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The Trajectory of Journalism Education in Brazil: From Minimum Curricula to National Curriculum Guidelines

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Abstract

This paper aims to contextualize and highlight some historical aspects surrounding the emergence of professional and university-level journalism education in Brazil. To this end, the proposed methodology involves a bibliographic review providing a brief overview of the history of journalism as a science, as discussed by authors such as Melo (1977), Machado (2004), Meditsch (2012), and Gadini (2016), as well as a documentary analysis of documents such as the currículos mínimos (minimum curricula) and the Diretrizes Curriculares Nacionais (National Curriculum Guidelines).

Keywords: history of journalism, journalism education, minimum curricula

Introduction

Journalism education in Brazil was guided by a series of institutionally established minimum curricula that did not always meet the expectations of the academic community but shaped the training and professional profile of journalists (Dias, 2018). According to Melo (1977), the first journalism courses in Brazil, created in the 1940s, aimed to improve the salaries of public service journalist-editors through higher education. This situation influenced journalism education in the 1960s, as the courses were linked to other faculties and consisted of humanities subjects, associating journalism mainly with practice (Melo, 1977, p. 81). Up until the 1970s, research in the area depended on isolated initiatives, lacking a clear national articulation (Machado, 2004).

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Although the current National Curriculum Guidelines represent a significant change for higher education in Brazil, journalism faced an additional challenge: its status as a specialization within the Social Communication degree. Broader debates in the field involving institutions, researchers, teachers, students, and professionals, starting in the 2000s, culminated in the publication of the National Curriculum Guidelines (DCNs) for Journalism undergraduate programs, established by Resolution No. 1 of September 27, 2013 (Brasil, 2013) by the Ministry of Education.

Objective

The objective of this study is to contextualize and discuss some historical aspects of the emergence of professional and university-level journalism education in Brazil, particularly focusing on the guidelines that directed the creation of journalism courses.

Methodology

This study employs bibliographic review and documentary analysis as methodological procedures. The two methods were conducted in parallel to understand how each curricular change impacted the history of journalism education. The bibliographic review included complementary readings such as Melo (1977), Machado (2004), Meditsch (2012), and Gadini (2016) to understand the development of journalism as a field. Documentary analysis focused on decrees and legal instruments that established various curricular frameworks implemented by the federal government.

Results, Discussion, and Analysis

Although journalism programs were created in 1947 and 1948, Brazil only began to see significant academic recognition (through publications, research, and graduate programs) and theoretical engagement with journalism from the early 21st century (Traquina, 2004).

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Throughout the history of journalism education in Brazil, it is evident that the creation of journalism courses resulted from growing demands for the professionalization of journalistic production—though there was not always a clear understanding of the need for conceptual or theoretical components in curricula (Gadini, 2016). A careful analysis of the curricula from Brazil's earliest journalism programs shows that the course at the Catholic University of Pernambuco—likely due to the initiative of its founder, Luiz Beltrão—was one of the few to include conceptual subjects focused on journalism (such as ethics and theory) alongside technical training (Gadini, 2016, p. 150). According to Meditsch (1992), the creation of journalism programs stemmed from the pressure of public service editors seeking salary increases. The courses were designed primarily as a means for career advancement during a time when journalistic enterprises valued political over economic achievements. Consequently, journalism education emphasized humanistic formation over technical improvement—a tendency that dominated until the 1960s (Meditsch, 1992, p. 59). Melo (1979) argues that the educational model influenced by the Centro Internacional de Estudios Superiores de Comunicación para América Latina (CIESPAL) also led journalism and communication schools to adopt content disconnected from Brazilian reality, importing models that did not align with national experiences.

Final Considerations

The legal conditions under which journalism education developed in Brazil over more than six decades greatly influenced the training of journalists and the graduate profiles defined by universities. Like other higher education programs in Brazil, journalism courses have historically been subordinated to the state regarding authorization, recognition, duration, and curricular structure. For a long time, journalism education was heavily shaped by state-

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imposed curricula, with institutions authorized only to make minor additions (Antonioli, 2014). It was only in 2001 that institutions gained the freedom to design their own curricula, following the publication of the National Curriculum Guidelines for Social Communication programs.

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