

# When a journalist decides to become a PR: an analysis of the role of university programmes and internships in Brazilian journalism students' career choices

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Received: February, 27, 2014

Accepted: September, 8, 2014

## Abstract

This paper analyses representations that Journalism undergraduate students at the University of Brasilia (UnB) make of public relations and corporate communication as a possible choice for their professional careers. It purposes a triangulation of the qualitative and quantitative data concerning student socialization processes. It analyzes: data obtained from a questionnaire administered to 119 UnB journalism undergraduates; journalism undergraduates' reports on their 2012 internships; and in-depth interviews conducted with five university teachers attached to the Journalism Department. The results show that right from the beginning of their course students perceive the career possibilities offered by the communication sector. Finally, this paper highlights the importance of the trainee/internship periods and of students' interactions with the journalism teaching staff as spheres that tend to reinforce that representation of the labour market.

**Keywords:** Journalism students, socialization, professional careers, labor market, Brazil.

## Cuando un periodista decide tornarse un relaciones públicas: una investigación del rol de la universidad y de las pasantías en las selecciones de carrera de los estudiantes brasileños

## Resumen

Este artículo investiga las representaciones que los estudiantes universitarios de Periodismo de la Universidad de Brasilia hacen de las actividades de relaciones públicas y comunicación corporativa como selecciones posibles en sus carreras profesionales. Hace una triangulación metodológica de los datos cualitativos y cuantitativos acerca del proceso de socialización de los estudiantes. Analiza los datos obtenidos de un cuestionario aplicado a 119 estudiantes de Periodismo de la Universidad de Brasilia; las relatorías acerca de sus experiencias como pasantes; y entrevistas en profundidad hechas con cinco profesores del Departamento de Periodismo de la misma Universidad. Los resultados revelan que, desde el inicio de su formación, los estudiantes perciben las posibilidades de carrera ofrecidas por el sector de comunicación. Este artículo, finalmente, evidencia la importancia de los periodos de pasantías de los estudiantes y también de sus interacciones con los profesores de periodismo como esferas que permiten reforzar las representaciones sobre el mercado de trabajo.

**Palabras clave:** estudiantes de periodismo, socialización, carreras profesionales, mercado de trabajo, Brasil.

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### Standard Reference

PEREIRA, Fabio Henrique (2015): "When a journalist decides to become a PR: an analysis of the role of university programmes and internships in Brazilian journalism students' career choices". *Estudios sobre el Mensaje Periodístico*. Vol. 20, Núm. 2 (julio-diciembre), págs.: 1149-1168. Madrid, Servicio de Publicaciones de la Universidad Complutense.

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## 1. Introduction

This paper analyses representations that Journalism undergraduate students at the University of Brasilia (UnB), a Brazilian public university in the federal capital city of Brasilia, make of public relations and corporate communication as a possible choice for their professional careers. It seeks to evaluate their perceptions about such activities and how university and internship experiences participate in the construction of a professional culture shared by those future journalists.

The absorption of part of the contingent of journalism graduates by the public relations and corporate communication segments of the market is a recurrent phenomenon in other countries (Mellado et. al., 2010; Ruellan, 2004). What distinguishes the Brazilian case is the way in which the concept of professionalism is constructed (Le Cam and Ruellan, 2004) and the existence of a legally founded status for journalists that makes it mandatory for professional journalists to hold a degree in journalism (Albuquerque, 2006; Sant'Anna, 2009). That legal definition, common to all members of the class, has meant that journalism graduates working in other sectors such as communication advisor continue to consider themselves to be professional journalists.

The journalists' appropriation of corporate communication jobs is a subject covered by a significant body of literature in Brazil (Castanho, 2003; Sant'Ann, 2009; Pereira, 2013; Silveira, 2010; Silveira and Góis, 2011). However, there is a lack of studies investigating how such processes reflect on journalism education. It is commonly held that that journalism programmes are incapable of keeping up with the changes in the labour market; indeed, the university itself sometimes assumes such ideas. However, since it is the journalism programmes that qualify the great majority of Brazilian journalists, universities (and to some extent the internships) can be considered as an environment where students have their first contact with professional culture. That being so, what is the contribution of the university/internships to the construction of this particular work field's representation among students? What are their perceptions about working as a communication advisor? What is the role of teachers, students and internships colleagues in the diffusion of this specific aspect of the professional career among students?

With those questions in mind, this article sets out to investigate how the possibility of eventually coming to work in PR and corporate communication jobs affects the experiences of students at the University of Brasilia. To that end it analyses: I) Data obtained from a questionnaire administered to 119 UnB journalism undergraduates; II)

journalism undergraduates' reports on their 2012 internships; and III\ In-depth interviews conducted with five university teachers attached to the Journalism Department. The process enables a triangulation of the qualitative and quantitative data concerning student socialization processes.

