within society to challenge prevailing cultures that would seek to define our role in it as solely a commercial one. We understand there are no easy answers here but in posing difficult questions we can begin to view our roles as educators in different and meaningful ways.

To conclude, in the neoliberal landscape we find ourselves in, we recommend that those working as jour-

nalism educators and researchers in the academy:

- promote the idea that the academic study of journalism and the media fulfils the welcome role of a ‘critical friend’ that can reshape practice and build greater trust and understanding of the wider role of journalism
- promote interdisciplinary teaching and research to the enrichment of the field
- dissolve outdated distinctions between theory and practice in the curriculum (Deuze, 2006)
- continue to promote widening participation in journalism courses to provide the diversity of talent that journalism and related professions clearly need
- campaign for paid internships so that less privileged students can gain experience and entry into the profession
- carry out further research into the benefits or disadvantages of industry accreditation
- carry out further research into the effectiveness of journalism education - that goes beyond the merely descriptive - to meet the challenges of the present and future within a framework that seeks to establish a re-set Journalism 101.

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