

Journalism Education in Turkey in the Spiral of Neoliberal Policies and Technological Transformation: Problems, Pursuits, and Suggestions

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Abstract: In recent years, radical changes in journalism due to political developments and technological innovations have accelerated the debate on the quality and future of journalism education. Today, as in the rest of the world, journalism academics in Turkey are faced with the need to restructure journalism education in line with the transformation of journalism and the problems as well as needs that come with it. Considering the structural problems of the media sector in Turkey and the need for quality journalism, the role of journalism academics in this process becomes even more important. On the other hand, in Turkey, where journalism education is a field with multifaceted problems because of neoliberal policies, how communication faculties and journalism departments can respond to the current needs of journalism education constitutes a critical issue. Based on these evaluations, this study focuses on the current needs and the pursuits for future journalism education of journalism academics in Turkey and their experiences under current conditions. With a qualitative research approach, interviews were conducted with seven faculty members of different backgrounds working in journalism departments affiliated to public and foundation universities in Turkey. According to the results, journalism academics had practices to structure training programs in line with the developments and needs in journalism and there were inequalities in this regard, especially in newly established departments. It was also revealed that the ongoing problems arising from higher education policies in journalism education generally complicate the efforts of journalism academics to respond to current needs.

Keywords: Journalism education, higher education policies, technological transformation, journalism departments, journalism academics

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Introduction

Journalism education has faced increasingly complex problems with the impact created in higher education and the media industry by the transformation of neoliberalism, which has become the dominant ideology in the world since the 1980s. This situation has raised the need for a redefinition since the 1990s in journalism education, which has adopted a trend towards teaching journalism business practices and developing professional standards all over the world, including Turkey, mainly by considering the sector (Deuze, 2006; Dursun, 2013; Gasher, 2005; Gaunt, 1992; İnal, 1996; Mensing, 2010; Ozbek, 1992; Tokgoz, 2003; Yildirim, 2006). The harmonization of universities and the media with market mechanisms and their removal from their public character with neoliberal policies have raised discussions about what journalism education, journalism, and academic education are and how they should be approached.

Calls for restructuring journalism education appear to have been voiced louder in recent years when journalism is experiencing political, economic, and technological dilemmas and is in a crisis of existence and legitimacy. In current international studies focusing on the future of journalism education, by recalling the rise of authoritarian governments in the world, developments in communication technology, and the loss of quality, reputation and trust experienced by journalism in this political-technological transformation and pressure environment, it is suggested that this conjuncture, in which access to accurate information has become critical, should be considered as a turning point in terms of shaping the future of journalism and journalism education (Creech, 2021; Goodman & Steyn, 2017; Hughes, 2019; Richardson, 2017).

The current debates, in which the tendency to focus on the sector and technology dominated by neoliberal ideology in journalism education is questioned again in parallel with political and technological developments, are of critical importance for Turkey, where journalism/journalism education is experienced with similar and unique problems as in the world. In Turkey, where the journalism profession is experiencing crises under intense political, economic, and technological pressure, where the mainstream media is dysfunctional and sectorally contracted, and where serious loss of quality and ethical problems arise in journalism, it is becoming increasingly important to review the practices and priorities with the tendency to focus on the sector in journalism education.

Today, journalism academics/educators in Turkey and all over the world face the need to respond to radical changes in journalism. It is known that the curriculum and even the department naming of journalism departments have been changed to adapt to the digital transformation in journalism. On the other hand, when the opinions reminding that the focus on technology in journalism education is part of a long-term trend that centers on concerns about the sector in academia and should not be made an end with its indispensability (Atabek, 2000; Creech, 2021) are considered, the question of the nature of the transformation in journalism education programs and the criteria by which they are created becomes important. In addition, in Turkey, where the number of journalism departments and students is increasing, it is also a question mark how

journalism departments respond/can respond to the current needs of journalism education with the ongoing problems arising from education/higher education policies. The situation of newly established faculties that have to respond to these needs under unequal conditions is a matter of serious uncertainty.

Journalism academics are undoubtedly the most significant interlocutors of the complex questions and problems related to the issues of journalism education that arise from higher education policies and gain a new dimension in line with political-technological developments in Turkey. However, in the journalism education literature in Turkey, which mainly includes studies on curriculum, student expectations, and the status of graduates, studies examining the attitudes or opinions of journalism academics on journalism education are rather limited (Atabek & Sendur-Atabek, 2014; Durna, Ozarslan, & Emre, 2020; Karaduman & Akbulutgiller, 2017). These studies are based on comparative interviews with academics, sector representatives, graduates, and students about the expectations from journalism education in general. In this context, in today's world, where the debates on the quality and future of journalism education are intensifying, it is important to examine the opinions and experiences of journalism academics who are the primary addressees of the subject. Based on all these discussions, the aim of this study is to comparatively reveal how journalism academics working in different universities (public and foundation) and journalism departments (well-established and newly established) in Turkey evaluate the current situation of journalism education, what kind of implementations they use to respond to current needs, and what their suggestions for the future are. It is foreseen that the study will contribute to the literature by focusing directly on the opinions and experiences of journalism academics about the current problems and needs of journalism education and considering different journalism departments comparatively.

Literature Review

In this section, the role of neoliberal policies in the transformation of universities and the effects of this transformation on journalism education in Turkey are outlined within the framework of the relevant literature. Subsequently, the current debates in the field of journalism education are presented.

Neoliberal Transformation in Higher Education

Neoliberalism shapes every area of life on a global and local scale according to market mechanisms as an attempt to revive capitalism. The issues raised by neoliberalism are multifaceted in the education system and higher education in particular. According to Brown (2017, p. 203), neoliberalism, which should be understood not only as an economic policy, but also as "a management rationality that envisions man only within the framework of homo oeconomicus" and extends market values and measurement systems to all areas of life, has restructured higher education within the framework of all these strategic plans for marketization.