## **2. Background**

For forty years, holding a degree in journalism was the legally determined condition for acquiring the status of journalist and gaining access to the corresponding labour market. A legal Decree (972/69) issued in 1969 by the Military Dictatorship regulated the profession of journalist in Brazil. It was only suppressed in 2009 by a decision of the Brazilian Federal Supreme Court but, for all the years it was in force, any individual holding a university degree in journalism, regardless of where he or she was working, was considered to be a journalist, and that position was vigorously defended by the journalists own trade unions (Albuquerque, 2006, Sant'Anna, 2009).

Broadly speaking, the law affected the professional field in three ways. First it stimulated the rapid proliferation of schools of journalism. According to Mick (2012), in the 1970s there were a mere 18 courses in the entire country but by 2010 the number was 316. In 2013, in the wake of the Supreme Court decision, the number of degree courses being offered is down to 307 (Ministry of Education, 2013). The university, however, continues to be the main gateway to the profession; a national poll conducted Mick and Lima (2013) in 2012 shows that 89.2% of journalists hold a bachelor's degree in journalism.

The law's second impact was on the Brazilian journalists' identity-constructing process. According to Albuquerque (2006), the existence of a statutory definition associated to the mandatory possession of a university degree tended to weaken the association between identity and professional activity. Furthermore, he contends, it inhibited labor unions from establishing restrictive definitions of what constituted a professional journalist, since such definitions could result in the exclusion of a part of the trade unions' members.

Thus the university can be seen as a space for the construction and negotiation of a journalistic culture (Pereira and Sousa, 2012) in which eventual adjustments to professional identity are made (Naid-Bouda, 2010). That is particularly apparent in the Brazilian case because their university training becomes an experience that almost all future journalists have in common. Possibly it does so in anticipation of some questions related to professional identity and practice that will be taken up later when the journalist actually enters the labour market.

A third consequence of legally defining the status of the Brazilian journalist was to blur the boundaries formerly separating the fields of journalism, public relations and corporate communication. Currently around 40% of Brazilian journalists work in communication advisory functions (Mick and Lima, 2013). Their appropriation of that labour space began in the 1980s at a moment when the corporate communication sector was experiencing a process of expansion in Brazil (Sant'Anna, 2009). In this process, the journalist class sought to associate its ideas of professionalism to the practices of corporate communication by viewing the latter as an extension of the jour-

nalistic newsrooms practice (Le Cam and Ruellan, 2004). In other words, it was possible to maintain the status of journalist acquired via a university education, even when actually working in the fields of corporate communication.

That phenomenon has been accompanied by debates among professionals, teachers and both journalist and public relations trade unions (Pereira, 2006; Sant'Anna, 2009; Silveira, 2010). The result in Brazil has been a relative deflation of the field of public relations and there has been a drop in the number of public relations degree courses on offer (in 2013 there were 90) and, furthermore, the very legitimacy of public relations as a profession has been called into question, being seen by many as a mere "events organizing" (Sant'Anna, 2009). Furthermore, among many journalists there is a persistent discourse that tends to attribute less legitimacy in terms of a professional career, to the work in corporate communication as if it were merely an option for those journalists that were unsuccessful working on media newsrooms (Lopes Filho et. al., 2011).

### **3. The university and socialization**

In journalism, the period spent at University is part of a far broader socialization process. We have adopted the concept of socialization used by Florence Le Cam (2013) which includes qualification and learning, initiation in professional practices as well as the constant adjustments to both identity and practices made in the course of the individual's personal trajectory. Le Cam holds that socialization is a continuous and dialogical process. It is nourished by professional relations, permanent adjustments to production routines, and adaptations to the practice of journalism so in that sense it must be seen as long-lasting phenomenon.

The present research focuses on a part of the socialization process of future journalists and complements other studies where the emphasis has been laid on the socialization of young journalists that occurs when they enter the professional world of the news media (Kunczik, 1997; De León, 2003).

In alignment with the proposal put forward by Le Cam (2013), we will analyse two dimensions of the process. First, the sociological aspect, which presupposes a relation between the individual trajectories and the interactions that students engage in with a variety of actors (family, course colleagues, teachers, professional journalists, etc.) during their passage through the schools of journalism. In that light the research investigates the process of negotiating a professional culture and structuring an identity based on relations with a certain set of social actors. This presupposition underlies our concern to situate the journalism course teachers and the internship experiences as important actors and spaces in the qualification of future journalists.

