

## Research Paper

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# For historical reasons

On the lack of acceptance of journalism studies in Germany

**Abstract:** In Germany, journalism studies as a university subject – whose role is innovation and education/training in relation to journalism as a profession, in a similar way to medicine for the medical profession – receives little acceptance compared to in the USA and even Russia. This is expressed, for example, in the rather hostile attitude of media practitioners to the academic professional training of journalists. This paper outlines a reason for this deficit that goes back to the history of the subject: In the USA, professional journalism training became established at many universities as far back as the 1920s, as journalism there broke away from party politics and questions of belief early on and publishers were happy to allow the public purse to pay for qualification for a profession with a public role. In Germany, on the other hand, it was the publishing houses and chief editors who called the shots as journalism studies was being set up, acting as party politicians or church representatives at the same time. They did not want to leave the training of their journalistic staff to universities – institutions that were and still are focused on academic objectivity. In contrast, journalism studies as a subject developed early and more powerfully in the USSR than in Germany, as both the media and the universities there were in the hands of the ruling single party, the CPSU. If the extra-occupational discipline of journalism studies is to move forward in Germany, it is important not to forget the historical reasons behind its traditional weakness here.

The starting point for the considerations<sup>[1]</sup> below is the way journalism studies views itself as a science whose role in relation to the journalism profession is similar to that of medicine for the medical profession or pedagogy for teaching. As such, it sees itself as using research and related teaching to help professional journalism to fulfil its specific role: creating a public sphere, with the fewest possible limits on communication in society and optimum transparency of conditions in society; put pragmatically: providing as much correct, important and up-to-date information for as many people as possible in a fair and unflinching way.<sup>[2]</sup>

Problem: Lack of acceptance of journalism studies in Germany

Only a handful of universities in Germany offer journalism studies as a subject. Fundamental degree programs such as those in Dortmund and Eichstätt have become rare beasts since the programs in Munich and Leipzig ceased to operate; more common are development or additional programs, largely at universities of applied sciences. Even though »research, teaching, study, and *advanced training*«<sup>[3]</sup> are all part of universities' statutory role, few public academic institutions (still) offer training courses for professional journalists.<sup>[4]</sup>

- 1 Revised version of my farewell lecture on February 1, 2013 at the Institute for Newspaper Research (Institut für Zeitungsforschung) of the City of Dortmund. The first section on my activities at the Institute of Journalism at TU Dortmund University has been omitted; the second section on the history of journalism studies has been extended and updated.
- 2 I presented the concept of this academic discipline in my opening lecture in Dortmund in 1996. Cf. Pöttker, H. (1998): Öffentlichkeit durch Wissenschaft. Zum Programm der Journalistik. In: *Publizistik*, 43, pp. 229-249. Klaus Meier built on this in his opening lecture in Eichstätt in 2012, expanding his considerations on the research-practice transfer model for the print version. Cf. Meier, K. (2014): Transfer empirischer Evidenz. Entwurf eines reformierten Leitbilds und Programms der Journalistik. In: *Publizistik*, 59, pp. 159-178. Journalistic professionalism is especially recognizable by a reliable orientation on the continuing role of creating a public sphere; only after this on pursuing changeable rules and techniques influenced by historical circumstances.
- 3 HRG, §2, Para. 1 (italics.: H. P.).
- 4 Exceptions e.g.: The advanced training project for local journalists in North Rhine-Westphalia, INLOK at TU Dortmund, which was suspended again after only a short time. Insight from Pöttker, H.; Vehmeier, A. (Eds.) (2013): *Das verkannte Ressort. Probleme und Perspektiven des Lokaljournalismus*. Wiesbaden: Springer VS. The private Berlin University for Professional Studies offers not explicitly journalistic further training, but a master's program in International Media Innovation Management, whose aims are described as follows: »You will develop new strategies, products, and services that use the potential of the internet – with its innovative options for distributing media content and interaction with the audience.« (<http://www.duw-berlin.de/de/masterstudium/executive-master-in-international-media-innovation-management.html>; 14. 8. 2015.) The »Pilot Project on Advanced Training of Journalists« at FU Berlin, which was initiated by former *Spiegel* deskman Alexander von Hoffmann and ceased in 2005, was one of the most influential starting projects in academic professional training for journalists in West Germany in the 1970s. Cf. Köterheirich, M. (ed.) (1984): *Dokumentation über den Modellversuch Journalisten-Weiterbildung an der Freien Universität*. Vol. 2., Berlin: Historische Kommission; Hoffmann, A. v. (1997): Aufbruch zur wissenschaftlichen Journalistenausbildung. In: Kutsch, A.; Pöttker, H. (Eds.): *Kommunikationswissenschaft autobiographisch*. Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag (= *Publizistik*, Sonderheft 1), pp. 161-183. Following the transformation in digital media, which brings with it a deep-seated transformation of journalistic self-image, rules, and working techniques, advanced training for journalists who already work professionally appears especially important.