According to the neoliberal policies that manifested themselves in the seventies and eighties in the world and peaked in the nineties, everything is a commodity that can be bought and sold (Onder, 2011, p. 188). With the penetration of market rationality into higher education in line with neoliberal policies, higher education has ceased to be a social and public benefit and has become a personal investment for the future envisioned mainly in terms of earning capacity (Brown, 2017, p. 210). As Ozbudun (2011, p. 91) points out, the neoliberal design of the university, which expresses a radical intervention in the university model that has been going on since the Enlightenment, is the end of the university as designed in the modern era, and more importantly the end of the descriptive logic of university, and it foresees the integration of the university with market processes and mechanisms. The ongoing process of the corporatization of the university is mainly driven by forms of evaluation that reduce educator autonomy and treat knowledge as a commodity and students as customers, imposing ruthless structures on the governance of higher education (Giroux, 2019, p. 286). In the neoliberal order, which erodes science and education – the basic functions of the university – with the logic of the market and spreads the discourse of "entrepreneurial university," the role assigned to universities is, in the words of Unal (2011), to direct their education programs in accordance with the needs of business life. In this order that transforms universities with all their structures and processes according to market rules and becomes increasingly permanent, science/knowledge, education, and technology become a fetish (Unal, 2011, p. 109-110).

In the capital order dominated by neoliberal ideology in universities, an understanding of education aimed at providing profession/job skills has become increasingly established. Uzunyayla and Ercan (2011) state that in line with this marketization process that determined education policies with the 1990s, education was put into an instrumental logic that was reduced to vocational training, and a process in which the functions of providing cultural and aesthetic equipment and being critical were pushed to the background has begun. In the words of Brown (2017), within this capital order where the understanding of "the university reconstructs itself through and for the market" is valid, the belief that "liberal arts is outdated" as an educational model has inevitably become widespread.¹ In the neoliberal university order, where educational policies that make higher education aimed at professional knowledge and labor force employment have become operational, the understanding of education aimed at critical and creative thinking and the development of participatory citizenship has been pushed to the background.

The beginning of the commercialization process of universities in Turkey is dated to the reflection of the marketist mechanisms put into practice in all areas of social life through the military coup of 1980 on universities (Hamzaoglu, 2011, p. 76). The process of adaptation to free-market conditions that have become observable in all layers of higher education since the 1990s has brought about the institutionalization of a pragmatic

¹ For a detailed reading on liberal arts education, which covers the general culture and critical thinking skills development of students rather than their technical skills, and the relegation of this educational tradition to the background with the neoliberal transformation of universities, see Brown (2017).

educational model and understanding aimed at meeting the needs of the capitalist sector whose connections with global capitalism have been getting stronger, as Nalcaoglu (1999) emphasizes. As a result of the "harmonization of the university with the market" understanding, the university has been drawn to the center of the market with applications such as evening education, paid universities, and virtual universities (Emre & Ozgun, 2010, p. 809). In addition, the number of universities seen as regional and local development tools in line with political preferences has increased unplannedly and inefficiently since the early 2000s due to the "a university in each city" approach.

In parallel with the harmonization of universities with market mechanisms in Turkey, communication faculties/journalism departments were also heavily affected by this transformation. the transformation of press and broadcasting schools into faculties in the 1990s was the beginning of this process.

Reflections of Neoliberal Transformation on Journalism Education in Turkey

With the neoliberal transformation process that started in Turkey in the 1980s, global and local power relations affecting higher education policies have intensely affected journalism education and the structural characteristics of the field. In 1992, press and broadcasting schools were transformed into communication faculties, and the number of communication faculties increased to seven with the ones established in the same year². This was a turning point when the transformation in communication/journalism education and the accompanying problems were opened to discussion. Since the 1990s, the intensity of the relations between variables such as capital-media-technology-education policies in communication and especially in journalism education has gradually increased (Tokgoz, 2003, p. 29).

Market-oriented education and employment policies that directed their training programs to vocational knowledge and to train a workforce and turned many of the universities opened one after another into "educational institutions that would delay the participation in the army of the unemployed for a few years" as Onder (2011, p. 190) said, had wide repercussions in communication/journalism education. Especially since the beginning of the 2000s, the opening of communication faculties one after another in line with the "one university in each city" policy, the establishment of communication faculties within foundation universities, which is a product of the commercialization of higher education, the introduction of the evening education program, and the rapid increase in the number of journalism departments and students have brought about many interrelated problems. According to Dagtas (2011), one of the most important reasons for the increase in communication faculties that were established with a populist attitude and market-centered understanding is that these faculties are the windows of the universities due to their popular features. Within the decade that has passed since 2011, when Dagtas stated that the policy of "a communication faculty for each university"

² These are the communication faculties in Ankara, Istanbul, Ege, Marmara, Anadolu, Gazi, and Selcuk Universities. For information on the establishment process of faculties providing communication/journalism education, see Oya Tokgoz (2003).

was directed towards the labor force needs of the market and that the number of faculties became nearly 50 with a populist approach, the number of communication faculties in Turkey has reached 70, and the number of journalism departments in formal education in Turkey has approached 40 (34 state and six foundation universities).³ In addition, there are 10 evening education and three distance education programs affiliated to some of these faculties.⁴

The harmonization of education/higher education policies with market mechanisms has intensively affected communication/journalism education in Turkey and has led to problems that have multiplied over time by being added to other variables. Relatedly, Uzun pointed out in her 2007 study that the lack of realistic policies for communication education and the employment of graduates, as well as the rapid quantitative increase in communication education, bring about problems related to the quality of education and the staff to provide training along with employment problems. More recent studies focusing on the current state of communication/journalism education reveal that the faculties and departments opened frequently in various cities lack the academic equipment, physical, and technical infrastructure required for a quality journalism education (Dincer, Kaderoglu Bulut & Comu, 2021; Laciner, 2014). Examining the current situation of journalism departments in Turkey from the aspect of higher education policies, Dincer et al. (2021) revealed that the opening of a journalism department in almost every city creates significantly unequal developments in terms of departments and leads to the lack of improved educational opportunities. As emphasized in the study, although the policies of massification in higher education are experienced on a global scale, these policies that are guided by political and regional reasons in Turkey lead to multifaceted and deepening crises in journalism education.