The second dimension of socialization is discursive and refers to the representations of the profession shared by journalism students. Such discourse is framed by a system of rules and values but it also has to do with the collective imagery and myths typically associated to the profession (the journalist as a mediator, as a social watchdog over political institutions, etc.) that constitute an important ideological binder maintaining the groups cohesion and the stability of journalistic practices (Deuze, 2005; Ruellan, 1993).

#### 4. Methodology

This study is an attempt at methodological triangulation. It consists of three-way cross-referencing of the results gathered from the questionnaires, from the in-depth interviews and from the documental analysis.

The background to this research is the journalism degree course at the University of Brasília. In 2012 there were 304 students enrolled in it, 64% of them women. The teaching staff consisted of 22 teachers 15 of whom held PhDs and 19 of whom were full-time. The four-year course is a balanced mix of vocationally-oriented and theory-orientated studies.

In 2011 the faculty started to offer a degree course in “Organizational Communication” expressly aimed at preparing professionals “capable of planning, formulating strategies for and managing communication projects in consonance with social responsibility, professional and ethical considerations and the demands of society as a whole<sup>2</sup>”. The idea is to offer a different qualification from that offered by the traditional public relations courses and one that is more aligned with labour market demands that have emerged in the field of communication advisory services and corporate and business journalism; a demand that has been growing faster than demands in the market of more traditional media forms (Sant’Anna, 2009).

##### 4.1. The student sample

A quantitative/qualitative questionnaire was administered on November 2011 to 119 journalism students at University of Brasilia out of a total group of 304 enrolled in the course. To ensure representativity of the different stages of qualification in journalism, the sample group was drawn from students in each of the course’s four years. On average students took 20 minutes to fill in the questionnaire. Of the 36 questions that make up the questionnaire we chose four that address the following aspects: their evaluation of the qualification being offered, the prospects they envision in regard to a professional career, and the professional status of journalist. The confidence level determined for this survey was 90% and the margin of error was 6%.

The tabulation process worked with the frequency of determined answers (expressed as a %). In the item that sought to identify the degree of importance attributed to University activities, a scale of 1 to 5 was used (1. Not important at all; 2. Of little importance 3. Somewhat important; 4. Very important; 5. Extremely important). A similar scale was used for the answers on professional values/status (1. Not at all; 2. To a small extent; 3. to some extent; 4. To a great extent; 5. To a very great extent). In both cases, for analysis purposes answers 4 and 5 were considered to be “Positive Evaluations”.

The answers were then grouped according to the course year of the respondents (years 1 to 5). The aim was to detect variations over the period of the course in respondents’ representations.

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<sup>2</sup> In: Comunicação Organizacional – Apresentação [http://fac.unb.br/site/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=415&Itemid=170](http://fac.unb.br/site/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=415&Itemid=170)

## **4.2. Analysis of internship reports**

The analysis of UnB journalism students' internship reports for 2012 was conducted from February to April 2013. The report files were provided by the Academic Integration and Accompaniment Board. It was originally intended to analyze data obtained from the reports of earlier years but they were unavailable at the time, having been forwarded to the University Archives department for micro-filming.

177 reports were analyzed. Information gathered concerned the trainee contracting companies/organizations, the stage of the course the student was at the time of internship, and the activities undertaken as part of the trainee internship. In the classifying and coding process the fields "organization/company" and "activities undertaken" were regrouped under a single heading, "Fieldwork" because we considered the answers in those two fields to be complementary in classifying the nature of the internship<sup>3</sup>. The macro-categories used in the classification of the various fields of activity were the same as those used in the questionnaire administered to students to investigate their definitions of possible future areas of professional activity, namely: 1. Mainstream News Media; 2. Miscellaneous Content; 3. Teaching and Research; 4. Public Relations/Corporate Communication. It was originally developed by Mellado et al. (2013) for the cross-national Journalism Students Project survey.

Finally we correlated the answers to the item on field of professional activity with the students' course years although this latter information was not always included in their reports.

## **4.3. Interviews with teachers**

5 teachers from the UnB's Journalism Department were interviewed in April 2013. The criteria used to select the interviewees were: their involvement with journalism study disciplines (theory or practice), their distribution in the various course years, and their professional experience. Semi-structured, in depth interviews were conducted based on a single script divided into three parts or areas of interest: career, teaching experience, and professional ideology and relations with the labour market. Interviews took from 30 to 90 minutes.

## **5. Results**

### **5.1. The students' representations**

The focus of our analysis was on the representations that students make of the professional labour world of journalism and the way they view the university's role in relation to that context. To that end we administered questionnaires to UnB journalism students, 65% of whom were women. Their average age was 21.1 and the student sample was drawn from each of the four course years.