The small number – compared to the USA, for example – of programs for academic professional training corresponds to the relatively small proportion of journalists who enter the profession via a degree in journalism studies. In the USA, »36.2 percent of those pursuing journalism as their main occupation majored in journalism. If degrees in fields such as radio or TV journalism, mass communication or communication are included, this figure rises to 49.5 percent.«<sup>[5]</sup> Half of American journalists have thus studied the relevant subject, rather than coming to journalism following a degree in a different subject and/or a traineeship at a media company, as the majority of those in Germany do.

There is also a lack of German (language) journalism studies institutions – for example, there is no specialist association like the Association of Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (AEJMC, [www.aejmc.org](http://www.aejmc.org)).

Last but not least, a further expression of the insularity of journalism studies in Germany is the fact that the subject has found little popularity among practitioners of the profession it supports. Unlike doctors, lawyers, or engineers, publishers and journalists often show little interest in suggestions from academia, sometimes even rejecting them out of hand. In a legendary bon mot, the Director of the Gruner & Jahr school of journalism, Wolf Schneider, claimed that he did not let professors cross the threshold of his institutions. In 2010, the deskman responsible for trainees at the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* (SZ), Detlef Esslinger, took aim at the training function of the »empty subject« of journalism studies:

»It is a subject on which one can waste one's time at university – regardless of whether one ends up at a good or a bad institution. Regardless of whether the lecturer himself could use a basic course in interviewing [...] or actually understands anything about texts [...].«<sup>[6]</sup>

An online introduction to media degree programs in Germany even begins with the warning: »Many newspaper publishers tend to advise against a program like this.«<sup>[7]</sup>

One possible reason behind these reservations towards the subject could be that many media practitioners looking at the university system from afar confuse journalism studies with communication studies in general. This subject has a broader base in Germany and is more visible than the more practice-oriented

5 Harnischmacher, M. (2010): *Journalistenausbildung im Umbruch. Zwischen Medienwandel und Hochschulreform: Deutschland und USA im Vergleich*. Konstanz: UVK, p. 133; for comparison, corresponding figures for Germany in 2005: journalism studies degree program: just under 14%; plus communication studies/media sciences approx. 17%, altogether just under 31%; cf. Weischenberg, S.; Malik, M.; Scholl, A. (2006): *Die Souffleure der Mediengesellschaft: Report über die Journalisten in Deutschland*. Konstanz: UVK, pp. 67, 265.

6 Cf. Esslinger, D. (2010): Journalistik, ein Leerfach. In: *SZ online*, <http://www.sueddeutsche.de/karriere/journalistenberuf-journalistik-ein-leerfach-1.166697>; 12. 8. 2015. (Quote translated from German.)