One of the most important effects of neoliberal higher education policies on communication/journalism education has been the deepening of the distinction in favor of technique regarding the theory-technique duality (Emre & Ozgun, 2009, p.84). In the post-1980 period, higher education was reduced to vocational training, and education programs were directed to a structuring focused on vocational knowledge and technical skills. It was also a period in which media-capital integration was experienced in Turkey, the communication sector expanded with the effect of technological developments, and the labor demand increased in this direction. In this period, where communication faculties are expected to train people who know the business in the media sector, the structuring of the departmental and training programs of the institutions providing communication/journalism education according to mass media and professional principles along with the increasing concentration in practice-oriented courses has

³ There are journalism departments in four universities abroad (TRNC and Turkic Republics) that have affiliation/equivalency to YOK (two state and two private).

⁴ The number of communication faculties and journalism departments may constantly change due to reasons such as opening new faculties in line with political preferences, changing the name of the department in the faculties, making decisions to open evening education and distance education programs, or to close existing programs. The numbers provided in this study were obtained from *OSYM 2021 Guide* and *YOK Atlas* database.

formed the basis of academia-sector and theory-practice distinctions (İnal, 1996; Ozbek, 1992).

The theory-practice distinction and the academic-sector tension that underpins it have been subjects of ongoing debates regarding the quality of communication/journalism education and how it should be structured in Turkey since the 90s (Atabek, 2000; Dagtas, 2011; Dursun, 2013; Emre & Ozgun, 2010; İnal, 1996; Ozbek, 1992; Yildirim, 2006). The fact that the sector's expectation from communication faculties is journalist candidates who are more technically skilled rather than having academic competence has inevitably led to the spread of an instrumental education approach. The positions of institutions and educators in institutions, as Atabek (2000) points out, can be at any point in a spectrum where the demands of the sector are fully legitimized at one end and completely rejected at the other. The theory-practice distinction that Dagtas (2011) describes as a situation closely related to how and where the faculty members look at the world and the positions taken towards it represent a stance that also determines the structuring of the faculties according to Emre and Ozgun (2010). Dominated by capital owners since 1990's, the media industry seeks for a workforce "to work on the assembly line", as often emphasized in the literature (Dursun, 2013; İnal, 1996; Ozbek, 1992). This expectation excludes a critical and questioning academic education perspective and sets forth both the theory-practice dichotomy, which is an invalid distinction, and the understanding defined as sector expectation as an inconclusive discussion topic. Atabek (2000)'s emphasis on reconsidering the positions in the face of these demands by pointing out that the demands of the sector are not homogeneous requires more attention in today's world, where the dilemmas of the media industry and journalism as a profession are intensifying.

Current Debates in Journalism Education

According to Giroux (2019, p. 283), one of the pioneers of critical pedagogy, to consider public opinion and higher education as democratic public spaces requires a rejection of the view that reduces them to places of workforce preparation. In the current debates on the problems and future of journalism education, it is stated that the sector-centered view deepens the crises in journalism education. Mensing (2010), who questioned the curricula focused on educating students for jobs in the news industry and the industry-centered education model in journalism education, suggested that the (liberal) assumptions in this model also make it difficult for journalism educators to respond to the current crisis/opportunities in journalism, and she proposed the development of a community-centered education model. Ten years after Mensing, Creech (2021) questioned the market-oriented approach in journalism education again, emphasizing the need for an educational approach that goes beyond business education, made applicable for the digital age, and is shaped around a commitment to public values with the tradition of liberal arts.

The crisis of truth that emerged during the 2016 US Presidential elections and the Brexit referendum process, as can be observed in the relevant literature, has given impetus to

the debates on the future of journalism education in recent years. In their preface to a compilation of the problems and needs of journalism education in the 21st century on a global scale, Goodman and Steyn (2017) argue that at a time when waves of strong nationalism are spreading around the world, including in the United Kingdom, France, the United States, Turkey, and the Philippines, the credibility of the press is being shaken, and the need for accurate information, truth, justice, and ethics is increasing, the struggle of journalism educators against such undemocratic tendencies is important. Richardson (2017) emphasizes the priorities of journalism education based on the problem of fake news and states that there is rarely a more challenging period that will lead journalism educators to rethink the goals of journalism on a world scale. Arguing that the impositions of neoliberal ideology should be challenged in journalism education and research, Hughes (2019) points out that we live in an age where journalism is used for ideology, propaganda, disinformation, and lies and emphasizes that it is more important than ever for journalism educators to address the fundamental questions of what the function and social role of journalism is.

The current debates in the international literature on the quality and future of journalism education are fairly new for Turkey, and there is a lack of this issue in the national literature. The study by Durna, Ozarslan, and Emre (2020) on the current problems and needs of journalism and journalism education through interviews with journalists, journalism academics, experts in professional organizations, and non-governmental organizations is significant in this respect. In the study where suggestions for the needs in journalism education were presented, it was emphasized that there is a necessity to review the established journalism understanding imposed by the sector, the responsibility of faculties/departments in this direction, the need for professional practice, the need for training programs which take the balance of theory-practice and the transformation in journalism as well as the problems it brings with it into consideration.

As can be seen from the relevant literature, current political developments and technological changes have pointed out new problem areas in journalism education along with journalism and brought the pursuit of restructuring to the agenda. However, as mentioned in the study of Durna, Ozarslan, and Emre (2020), the current problems of communication faculties and journalism departments, in particular in Turkey (the increasing number of faculties and students, the unemployed graduate rate, lack of qualified staff, and the state of the sector), continue to create obstacles to an education structure focusing on current developments. This study focuses on the practical problems experienced by journalism academics who have to respond to the current needs of journalism education under all circumstances and their search for solutions.