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<sup>3</sup> There were situations in which the student had been contracted by a media company, but to carry out activities in the area of corporate communication for the organization. Also, the descriptions of the activities undertaken were not always sufficiently detailed to provide a clear idea of what the student had actually done.

Table 1: Journalism students interviewed by course years

First year	22.9%
Second year	23.7%
Third year	19.5%
Fourth year	24.6%
Fifth year	9.3%*
*Those respondents that marked the option "Fifth Year" are behind in their studies. Only valid answers were considered for data tabulation. In regard to the distribution of data according to course years, attention was paid to signs of consistent variations and they have been highlighted in bold in the tables.	

### 5.1.1. Assessment of the university

Students answering the questionnaire were asked to evaluate the set of activities unfolded by the School of Journalism. Three of the items concerned the relations between journalism and public relations as possible future work areas. The items were: "Conceptually validate public relations/corporate communication as part of the journalists' field"; "Validate only work in news media as the professional practice of journalism"; "Differentiate the specific and distinctive place that journalism has within public communication".

The analysis of responses pointed to a refusal on the part of students to accept a restrictive definition of journalism practice even while they were still in the process of acquiring their qualification. Only 10.1% of respondents gave a positive evaluation of the item: "Validate only work in news media as the professional practice of journalism". In regard to the field of corporate communication, the students were divided: 46.6% favoured "Conceptually validate public relations/corporate communication as part of the journalists' field" while 48.3% preferred "Differentiate the specific and distinctive place that journalism has within public communication".

The analysis of the evolution of responses according to the course year showed very few variations among the students' representations. In terms of percentages there was a slight reduction comparing the first to the fourth year students in the numbers of those respondents that thought the university should validate work in corporate communication as a legitimate part of the journalistic field. There was also a notable concentration found among first year students that considered it to be important/extremely important for the university to validate only media work as being the legitimate field of action of professional journalists (see Table 2).

Table 2: Respondents' evaluations of University activities associated to the relations between journalism and public relations as professional fields of action, by level of studies.

		Level of Studies				
		First year	Second year	Third year	Fourth year	Fifth year
Conceptually validate public relations/corporate communication as part of the journalists' field	Not important at all	1	2	2	3	2
	Of little important	3	2	2	3	1
	Somewhat important	9	10	7	12	3
	Very important	13	11	11	8	4
	Extremely important	0	3	1	3	1
<b>Total</b>		26	28	23	29	11
		Level of Studies				
		First year	Second year	Third year	Fourth year	Fifth year
Validate only work in news media as the professional practice of journalism	Not important at all	5	8	7	7	4
	Of little important	7	10	4	8	5
	Somewhat important	10	9	10	10	2
	Very important	5	1	2	2	0
	Extremely important	0	0	0	2	0
<b>Total</b>		27	28	23	29	11
		Level of Studies				
		First year	Second year	Third year	Fourth year	Fifth year
Differentiate the specific and distinctive place that journalism has within public communication	Not important at all	0	2	0	1	1
	Of little important	3	2	3	8	0
	Somewhat important	12	10	6	7	5
	Very important	6	11	8	11	2
	Extremely important	6	2	6	2	3
<b>Total</b>		27	27	23	29	11

**5.1.2. Status, values and professional careers**

The second group of items addressed the way in which the respondents define professional status and values associated to working in corporate communication. It could be seen that they share the opinion that journalists maintains their professional status even when they are actually engaged in other activities – which is in alignment with the former legal definition which established a degree in journalism as the main mechanism for achieving that condition. Only 16% of the respondents agreed with the proposition that: “The journalist who has never worked in media loses his/her status as a journalist”. The percentage was even lower (10.1%) of those that agreed with the

statement “The media journalist who changes to a job in another communication sector loses his/her status as a journalist”.

On the other hand, a larger percentage of respondents considered that there were distinctions between the value systems and social roles of journalists and those of public relations professionals. 37.8 % agree that “the value system for public relations practitioners is very different from that of media journalists”; another 39.5% agreed that: “The professional roles of media journalists and public relations practitioners are absolutely different”.

That duality in the responses seems to underscore the findings of an investigation of the processes that manage journalism’s professional frontiers conducted by Ruelan (1993). That author describes a situation of relative openness in regard to the professional terrain (which he refers to as “*profissionalisme du flou*” [imprecise professionalism]) apparently designed to allow for the incorporation of new practices – which seems to be consistent with the idea that journalists maintain their professional status even when they are working in other communication sectors. At the same time, journalists proffer a normative discourse alluding to the supposed “purity” of their practices (values and social roles) whose underlying purpose would be to maintain the group’s cohesion and protect it from external actors (in this case, “amateurs”). What is interesting here is that the same process can be observed among the journalism undergraduates.

