



Open School
of Journalism

Improving Journalism Education

An Online Survey

2016

Improving Journalism Education

Introduction

For more than a decade, the media landscape has been undergoing extreme change. New media has upstaged classic information channels such as daily newspapers, television and radio. Fast, convenient and free of charge, more and more people are discovering the virtual network. That is why many newspapers now have an online presence. Against this backdrop, the journalist's field of work has changed considerably. The public no longer needs journalism in the same way as it did; print media and radio no longer function as the only mouthpiece. With the help of social networks, news can now spread in real time. And with the right app on your smartphone, you receive only tailor-made messages—according to your interests. The diminishing importance of "classical" journalism has meant that the professional image of a journalist has also changed: it is no longer enough to just write an article. Today, cross-media training is required. Taking photos, creating videos, and using social media channels is as much part of a journalist's work as investigation and writing. What else belongs to a "new" professional image of a journalist in order to be successful in the time of media change?

Against this backdrop, Open School of Journalism has carried out a survey: What do future journalists consider important to ensure that journalism training is future-proof and of high quality? The survey was carried out between 09 February and 30 August 2016. 1,815 journalists and journalism educators took part in the survey, which has shown interesting results.

Executive Summary

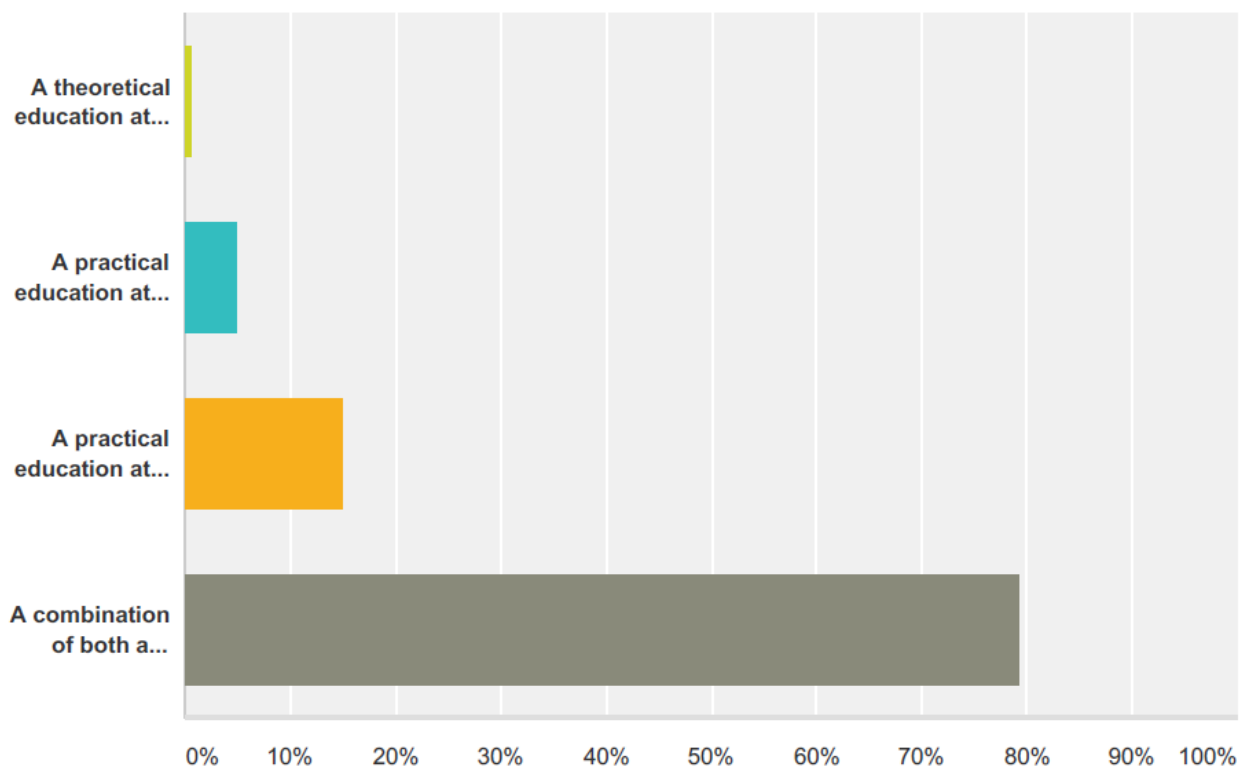
An overview of the most important results of the survey:

- The majority of respondents (80%) consider a combination of a theoretical and practical education the best approach. At OSJ, we adopt this approach by offering an online-based teaching and learning method; at the same time, students can work at a newspaper or radio station, e.g., while simultaneously studying at OSJ.
- Around 94% of the respondents consider methods of research/inquiry the most important topic or skill to be taught at a journalism school. This is followed by ethics, with still over 90%. Both topics are standard modules at OSJ.
- Other topics or skills that respondents consider important as well but that weren't mentioned in the survey are, for example, communicative and social skills.
- More than 80% consider journalism educators who worked for notable or first-class media as (very) important; 80% think that independence from political parties, media companies and the like is (very) important as well. Affordable tuition fees are highly considered by nearly 80% of the respondents. OSJ offers all of these characteristics.
- An overwhelming majority (98%) is (very) content with current characteristics provided by OSJ, such as feedback from teachers/tutors and flexibility. Some respondents wish for a more first-hand experience / teachers who are still in the industry and a more international approach with regards to teaching / teaching material.
- A vast majority (about 80%) considers social media, objectivity in journalism vs unbiased reporting, and keeping up with technology (cross-media) to be a (very) big challenge for both journalists and media companies. Another interesting challenge mentioned is “relevance”—how to stay relevant as a journalist with your work in a more competitive market online will be an essential challenge.

1. What kind of journalism education do you consider useful?

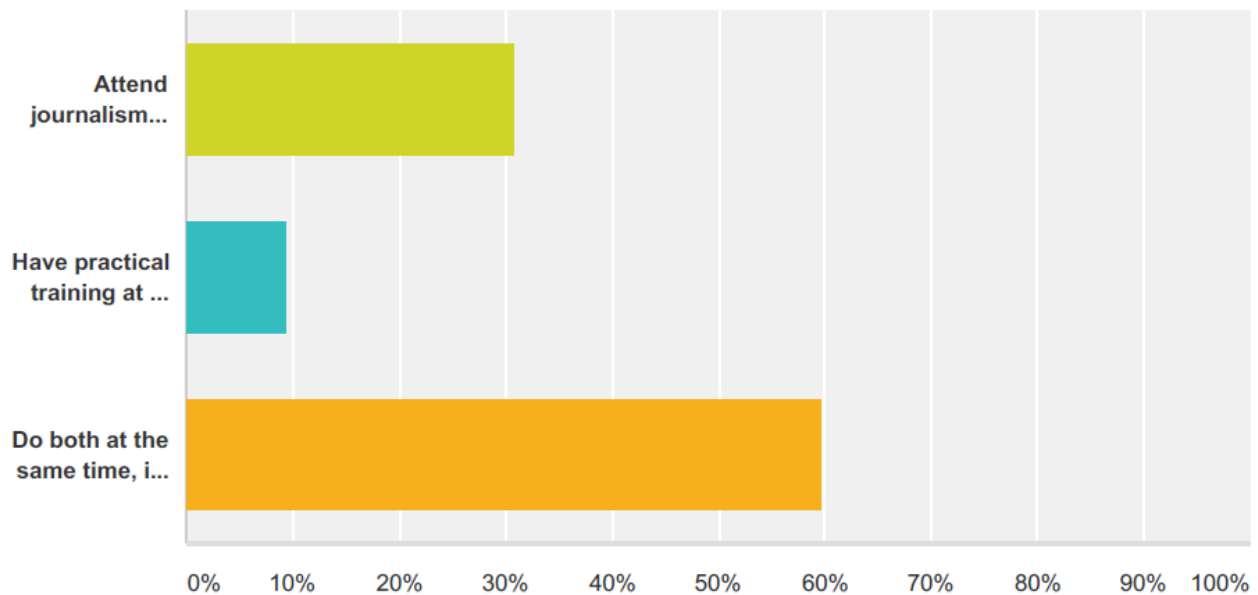
Ever since there has been journalism training, there has always been a debate about the “right” ratio of theory to practice. Should journalism be learnt just “by doing” or should you undertake academic studies? Therefore, we asked the survey respondents what role theory and practice should play in journalism education. The answers were very clear. An overwhelming majority of nearly 80% said that a combination of a theoretical and practical education is the best approach.

At Open School of Journalism, we adopt this approach as we use online studies for our teaching and learning method. Students can work at a newspaper or radio station, for example, and simultaneously study at OSJ. More than two thirds of all OSJ students do so.