Method

In today's conditions, the radical change in journalism brings forward the need to restructure journalism education. In this regard, this study aims to reveal the state of journalism education in Turkey from the experiences and perspectives of journalism

academics in different universities and journalism departments. The study was designed according to the qualitative research approach and was carried out with the interview technique. Qualitative research reflects a research attribute in which the knowledge of the social is compiled from people's own expressions and narratives (Kumbetoglu, 2005, p. 38). In contrast to the positivist approach, which assumes objective reality in the social phenomena, the generalizability of research, and the objectivity of the researcher, qualitative research and methods tend to address social reality with a holistic and flexible approach within the scope of the interpretive paradigm (Creswell, 2017a; Glesne, 2012; Kumbetoglu, 2005). The qualitative research approach, which aims to define and understand social phenomena mainly from the perspective of the participants and within their contexts, has been preferred as an appropriate approach for this study that aims to describe the state of journalism education in Turkey and how it is experienced under different conditions from the perspective of journalism academics who are most closely related to the subject.

Study Group

The idea behind qualitative research, which allows social reality and experiences to be handled with a holistic approach, is to purposefully select participants (or workplaces, documents, ...) that will help the researcher best understand the research problem and questions (Creswell, 2017). This study, which examines the current situation, problems, and needs of journalism education in Turkey comparatively within the framework of the opinions and experiences of journalism academics, was carried out with seven faculty members working in journalism departments of seven different universities in Turkey, five of which are public and two of which are foundation (private) universities. By using the purposeful (criterion) sampling method, journalism academic participants were determined to understand and compare the status of well-established and newly established journalism departments as well as the faculties affiliated to public and foundation universities. In addition, aiming at the contribution of academics with seniority and experience in journalism education to the research, the criteria of having at least five years of experience in teaching field/vocational courses (applied and/or theoretical) were also sought in the selection of the participants. In this context, ten academics with the status of faculty members working in universities (public-foundation) and journalism departments (established-new) with different qualifications in various regions and cities were contacted, and the research was carried out with seven participants who agreed to participate. Accordingly, two academics from foundation universities and five from state universities participated in the study. As a result, three academics from the departments with a history of more than twenty years in state universities and two academics from the departments that were established in the last decade and have been graduating students for several years took part in the study.

In the study, codes such as *Interviewee (1, 2, ...)* were used for the participating academics. The interviewee information is presented in Table 1 in terms of gender, type of university served, duration of study of departments, and duration of course experience.

Table 1.

Interviewee Information

	Gender	University (type)	Department (history of education)	Experience
Interviewee 1	M	Foundation	5-10 years	20 years and above
Interviewee 2	M	Foundation	5-10 years	20 years and above
Interviewee 3	F	State	5-10 years	11-15 years
Interviewee 4	F	State	20 years and above	5-10 years
Interviewee 5	F	State	5-10 years	5-10 years
Interviewee 6	M	State	20 years and above	16-20 years
Interviewee 7	M	State	20 years and above	11-15 years

An Ethics Committee Approval was obtained for the research, and the participants were informed about the subject and purpose of the study.

Data Collection

To reveal the current problems and needs of journalism education from the perspective of journalism academics, the interview technique and open-ended question forms were used as data collection tools in the study. Due to the geographical distance, the research was generally carried out by taking written opinions from the participants through e-mail interviews, and two participants were interviewed face to face. While face-to-face interviews in qualitative data collection are one of the most effective methods in terms of obtaining in-depth information and interaction with the participant, e-mail interviews, as indicated by Creswell (2017) as a convenient technique for collecting qualitative data and obtaining systematic data from a group of geographically dispersed people were also suitable for this study with participants from different regions and cities. In addition, with the onset of the pandemic process, e-mail interviews were advantageous in terms of continuing the research without interruption, giving participants freedom regarding time and space, providing the opportunity to think about their responses and give feedback, and ruling out the dominance of the researcher (Creswell, 2017; James & Busher, 2012).

In the open-ended questionnaires used in both face-to-face and e-mail interviews, the participants were initially informed about the subject and purpose of the research. Within the scope of the seven questions prepared, the participants were asked to provide opinions about the following:

- Their evaluation of the current state of journalism education in Turkey,
- The conditions of the departments in terms of journalism education; facilities/impossibilities concerning infrastructure and equipment (staff status, space, and technological facilities),
- Studies on current needs in journalism education in the last few years in their departments (changes in curricula, updating course contents, training activities to increase the

competencies of instructors, etc.); problems experienced during practice, and ways to solve them,

-Suggestions on the requirements of a modern and qualified journalism education in general and in Turkey.

They were also asked to indicate if there were any points they would like to add. The answers of the participants to the interview questions were generally satisfactory in terms of the purpose of the research. Only one participant was re-accessed for more detailed information about the department where he was employed, and feedback was received.

Data Analysis

The data obtained from the interviews in the study were analyzed through qualitative content analysis. Qualitative content analysis is an analysis method in which the explicit and implicit meaning of qualitative data is systematically defined, allowing inferences and interpretations based on the context of the data (Schreier, 2012). Schreier (2012, p. 1-9) defines qualitative content analysis as a systematic, flexible, and data-reducing method, which he explains as the process of categorizing the material subject to analysis based on a coding framework and bringing together the data that is meaningful for the research within the framework of inclusive themes and interpreting them.

Qualitative content analysis, a powerful and widely used method to analyze a large amount of qualitative data obtained from interviews (Schreier, 2012, p.3-4), has been preferred as a suitable analysis method in this study carried out with the interview technique. The first stage of the analysis was to break down and read all the data in the study. In the second stage, a temporary coding framework was created based on the research questions, and similar and differentiated data were encoded. Then, a coding framework was created again by taking into account the codes emerging from the data, and all the codes were brought together by two researchers and examined separately. In the final stage, three main themes agreed upon by both researchers based on common codes were determined, and the findings were presented and interpreted under these three basic headings/themes. Direct quotations from the participants were frequently included in the data analysis in line with the 'rich and detailed description' (Creswell, 2017) strategy to reflect the context and experiences as much as possible.