Table 3 sets out an analysis of students’ perceptions of status, value systems and social roles in regard to journalism and public relations, according to course years. There are no notable variations among the years in regard to status. On the other hand there is a gradual increase from the first year to the fourth in the number of students that believe that there are differences in both value systems and social role between the two.

Such results suggest a possible evolution of the representation the students make of journalism and corporate communication practices and that may be linked to adjustments to identity concepts that are made as part of the socialization process that occurs in the university.

Table 3: UnB journalism students’ evaluations of relations between journalists and PR professionals regarding status, professional values, and roles, by course year.

		Level of Studies				
		First year	Second year	Third year	Fourth year	Fifth year
The media journalist who changes to a job in another communication sector loses his/her condition as a journalist	Not at all	10	11	8	9	4
	To a little extent	11	14	6	17	4
	Some extent	4	2	5	1	0
	To a great extent	2	1	4	1	2
	To a very great extent	0	0	0	1	1
Total		27	28	23	29	11

		Level of Studies				
		First year	Second year	Third year	Fourth year	Fifth year
The value system for public relation practitioners is very different from media journalists	Not at all	1	1	1	0	0
	To a little extent	13	8	4	10	2
	Some extent	9	9	6	7	2
	To a great extent	4	8	9	11	5
	To a very great extent	0	2	3	1	2
Total		27	28	23	29	11
		Level of Studies				
		First year	Second year	Third year	Fourth year	Fifth year
The professional roles of media journalists and public relations practitioners are absolutely different	Not at all	2	3	1	1	0
	To a little extent	9	8	6	8	2
	Some extent	9	7	7	5	3
	To a great extent	7	10	8	14	3
	To a very great extent	0	0	1	1	3
Total		27	28	23	29	11

Finally, we examine the data concerning the way students’ envisage their future careers according to their chosen areas. 57.6% expect they will enter the labour market working in mainstream news media and 25.4% in communication advisory bodies. 11.9% selected Miscellaneous Content and 5.1%, Teaching and Research. The percentage of students declaring they would like to work in Mainstream News Media went up to 62.1% in response to the question “If you could choose, in which communication area would you like to work in for the rest of your professional career?”, while 21.6% marked the option public relations/corporate communication.

Analyzing those results grouped by year of studies (Table 4) showed an observable increase from the first course year to the fourth/fifth year in the number of students (from 3 to 11) that considered the “public relations/corporate communication” sector as a work option for the start if their careers. The number of students that would like to work in “Mainstream News Media” however showed no such variation by course year. We found a relative stability in the responses regarding the communication sector that the students would prefer to work in for the rest of their professional careers save for a slight oscillation in regard to area of “Miscellaneous Content”, detected among students in the third year of the course.

Table 4: Career prospects envisioned by UnB Journalism students by communication sector and by course year.

		Level of Studies				
		First year	Second year	Third year	Fourth year	Fifth year
In which communication area do you think you will begin to work in when you finish your studies?	Mainstream News Media	14	17	15	15	7
	Miscellaneous Content	8	1	2	3	0
	Teaching and research	2	1	0	2	1
	Public Relations/Corporate Communication	3	9	6	9	2
	Total	27	28	23	29	10
		Level of Studies				
		First year	Second year	Third year	Fourth year	Fifth year
If you could choose, In which communication area would you like to work in for the rest of your professional career?	Mainstream News Media	18	18	9	19	7
	Miscellaneous Content	5	5	9	6	0
	Teaching and research	1	2	2	2	1
	Public Relations/Corporate Communication	1	3	3	2	2
	Total	25	28	23	29	10

### 5.2. Socialization in the internships

The variations detected in the data derived from the questionnaires suggest that some limited changes occur in the students' perceptions of the professional practice of journalism and public relations as possible fields to work in. One explanation for that change could be the process of socialization that occurs during their trainee/internship periods. Indeed one piece of qualitative research on the professional careers of Brazilian journalists (Pereira, 2013) has already demonstrated how much importance professionals in those fields attribute to the internships, which they see as fundamental spheres of learning and of access to the labour market. The analysis of the internship reports made available by the University of Brasilia's administration department shows that the public relations/corporate communication sector is responsible for contracting 49.7% of the contracts journalism course trainees/interns, which is a slightly higher percentage than that of the Mainstream News Media (45.8%).

Those figures have lot to do with the singular characteristics of the local labour market. Brasilia is the federal capital of Brazil, so many of the posts in the public and government communication sectors are concentrated there. Thus, even though it may not be viewed as the ideal sector to work in from the long-term career point of view, the communication sector has become a viable and increasingly common option for professional learning and gaining access to the jobs market.