2. How should one combine theory and practice in journalism education?

Since there is an academic way and a practical way to undergo journalism training, it is quite useful to find out which is most favored by budding journalists. Thus, we asked the respondents which approach they prefer. A majority of 60% think that the possibility of combining both ways—the academic and the practical—makes the most sense. Here again, students at OSJ have the opportunity to receive academic education in journalism and undergo practical training at a newspaper, for example, at the same time.



3. Which skills are how important?

“Classical journalism” and new media both require journalists to bring certain skills to the table. Therefore, we asked the respondents what topics and skills should be taught by a journalism school. An overwhelming majority of about 94% find methods of research/inquiry the most important topic or skill. In addition, journalistic ethics is very important to over 90% of the respondents.

Both topics are regarded as very important study modules at OSJ. All the other topics are also offered as modules. Current and future trends are covered in an extracurricular section on our website and discussed in online curricula.

| | Very important | Important | Moderately important | Slightly important | Not important | Total |
|--|-----------------|---------------|----------------------|--------------------|---------------|-------|
| Methods of research/inquiry | 70.04% 1,190 | 24.13% 410 | 5.00% 85 | 0.65% 11 | 0.18% 3 | 1,699 |
| Writing style for print media | 47.38% 805 | 38.08% 647 | 11.24% 191 | 2.77% 47 | 0.53% 9 | 1,699 |
| Writing style for other media formats (radio, TV, online) | 39.38% 669 | 41.20% 700 | 16.30% 277 | 2.53% 43 | 0.59% 10 | 1,699 |
| Copy editing/sub editing | 38.08% 647 | 37.67% 640 | 19.42% 330 | 4.06% 69 | 0.77% 13 | 1,699 |
| Job specialization (e. g. as a Business, Political, Sports Journalist, etc.) | 13.95% 237 | 26.49% 450 | 37.85% 643 | 14.95% 254 | 6.77% 115 | 1,699 |
| Media/press Law | 41.97% 713 | 32.67% 555 | 20.01% 340 | 4.83% 82 | 0.53% 9 | 1,699 |
| Journalistic ethics | 67.04% 1,139 | 24.84% 422 | 6.30% 107 | 1.65% 28 | 0.18% 3 | 1,699 |
| History of journalism | 6.89% 117 | 18.25% 310 | 35.31% 600 | 29.66% 504 | 9.89% 168 | 1,699 |
| Future of journalism | 29.49% 501 | 35.49% 603 | 23.54% 400 | 9.01% 153 | 2.47% 42 | 1,699 |
| Public Relations | 13.13% 223 | 24.07% 409 | 29.43% 500 | 22.37% 380 | 11.01% 187 | 1,699 |

4. Which skills not mentioned are also (very) important?

In the next question, we asked the respondents what other skills or topics—aside from the ones mentioned in the previous question—they consider to be (very) important to teach in a journalism school. Among the roughly 1300 responses we received, more than 90% of the respondents think that either “all important topics or skills are already covered” or “don’t know any other topics or skills that could be offered” or “not specified”. A few more topics have been added by the respondents such as “Communicative skills”, “War journalism”, and “Social skills”.

OSJ is proudly offering study material in each topic/skill mentioned above. We will closely consider any other suggestion from our respondents in order to round out journalistic education at OSJ.

5. What characteristics of a journalism school are important and to what extent?

There are many schools that offer journalism courses. Regular journalism schools with classroom training and an emerging number of online journalism schools raise an issue for many students as to what is the best decision for their journalism education. We have asked respondents to specify the importance of characteristics of a journalism school. More than 80% consider journalism educators who worked for notable or first-class media as (very) important; 80% think that independence from political parties, media companies and the like is (very) important as well. Affordable tuition fees are highly considered by nearly 80% of the respondents.

OSJ is adopting these characteristics by being an independent journalism school with affordable tuition fees and first class educators from notable schools (such as Columbia University, CUNY, Harvard, Penn State, Stanford University, Stockholm University, etc.) and media (such as BBC, Bloomberg, CBS, CBC, Chicago Tribune, NY Times, Washington Post, etc.). The curriculum can be compiled from a broad selection of modules.