Findings and Interpretation

The State of Journalism Education: "Transferred Problems"

Studies carried out on different dates related to journalism education in Turkey have consistently revealed a negative picture of the state of journalism education, regardless of the subject focused. As can be seen from the relevant literature, journalism education in Turkey is a field with unsolved problems, mainly arising from higher education policies. When asked for their views on the current state of journalism education, the

participating academics gave answers that differed depending on the nature of the university/faculty/department they served. However, although their positions and perspectives differed, it was seen that the participants agreed that journalism education could not be handled independently of the problems in the education/higher education system that affected the educational process in various aspects and the situation of the media sector. *Interviewee 1* states that the state of journalism education in Turkey bears the traces of problems based on higher education policies and crises and uncertainties in the media, which can also be observed worldwide:

The state of journalism education cannot be considered successful in Turkey and worldwide. In general, the problems in university education are effective in the emergence of this situation. The competencies of universities have decreased, and their social legitimacy has been eroded. Factors that can be summarized as market conditions are the main reasons for this negative state. This problematic situation in universities is seen in journalism education, too. Moreover, journalism as a profession has become very problematic in Turkey and worldwide. The reason for this situation is market conditions, and its typical indicators are the tendency to monopolize, the deterioration in employment conditions, and the loss of editorial independence. All these negativities have been reflected in journalism education in various dimensions.

Similar to *Interviewee 1*, *Interviewee 2*, who has public university experience and is currently working at a foundation university, mentioned the structural problems of the media sector reflected in journalism education and criticized the common generalizations that journalism education is too theoretical and disconnected from the sector in this framework in his evaluation of the current situation in journalism education:

Journalism education in Turkey has emerged so that educated journalists can be trained, and the profession can be done as required. Today, looking retrospectively, the number of people with journalism education in the sector has increased, and journalism has developed considerably. However, other problems have arisen due to the ownership structure and the shrinking of the sector, and these are the problems that inevitably make the profession ideally undoable. When we look at the current situation today, the journalism sector in Turkey is experiencing severe problems in terms of economy, ethics, and reporting. But there is this situation reflected in journalism education. That is, it is as if the sector is excellent, and we cannot train students suitable for them. There is no such thing. At the point where journalism has come, we are again actually trying to do what we have to do.

In their evaluation, *Interviewees 1* and *2* also highlighted problems arising from basic education. Stating that students came to the communication faculties at a low level in terms of basic education, *Interviewee 2* commented that the "lack of knowledge accumulation due to the fact that Turkish language courses and social fields have been pushed to the background in high schools" was increasingly felt in the students and that this situation harmed the quality of the journalism inclination. *Interviewee 1* also emphasized the "invalidity of the verbal-numerical distinction," which he thought had a negative impact on the education system, regarding the quality of incoming students and the educators. Mentioning that "language and mathematics abilities support each other," *Interviewee 1* noted that mathematics knowledge has become more necessary for both the instructors and the students in today's world where current practices such as data journalism are required.

Interviewee 7, an academic in one of the well-established journalism departments, evaluates the current situation in journalism education within the framework of the problems related to the education/higher education system, employment policies, and the condition of the sector as follows:

When we look at the state of journalism education in Turkey, I find the policies regarding communication and particularly journalism education wrong, primarily in terms of the number of faculties and departments. As a result of the reflection of neoliberal policies on education, the majority of public and foundation universities in Turkey have communication faculties and journalism departments and programs in these faculties. This situation negatively affects the quality of education in the first place. On the one hand, when we consider the employment opportunities of the sector and the private and public areas where the department graduates can work, we witness the difficulties experienced by thousands of young people who graduate every year. On the other hand, the lack of qualified staff is another negative issue. Even if we do not have problems in general in terms of education staff and infrastructure, the fact that successful students do not prefer the department due to the type of score determined by the OSYM [Student Selection and Placement Center] and the conditions of the region we are in creates serious problems in education. In addition, the need to update the new ways of doing business that have emerged in journalism is in question for all of us, and especially the lack of expert training staff to give practical courses is evident in almost all journalism departments...

The overall education system that affects the quality of journalism education in many dimensions and the problems affecting newly established departments besides the developed ones due to new needs can be read from the evaluations of *Interviewee 3*. *Interviewee 3* reports the following about the state of journalism education, including the structural problems of the media, academia-sector tension, and the ways of dealing with the sector:

Journalism education in Turkey is an area with problems that are transferred forward. There are undoubtedly new dimensions and problems with the current state and transformation of journalism, but many of them are recurring problems. Journalism has changed; its structural problems have increased. When the journalistic environment in Turkey is considered, there is a need for quality journalism, and we have responsibilities in this direction. Of course, the journalism educator's sense of responsibility does not match the so-called expectations of the sector, and it was the same yesterday. Today, as always, we are in a scapegoat position due to the multidimensional crises in the sector. In an environment where the number of students is constantly increasing, what miracle is expected from communication faculties is another matter. In new faculties like ours, the academic staff's weakness in terms of quantity and quality is a fundamental problem. There is unplanned staffing with the understanding that "everyone can give lectures in communication faculties." Education is left to the hands of personal sacrifice due to the heavy course load. Not being able to devote time to scientific research also puts us in an unequal position in terms of career and education.

Interviewee 5, who is an academic in one of the new faculties like *Interviewee 3*, also comments on the current situation of journalism education by highlighting the unfavorable conditions in her department:

In today's conditions, it can be said that journalism education and journalism departments have a cumbersome structure. There are many reasons for this situation. With technological developments, the field of communication is advancing very fast, and it is almost impossible for communication academics to keep up with this speed. Being aware of new developments requires both time and cost. Academics drowning in the burden of lessons and administrative tasks and who cannot find

the opportunity for research due to poor conditions are forced to do high school quality teaching by focusing only on the subject they know. A primary problem for me is the formation of academics in journalism. We have academics who are familiar with the communication literature, but the fact that they are unaware and inexperienced in the sector prevents them from providing education by making an analytical evaluation.