The grouping of data according to the students’ course years shows that most of the students engaged in trainee or internship activities are in the 3rd and 4th years of the course<sup>4</sup>. It was found that public relations/corporate communication employs more 3rd year students while 4th year students prefer to serve their trainee periods in Mainstream News Media (Table 5).

Table 5: Distribution of internships by field of activity. Source: internships reports (DAIA/UnB)

		Level of Studies				
		Not informed	Second year	Third year	Fourth year	Fifth year
Field of work	Mainstream News Media	2	0	32	47	0
	Miscellaneous Content	0	0	3	4	0
	Teaching and research	0	1	0	0	0
	Public Relations/Corporate Communication	6	8	43	30	1
Total		8	9	78	81	1

That inversion of preferences suggests that there are underlying factors involved that need to be investigated. Possibly students evaluate internships served in corporate communication as extensions of the learning process and an enhancement of their professional careers while the mainstream news media are seen as the real gateway to the labour market. It may be easier to be hired by as press assistance in Brasilia (it offers more posts) and that would be what encourages students to opt for the sector. At the same time the competition to get into the media sector may be more intense or it may be more difficult. Accordingly, students may view the latter option as more legitimate from the professional point of view, given the possibility of their being hired after they have concluded the course (a process that is more complicated in communication advisory bodies linked to the public/government sector where hiring is usually based on competitive civil service entrance examinations).

**5.3. Interaction with teachers**

Based on the analysis of professional careers and their relations with ideologies and institutional change proposed by Strauss (1992), we endeavour to discern the possible relations between the trajectories in journalism and/or corporate communication of the university teachers that were interviewed, their values and representations regarding the professional incumbencies of a ‘journalist’ and that of a communication advisor and the way in which those factors make themselves felt in their teaching practices, interactions with the students and discourse on the labour market.

<sup>4</sup> In fact the internal regulations of the university itself forbid trainee activities prior to the 3rd year.

All five of those interviewed had worked in newsrooms and 4 of them had also had professional experience in the field of corporate communication. In their discourse, these teachers sought to underscore the differences between the work of journalists and advisors but, at the same time, the four teachers that had worked in corporate communication addressed the incorporation of this fieldwork into the scope of the journalism labour market as if it were perfectly natural:

T1: Communication advisor bodies can no longer be left in the hands of journalists alone, as it used to be [...]. It involves publicity, public relations, corporate communication as such, internal, external and administrative communication and the institutional image, so you cannot expect that a journalist or a team of journalists [would be capable of doing it all].

T2: I was a press adviser and I could see quite clearly that I was in that position to manipulate my journalist colleagues and on many occasions when I found myself part of a team doing precisely that manipulating work I found myself forced to do so. I wanted to go back to journalism because I was dissatisfied with that kind of conduct [...]. The expansion of the labour market [in Brasilia] has been precisely in the area of corporate communication. More and more, the proportion of journalists working as communication advisor is greater than those working on newsrooms [...]. Journalists have been drifting to this field because they have been out of a job. I went to work in corporate communication because it paid better. I wanted to earn more; it was a financial matter.

T3: [Journalism and corporate communication] are two different things. I believe a distinction must be made between the two roles. Journalism means capturing information, subjecting it to relevance criteria, you have to consider its value as news, deal with the truth, transmit the truth. It stops being journalism the moment the communication advisor invents something or lies or fictionalizes (which does not usually happen). But if the work involves certain procedures like aggregating news value, and the verification, writing up and diffusion of information, then why shouldn't it be called journalism?. The job market in the press advisory area is a rich one; it gets confused with marketing, with political marketing and there are many journalists migrating to it.

T4 [the only one that has never worked in a journalism and corporate communication function]: To me they are two distinct professions, as they are in several other countries. I do not think that journalists and communication advisor need to have the same qualifications or that the two kinds of work are equivalent to one another. I do not believe that the work of a communication advisor is journalistic work if you look at what the essence of journalism is. If a communication advisor were to effectively to play the role of journalist and follow all the principles of good journalism, then he would be an awful press relations officer. He is going to be terrible. He is going to be almost a dishonest adviser [...] The job of a communication advisor is a great job but why should a very good communication advisor have to be called a journalist?

T5: Communication is not just a way of transmitting a piece of information, it is a strategy and that strategy involves political, organizational, social and even financial concepts [...]. I believe that a press relations advisory body definitely needs journal-

ists. However, there may be other functions within the sphere of a communication advisor body that do not necessarily need to be performed by journalists but, rather, by Public Relations personnel for example.