| | Very important | Important | Moderately important | Slightly important | Not important | Total |
|---|-----------------|---------------|----------------------|--------------------|---------------|-------|
| Be attainable from everywhere (office, home, library, away on travel) as an online/distance program. | 20.55% 314 | 34.82% 532 | 28.60% 437 | 10.14% 155 | 5.89% 90 | 1,528 |
| Be accredited by a well-known agency. | 31.50% 482 | 39.22% 600 | 20.13% 308 | 5.10% 78 | 4.05% 62 | 1,530 |
| Be attainable part-time (while working/studying/parental leave). | 25.07% 382 | 46.06% 702 | 22.05% 336 | 4.72% 72 | 2.10% 32 | 1,524 |
| Be certified by ISO 29990 standard. | 11.00% 168 | 25.80% 394 | 31.43% 480 | 12.97% 198 | 18.80% 287 | 1,527 |
| Be certified by ISO 9001 standard. | 10.86% 165 | 25.59% 389 | 31.25% 475 | 13.22% 201 | 19.08% 290 | 1,520 |
| Be independent (from political parties, media companies, churches, etc.). | 66.51% 1,017 | 20.60% 315 | 7.98% 122 | 2.16% 33 | 2.75% 42 | 1,529 |
| Be state-authorized. | 11.32% 172 | 19.16% 291 | 27.39% 416 | 11.52% 175 | 30.61% 465 | 1,519 |
| Have a broad selection of elective modules. The course curriculum can be compiled according to individual preferences. | 28.20% 430 | 40.33% 615 | 21.84% 333 | 7.61% 116 | 2.03% 31 | 1,525 |
| Have an international orientation. | 20.97% 321 | 32.20% 493 | 28.61% 438 | 12.61% 193 | 5.62% 86 | 1,531 |
| Have journalism educators who graduated from a notable/first-class journalism school. | 13.87% 211 | 28.34% 431 | 26.43% 402 | 16.63% 253 | 14.73% 224 | 1,521 |
| Have journalism educators who worked for notable/first-class media. | 49.11% 749 | 36.72% 560 | 9.97% 152 | 2.95% 45 | 1.25% 19 | 1,525 |
| Have affordable tuition fees, payable in installments, no loans required. | 43.23% 661 | 36.76% 562 | 15.96% 244 | 2.88% 44 | 1.18% 18 | 1,529 |
| Offer a flexible timetable/schedule. The students can decide for themselves when they study, and the course duration is flexible. | 22.60% 346 | 33.64% 515 | 26.52% 406 | 11.10% 170 | 6.14% 94 | 1,531 |

6. What characteristics not mentioned do you consider to be (very) important for a journalism school?

With so many journalism schools around the globe today, the question arises: What do students and future students really want and need in order to be successful after graduation? Thus, we have asked in our survey for further (very) important characteristics of an excellent journalism school. An overwhelming majority (98%) is very content with current characteristics provided, such as feedback from teachers/tutors and flexibility. Interestingly, most mentions pointed out more first-hand experience / teachers who are still in the industry and a more international approach with regards to teaching / teaching material.

OSJ appreciates these suggestions. We are striving for the best possible experience and quality for our students. And since we are an international online program, we are already offering material with a broader academic *and* practical point of view as well as tutors with state-of-the-art experience.

7. What, in your opinion, are the most essential challenges for future journalists and media companies?

The media has been and still is undergoing changes that affect journalists and media companies all over the world. Considering this development, which challenges arise for future journalists and media companies? We put this question to our respondents. A vast majority (about 80%) considers social media, objectivity in journalism vs unbiased reporting, and keeping up with technology (cross-media) to be (very) big challenges for both journalists and media companies. Another interesting challenge mentioned is “relevance” – how to stay relevant as a journalist with your work in a more competitive market online will be an essential challenge.

OSJ is supporting a cross-media and social media approach by offering a broad variety of relevant modules such as our module “Writing for Online Media” as well as writing for other media channels. As already mentioned, future trends are discussed in online curricula.

About Open School of Journalism

Open School of Journalism (OSJ) is a leading online journalism school. It is independent from media organizations, political parties, churches and other interest groups. OSJ students get a short and comprehensive journalism education at ISCED Level 4 (post-secondary education).

With OSJ's world-class faculty recruited from journalists from notable newspapers, magazines and other media companies, and from journalism educators from the best journalism schools worldwide, students learn from the best instructors.

At OSJ, students compile their practice-oriented customized curriculum by selecting the online modules and online workshops that suit their needs best. Students can specialize in one or more areas and create their own course from millions of possible combinations.

Studying journalism by online or distance learning means the highest degree of flexibility and freedom. Students can learn wherever they are and whenever they want. The duration of the journalism training is three to 24 months depending on the time students can invest.

OSJ has a state authorization from the ZFU State Central Agency of Distance Education in Germany. It's quality management system is compliant to ISO 29990:2010.

www.openschoolofjournalism.com