Participants' evaluations of the status in journalism education differ according to their experiences and educational understandings. While *Interviewee 5* emphasizes the quantitative inadequacy of the academic staff and sector experience as a priority need, *Interviewee 6*, who works in one of the well-established faculties, states that they have problems due to unplanned staffing and notes the following about the current situation of journalism education:

Looking at the state of journalism education in Turkey, I see that a significant part of the issues is related to the problem of basic education. Although the faculties try to keep up with current and technological developments and do their best, I think their hands are tied in terms of the quality of the incoming students. In addition, there is some swelling or deficiency in our academic staff because of the lack of planning and the formation of new departments. However, it is not easy to overcome them. One of the critical problems in the academic community is human resource planning, which I think is also an important concern in the country...

Interviewee 4, an academic at one of the most established faculties of Turkey, refers to the need for structuring based on current and technological developments in journalism departments as a fundamental issue within the framework of her field of study/expertise:

Since my field of study is digital media, it would be appropriate to respond to the current situation of journalism education by looking at the developments in this manner. In journalism education, there are deficiencies in understanding dynamic technological inputs and the new problem areas they bring with them and adding them to the course contents. It is difficult to find an answer to the question of how a journalism education will find a solution to the new problem areas that come with everyone becoming an amateur producer and distributor of information and the employment problem that increases with robot journalism in Turkey and the world. We are in a period in which the current economic models are also collapsing. Technological developments are multiplying the existing problem areas, causing new ones. I think there is a need for an understanding of education that will respond to these developments.

Although each of the interviewees emphasized the need to develop an understanding of journalism education in accordance with the requirements of the age, especially academics in the more recently established faculties of communication reported the inadequacy of infrastructure-equipment and lack of staff as an important problem. In addition, it is seen that most interviewees felt the need to emphasize the effect of incoming student qualifications on journalism education in various aspects.

The Need for Change in Journalism Education: Practices, Searches, Inequalities

As mentioned in the literature section of the study, journalism educators all over the world are striving to create a training program that is compatible with the developments in journalism. In Turkey, it is observed that journalism curricula are being revised, new courses have been added to the programs, or existing course contents have been

updated. While the interviewed journalism academics gave information about the curriculum update practices carried out within the framework of the current conditions in the faculties they are in, they also provided various and striking clues about why these updates have become needed and what they mean in terms of the problems and future of journalism education.

Interviewee 7 noted that "digital communication technologies, which are becoming increasingly effective in the media sector and daily life, also affect journalistic practices, content and reader/user position" and that they added new courses to the curriculum to keep up to date in the face of these developments:

For example, while courses such as 'News Presentation Techniques in the Web Environment,' 'Audio and Video Editing,' 'Animation,' etc. were added to our training programs to adapt to the transformation in the professional field, on the other hand, 'Human Rights' and 'Social Gender' focused courses were included in order to raise responsible people/journalists, and the contents of the existing courses were reviewed. But just as important as updating journalism on new ways of doing business and the needs of journalism is that there should be qualified educators who can teach these courses properly...

Interviewee 7 said, "In addition to updates on transformations in the sector, courses that will provide students with intellectual accumulation and ethical responsibility are vital." For this reason, emphasizing that theory is also very important in journalism, *Interviewee 7* believes that professional/technical skills should be supported by a theoretical background; otherwise, "a journalist/journalist candidate cannot go beyond being a technician." In line with this view, *Interviewee 4* stated that the theory-practice duality that has been discussed for years in communication/journalism education should be overcome, that there is a tendency in this direction in the leading journalism schools in the world, and that they have added new courses to their journalism programs by following these trends. Saying that they are lucky in terms of academic staff and infrastructure as a well-established department, *Interviewee 4* conveyed the following about the arrangements made:

Courses such as "programming language" and "data journalism" for journalists have been added to our curriculum. I hope we will soon be able to register students for our programming language course for journalists. The content of the course covers HTML, CSS, simple JavaScript teaching in parallel with similar course contents in the USA and European countries. We aim for students to be able to write the codes of their own web pages by the end of the course. Obviously, the main goal is to teach basic coding logic. Interested students will already be able to learn other programming languages.

Stating that they have made some updates in the curriculum by taking into account the impact of the developments in communication technology on journalism and the requirements of the age, *Interviewee 3* gave the following information about the regulations in their departments by adding that they have deficiencies in academic staff, computer hardware, and space:

We are in a period where quality journalism is needed. In order to meet this need, some arrangements are being made in the curriculum within the limits of possibilities. 'Data journalism' and 'social media and journalism' courses were added to the program because of this need. Due to the lack of staff, we are trying to provide expert support from outside as much as the conditions

allow. There is always an emphasis on technology, but we have included courses to develop literature and written expression in the curriculum to contribute to students in terms of both literacy and general culture. We have updated courses such as 'newspaper article types' and 'interview techniques' by looking at examples in the world. We are also reviewing the contents of other field courses. For example, it is not possible to give the Ethics course without the new media dimension and 'News gathering and writing,' without addressing the new channels and sources of journalism today.

Interviewee 6 states that as a department aiming at multimedia broadcasting, they are carrying out projects towards this purpose, and efforts are underway to train academic staff and open new courses in this context, but he is of the opinion that qualified manpower in journalism is needed more than technology: "In the past, newspapers weren't published with cutting-edge technology computers. Technology is at our disposal today, but we need more creative, productive, hardworking, and enthusiastic young people to use it."