Two points stand out in these extracts from the interviews. First, the relation between the actual professional experience of the interviewee and the way in which he forms or defines the professional limits and competency of journalists and the way they relate to the work of a communication advisor. Second, the homology of students' and teachers' representations: in both cases, there is a noticeable discourse emphasising the differences between the values and roles of journalists and those of PRs and corporate communication personnel, but it is a discourse that does not preclude or disqualify the entrance of journalists into this new labour market area (except, obviously in the case of Teacher T4). We cannot distinctly affirm that the students acquired those representations in the university classrooms, in their contact with the teachers, but there certainly seems to exist a circulation of a set of perceptions regarding the labour market for journalists in Brasilia and the possibilities of employment that are opened up in the field of corporate communication.

In constructing their discourse on the labour sphere, the teachers that were interviewed articulate a definition of the journalist and a set of associated skills and incumbencies, some drawing the profession closer and some setting it further apart from the neighbouring fields. The duality apparent in the answers on the mandate of the journalist-communication adviser is linked to the very lack of precision in the definition of the profession in Brazil. It seems to oscillate between, on the one hand, a more open and pragmatic concept that owes its existence to the Law of 1969, which conditioned the status of journalist to the individual's holding a university degree in journalism, and on the other hand a more essentialist definition based on professional practices and ideology that associates journalism to ideas like the production of information, independence in regard to sources, and the ideal of serving the public interest and so on (Deuze, 2005).

To some extent, this set of interpretations structures the teachers' interactions with the students, either in the way they refer to the real practices of journalistic coverage, which is marked by relations between the journalists and those working in communication (T3 and T4), or in the way they anticipate, in the classroom or in their informal talks with students, the realities of the respective labour market (T4). Those interactions seem to reinforce the idea that the university is a space where the socialization of journalism students effectively takes place especially in the aspects of negotiating an identity and constructing discourse in regard to the profession.

## **6. Discussion**

The results underscore the role played by the university as one of the possible spaces for the negotiation of the journalists' professional identity and culture. In the specific case of the status attributed to the journalist that decides to work in the sphere of corporate communication, the research survey shows how the experience of studying in a journalism programme enables students to anticipate the actual dynamics of the journalism labour market. That means that while the initial explanation was that a jour-

nalist's decision to go into corporate communication rather than journalism as such was said to be the difficulty of getting a job in editorial copy desk offices they encountered AFTER they had already graduated, the questionnaire data shows that future journalists visualize their entry into the field of corporate communication as a possible field of professional employment while they are still only students.

That does not mean considering the university qualification process as being a mere mechanism for initiating students into the journalistic culture or for reproducing in an uncritical manner the dynamics of the professional labour market. Actually, the experience of undertaking a higher education course can be seen as a specific point or moment in the trajectory of future journalists in which different cultures (professional, academic, political, etc.) come together and confront one another. It enables the circulation of a variety of actors: students, teachers, journalists, communication advisers and so on. In this case the trainee activities and internships are just a part of a far broader process of exchanges among the trainees' work-related (or pre-work related) experiences, the learning that takes place in the classroom, and all sorts of other interactions that the future journalists maintain among one another, with their teachers and with other professionals.

Our discussion must address the role of the university qualification and training as a sphere that reinforces or changes the professional identity and values of journalists. The overall framework portrayed by the analysis of the data obtained through the administration of a questionnaire to students and distributed according to their course years shows a relative homogeneity among their responses. That would suggest the production and circulation of a certain discourse structuring the journalism profession that is appropriated by students PRIOR to their beginning a university degree course<sup>5</sup>. That process would tend to minimize the roles of local specificities and of the very socialization process that takes place within the university as spheres for the construction of professional values. These last seem to be more related to the political and professional cultures associated to journalism in different countries (Mellado et. al, 2013) and to the educational policies and professional regulations instituted by the respective national governments. At the same time there is a discourse reasonably well consolidated among professionals that tends to set higher value on questions such as talent and competence in the practical field of journalism to the detriment of the formal learning offered by higher education institutions (Frith and Meech, 2009).

That does not necessarily mean minimizing the role of the university or of the trainee and internship experiences in the journalism socialization process. Firstly, because a more refined analysis of the results points to the occurrence of adjustments to identity perceptions in regard to the journalists' mandate in their relations with the activities of corporate communication in Brazil. As the course proceeds the students

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<sup>5</sup> There have been some studies on the construction of collective imagery of the figure of the journalist in Brazil whether via cinema (Senra, 1997; Travancas, 2001) or literature (Costa, 2005). Very few authors, however, have made progress towards understanding the processes of construction and circulation of such discourse or the construction of a socially shared reference framework for the profession.

seem to acquire a clearer understanding of the professional practice and its associated values system so that they come to assimilate and reproduce a discourse regarding the corporate communication work similar to the one proffered by actual journalists and press relations advisers and their journalism teachers.

Furthermore, even if it is examined in isolation from what is actually a prolonged socialization process, the university experience must, above all, be seen as being in harmony with the logic of continuity (and not rupture) that marks the greater part of a journalist's trajectory. In fact, the period of university qualification cannot be viewed as a single moment in the process of forming/constituting/transforming a professional identity, but rather, it is immersed in an extensive continuum of adjustments, adaptations, changes and exchanges that typify a career. That means that although the alterations detected in this research do not appear to be highly evident in structural terms, they take on a different aspect when the analysis is made in a micro-sociological perspective focussing on long term changes.

Finally, in regard to the relations between the internship activities and those in the classroom and their role as variables that might explain the students' construction of their representations of the journalism career and the respective labour market, our view is that there is a false dichotomy between two lines of discourse whereby each one tends to insist on its primacy as the one "true" sphere of learning journalism. Our research has shown that the limitations of both those spheres of experience when seen against the background of the overall professional socialization process in journalism. In other words, both the practical training experiences and the time spent at the university are incapable, on their own, of encompassing the entire journalism learning process. To a certain extent the introduction to the practice of journalism is actually much more complex and polyphonic than it is generally thought to be. The process mixes individual trajectories, pre-work experiences in newsrooms and in corporate communication, the assimilation of a body of theoretical and practical knowledge in the classroom, and all the interaction that takes place with teachers and peers. There are also certain moments of confluence between what is taught in the classroom and the practical training activities, given that a considerable proportion of the university teachers have themselves had professional experience in journalistic and corporate communication but, in other moments, the values systems are completely different. Thus while one professional group may tend to place higher value on the internships and trainee periods, for example, minimizing university learning (Le Cam and Pereira, 2012), the two spheres actually appear to be immersed in a much wider set of individual and collective experiences. It is in fact impossible to distinguish between what was learned in the internships and what was learned in the faculty of journalism.

## **7. Conclusions**

In this article we have sought to find explanations for the choices journalism students at the University of Brasilia make regarding their professional careers, especially the aspect of the possibility of their working in the fields of corporate communication. We started from the need to re-examine the explanation commonly proffered by studies in this field, namely that journalism graduates only consider corporate communication

as a possible career option when they leave university and try to enter the labour market, and that it takes place as a result of the dearth of jobs for journalists in newsrooms. Our research has shown that right from the beginning of their course students perceive the career possibilities offered by the communication sector. We also realized the importance of the internship periods and of students' interactions with the journalism teaching staff as spheres that tend to reinforce that representation of the labour market, insofar as they are what makes it possible for them to deepen their understanding of the real employment conditions in the respective areas and of the reality of journalism and corporate communication practices. At the same time we have been able to perceive how the students' representations of the activities of communication advisor evolves as their journalism course unfolds, especially in regard to professional values and roles.

Our research strategy was to triangulate three different methodologies. This option was taken to address the need for a broader set of explanations for students' choices and representations concerning the labour market and professional values associated to journalism and communication advisor work. There was also an underlying interest in gaining an understanding of the set of subjacent interactions and their possible contribution to explaining those representations. On the other hand, we encountered certain limitations associated to this triangulation of methodologies. Indeed the very fact of working with a more expressive volume of data actually restricted our capacity to examine, in greater depth, all the possibilities suggested by the results that were obtained. Those limitations, however, were merely a consequence of our choice of methodologies and do not imply that there was any lack of rigor in the data analysis or invalidate our conclusions in any way.

Whether seen in the context of journalistic careers or of journalists' socialization processes this paper opens up other research possibilities. For example, what would be the role of the family in the students' construction of their representations of the profession and in their career choices? How are the different learning processes involved mediated in the daily round of the university experience? How, for example, is the journalistic culture negotiated and acquired by the students in their interactions with their peers? How is collective imagery regarding the profession assimilated during the students' trajectories?

Those questions actually reveal the extent of our incomprehension as to what really goes on during the period of formal qualification of the future Brazilian journalist. In a way, it shows that, in spite of the university course's having been historically constituted as the mandatory mode of gaining access to the labour market in journalism, there has been little progress towards getting beyond the sphere of merely normative debate on the question of the relation between the qualification process and the acquisition of a set of practices and a professional identity. Generally speaking our research efforts have been largely descriptive or prescriptive. There is a long pathway to be explored to arrive at an understanding of what happens during a student's passage through a journalism programme.

## 8. Acknowledgement

This work was supported by the Brazilian National Counsel of Technological and Scientific Development (CNPq); and University of Brasilia.

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