According to *Interviewee 2*, who emphasized the importance of technology in journalism and journalism education but stated that he did not find it right to fetishize it, "what is important is that technology can be used for quality content production." *Interviewee 2* stated that they are trying to create a curriculum in which theory and practice support each other and that they have generated a wide pool of elective courses that address current requirements such as 'data journalism,' 'new media programming language,' and 'digital content production' in parallel with the changes brought about by new technologies. *Interviewee 2* also stated that due to the advantageous position and opportunities of their faculties in various respects, they often met with professionals who would contribute to the students by helping them understand applications and current problems through workshops and conference-type activities. *Interviewee 2's* statements demonstrate that faculties in developed cities, especially private universities with wider economic opportunities, are in an advantageous position to reach people working in the field of media/journalism or to participate in educational platforms where experts from academia/media circles come together. On the other hand, as *Interviewee 3* also pointed out, *Interviewee 5*, who emphasized the impossibilities of the new faculties in terms of both geographical location and infrastructure-equipment deficiencies, stated that both internship and interaction with those in the field of practice were carried out in a narrow framework in their departments and were generally limited to local media organizations. *Interviewee 5* remarked that they received support from the employees of the regional TRT directorate due to the lack of teaching staff, partly because of the region they were in, and that no update could be made in the curriculum "in line with the expectations of today's communication world" with the exception of increasing the number of courses on graphic and web design under current conditions.

Interviewee 1 said that in their new media-oriented department, the curriculum is shaped to overcome the problems in traditional journalism and journalism education to some extent, but it will be understood in time how successful this action can be. While emphasizing that technological developments should be followed carefully, *Interviewee 1* pointed out that "curriculum updating is a practice that has become almost a fetish in universities" in the face of developments in journalism. Stating that their own faculties

have the same tendency, *Interviewee 1* is of the opinion that it is not right to make frequent changes in the curriculum:

Reflecting every technological "innovation" immediately in the curriculum should be avoided. Otherwise, a department curriculum that is breathless and constantly late behind technological innovations will emerge, everything learned will quickly become obsolete, and the future of students will become uncertain.

Another Journalism Education Is Possible (Is It?): Recommendations

As revealed by the relevant literature, the tendency to consider the sector as a basic parameter in journalism education is widespread. It was seen that the academics who were interviewed questioned this established understanding, albeit with different perspectives on the requirements of a quality journalism education in general. According to *Interviewee 1*, who stated that an approach that prioritizes the expectations of the job market and technical skills should be avoided in journalism education, "the main issue for a quality journalism education is to teach a basic social science understanding with basic technological competencies." Both *Interviewee 1* and *Interviewee 3* agree on the idea that it is necessary to turn to alternative searches to overcome the existing problems rather than the ideal in journalism education in today's conditions, and their suggestions in this direction are as follows, respectively:

Today, an excellent journalism education is not possible because the ideal of the journalism profession has disappeared... But it is possible to ponder over a 'better journalistic education.' For this, an education aiming at a new understanding of journalism based on the data produced by traditional media structuring and digital society is possible.

....

An understanding of journalism education that points to the importance of quality content and the need to use technological developments in this direction needs to be developed. Of course, there is a need for this kind of understanding in the sector, but at least the academy should have this understanding and orientation. For this, academic education should be prioritized, and its quality should be increased.

One of the common points that the participating academics mentioned is the need to develop an educational understanding that will direct students to produce qualified content. According to *Interviewee 2*, who said, "If we can teach our students good content production, the rest will come," what is necessary for good journalism education is to revive the ability to create stories at the core of journalism and to draw attention to the opportunities that digital technology can provide in this direction:

The essence of journalism does not change; after all, journalism is journalism. Today, we are only discussing how technological developments can provide opportunities for journalism and its education. Journalism has had significant opportunities with the new media. However, what is important is how the opportunities provided by the digital are used and its handling as an advantage for better content production. It is essential to be able to produce original content and tell stories in journalism. For this reason, we should create our courses accordingly and direct journalist candidates born into digital technology to discover the advantages of new media in terms

of content production. This is where it becomes important to focus on forms that place the good story, social problems, and research at the center, such as literary journalism.

On the other hand, emphasizing the importance of quality content and technology in journalism education, *Interviewee 4* draws attention to the need to inform students about both new news production practices and the positive and negative dimensions of technology. Stating that "current issues such as ethical problems arising from algorithms and personal data protection should be added to the course contents," *Interviewee 4* said that the subjects and courses such as web design, data journalism, and programming language require a strong theoretical context, and therefore, "an educational understanding that goes beyond the theoretical-practical dichotomy should be developed."

By pointing out the invalidity of the theory-practice distinction, as did *Interviewee 4*, *Interviewee 7* also listed his suggestions as follows, emphasizing that journalism education should not be condemned to "curricula filled with courses within the field of expertise and demands of the current academic staff in the faculty":

The faculty member's competence should be decisive in preparing an updatable and sustainable curriculum in which a balance of theory and practice is established, including transformations in the field of media and in the distribution of courses. In the curriculum preparation process, stakeholders (media representatives, non-governmental organizations, graduates, academics, associations, and societies related to journalism) should come together. In addition to field knowledge, general culture, and applied courses, enough courses with credits required for the education of students who are sensitive to the environment and human rights, who can use the language effectively, and who are ethically conscious should be included in the curriculum. Lessons should be in such a way that students can internalize information, not for show. The teaching staff should follow the current developments, constantly improve themselves, and have the opportunities to do so.

In parallel with *Interviewee 7*, who states that for qualified journalism education, lecturers should develop themselves and be supported in this route, *Interviewee 5* also explains the same need by emphasizing the problems in new faculties, noting that "first of all, faculty members should be freed from the intensive course load and should have the time as well as financial and mental development opportunities."

While putting forward their suggestions on the requirements of a quality journalism education, it is generally seen that the participants drew attention to the importance of offering a training program to journalist candidates in which they can grasp the transformation of technological developments in journalism in theory and practice, but more importantly, in which they can realize that journalism has a value beyond technology and its usage knowledge. On the other hand, it can be seen from the answers of the participants that this goal, which is repeated in the discussions on the quality and future of journalism education all over the world, has become a difficult struggle in Turkey, especially due to the problems in the education system. *Interviewee 6* commented that the answer to the question "What kind of journalism education?" begins with the question "What kind of world and country do we want to live in?" Stating that a number of fundamental problems arising from the education system should be

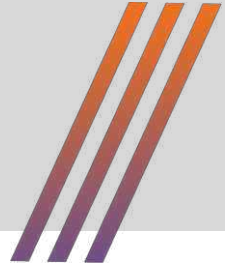
overcome, Interviewee 6 expressed metaphorically that what was done otherwise would be attempts to offer temporary solutions to the problems, "such as attempting to renovate the roof of a building with a rotten skeleton."

Conclusion and Recommendations

This study is designed to examine the state of journalism departments in Turkey against the current developments in journalism from the perspectives of journalism academics, who are the foremost interlocutors of the subject. The research tried to determine what kind of experiences are introduced with the current conjuncture of multifaceted problems, which are also the subject in the relevant literature of journalism education.

The interviews conducted within the scope of the study revealed that journalism departments are in a structuring process in line with the developments in journalism, especially in terms of updating educational programs. On the other hand, multifaceted problems arising from education/higher education policies make efforts difficult from several aspects. The interviews have shown that there are inequalities in responding to the current needs of journalism education due to various and fundamental problems, such as lack of academic staff, incoming student quality, and lack of infrastructure and equipment, especially in recently established departments. The experiences of the interviewed academics reveal that the negative picture predicted by İnal (1996), who pointed out the determinants of "myopic political policies" in the unplanned increase in communication faculties and departments in the 90s and the potential problems that would be created by educating workforce for the industry, has become a concrete reality today when the number of faculties and students is exploding. In line with this view, the interviewees pointed out that the issues they raised with similar or different dimensions, from the main problems that adversely affect the quality of education to the precarious job conditions waiting for the increasing number of graduates, have become unsolvable and disrupt the efforts regarding the current needs and the future of journalism education.

Due to the political preferences that make universities a development tool for developing cities and communication faculties a part of the image strategy of universities (Dagtas, 2011; Kaderoglu Bulut & Comu, 2021), the failure to create adequate conditions in the increasing number of faculties and departments adversely affects the quality of education, as expressed by the interviewees. The interviewees working in the new faculties/departments emphasized the importance of providing education in line with the current needs of journalism education, and they stated the lack of the quantity and quality of academic staff as a fundamental problem. When the insufficiency of academic staff, the inadequacies of space and technical equipment, and the responsibilities of the lecturers, such as intensive course load is considered, it is seen that the efforts to adapt to the rapidly developing technology and the requirements of today's media order have become a complete crisis management in new faculties/departments. In addition, the need for academic staff to respond to the needs arising with the developments in



journalism was expressed by the interviewees in general, and it was emphasized that the research and development activities of the lecturers to follow the current developments in the field and to increase their competencies should be supported.

The interviewees' accounts of the current status and needs of journalism education reveal that the loss of quality in basic education is reflected as a problem in journalism departments and in educational institutions at all higher education levels. While the interviewees expressed that the incoming students did not have sufficient infrastructure for a qualified journalism education, the fact that the students were admitted in the verbal type of score and their lack of a minimum level of mathematical knowledge was mentioned as a problem. An interviewee also stated that current journalism practices require basic coding and mathematics knowledge and added that this had become a necessity for the teaching staff as well.

While developments in journalism create the need for an update in journalism education, technology inevitably emerges as an important parameter, which leads journalism departments to develop a curriculum focused on technical skills in line with the trend in the current job market. However, within the scope of their activities and suggestions for current and qualified journalism education, it was also seen that the interviewed journalism academics questioned the educational approach that generally focuses on the sector. It has been stated that established distinctions such as theory-practice, academia-sector in journalism education, approaches that focus on technique and fetishize technological innovations are problematic and invalid, and academic and vocational education requires a holistic approach.

In the study, it cannot be said that the interviewees included in the sampling without any criteria other than being senior faculty members from different journalism departments and in the field represent the general trends in educational understandings and recommendations. Since the study was designed according to the qualitative approach, and therefore, does not aim for generalizable results, it has limitations in terms of both the research approach and the number of participants, so the subject requires broader studies. However, it can be stated that the topics and problems raised by the participants also concern other departments/lecturers, at least creating clues about their experiences. At this point, it is important to increase the studies focusing on experiences in journalism departments and the educational component. As revealed by the research findings, it is clear that journalism education cannot be handled independently of the effects of neoliberal policies on the education/higher education system and the news industry on a global and local scale as well as the relations between variables such as media-capital-technology-education policy, as pointed out by Tokgoz (2003). Despite the profound impact of the problems arising from education policies on other components, it is seen that journalism education in Turkey remains in the background in research, and there is a need for studies questioning the multifaceted impact of neoliberal policies in journalism education and traditional educational approaches. In fact, this education model proposed by Creech (2021), who argues that the development of a critical pedagogical understanding is a necessity in journalism education under current conditions, has been the subject of different studies in Turkey concerning the debates in

the world since the 90s, and its importance has been emphasized (İnal, 1996, Yildirim, 2006, Dursun, 2013). In addition, the tendency to take the sector as a basis has resulted in the structuring of training programs according to business life in journalism education, as in other areas. Besides, the studies in the field have focused on sector demands and curriculum in parallel with this situation, so the education component has been generally ignored with many dimensions. At this point, it is thought that it will be useful to focus on the opportunities that critical pedagogy can provide to communication/journalism education in the current conjuncture and to review traditional curricula from this perspective in future studies.

In the field of journalism education in Turkey, where new problems are added to existing ones day by day, there is a need for holistic analyses, especially on education policies and understanding. It should not be ignored that unless both policymakers and academics address these problems adequately, the spiral of problems in journalism education will grow continuously.

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