7 Lüpke-Narberhaus, F.: Irgendwas mit Medien? Medien- und Journalismus-Studiengänge. In: <http://www.studis-online.de/Studienfuehrer/medien-studieren.php>, p. 1; 12. 8. 2015.

journalism studies – a situation that has something to do with the tradition of »pure« science in its »ivory tower.«<sup>8]</sup> This tradition also goes some way to explaining why German communication studies has become shaped by the system-theoretical paradigm and with it by a strong belief in the particular efficiency of autonomous »systems« that are strictly isolated from their surroundings and fixated on their own code. The academic system is one such system. If journalism studies is seen as part of communication studies, this attitude makes it more difficult to achieve acceptance of the subject in media practice.

Klaus Meier has pointed out that a model that is based on system theory and therefore relies on disassociation from professional practice – a model that has even gained ground in parts of journalism studies itself – must necessarily lead to tensions including within institutes and degree programs.<sup>9]</sup> He criticizes the conflict-laden duality of having two models, one of which relies on practice-friendly proximity and the other on critical distance.

If this were the only explanation, journalism studies and its divergent models would be solely responsible for the backwardness of academic professional training for journalists in Germany. The subject needs to scrutinize the part it plays in this self-critically, but this in itself cannot be enough. After all, why does journalistic professional training as a science meet with so little acceptance in Germany in particular – so different from the USA or Russia, for example. Why has *Germany* had so little success in embedding it with a broad base at universities?

In order to find answers to these questions, we will first consider the historical development of journalism training at public universities. The motive and guiding vision is the premise that academic professional education can promote the *quality*<sup>10]</sup> of journalistic activities and products. The »place of refuge for theoretical positions, the selection and development of methods, and interpretation of results« in journalism studies is »the quality of the journalism.«<sup>11]</sup>

Just as in the case of doctors, teachers, lawyers, engineers, and, today, even chefs, academic professional training is a sign of the modernity of a society for journalists, too. In addition, the profession of journalism even plays a public

8 University study in the USA has become significantly more practice-oriented since the Progressive Era in the early 20th Century, including in arts and social sciences. Literature studies there, for example, include writing schools where authors can learn their trade. This tradition goes some way to explaining the strength of American journalism studies.

9 Cf. Meier 2014 *ibid.*, p. 162f.

10 For clarification of the term »journalistic quality,« which, contrary to the common bon mot from Stefan Ruß-Mohl, is not harder to pin down than other terms in journalism studies, cf. Arnold, K. (2013): *Qualität im Journalismus*. In: Meier, K.; Neuberger, Ch. (Eds.): *Journalismusforschung. Stand und Perspektiven*. Baden-Baden: Nomos, pp. 77-88; Pöttker, H. (2000): *Kompensation von Komplexität. Journalismustheorie als Begründung journalistischer Qualitätsmaßstäbe*. In: Löffelholz, M. (ed.): *Theorien des Journalismus. Ein diskursives Handbuch*. Wiesbaden: Westdeutscher Verlag, pp. 375-390.

11 Meier 2014 *ibid.*, p. 168.

role defined by the highest courts.<sup>[12]</sup> Does Germany, as a »delayed nation«<sup>[13]</sup> still have a modernity backlog that has not yet been (entirely) eliminated in this regard, too?

Starting point: The idea of academic professional training for journalism emerged in around 1900 – including in Germany

The idea of academic training not just for doctors, judges, and engineers, but also for journalists, emerged at the same time in many Western countries: around the turn of the 20th Century, as journalism was becoming professionalized.<sup>[14]</sup> In 1904, having proposed a relevant concept unsuccessfully in Austria, the successful publisher Joseph Pulitzer published his paper *The College of Journalism*,<sup>[15]</sup> in the USA. In it, he set out his reasons for the necessity of academic training for journalists. The first academic school of journalism opened at the University of Missouri in 1908. Its founding dean, Walter Williams, emphasized the analogy to law, medicine, pedagogy, and other professionally oriented subjects:

»The School [of Journalism] is co-ordinate, equal in rank, with the schools or collages of law, medicine, engineering, agriculture and teacher's collage. The requirements for admission to the school will be the same as to other departments of the University.«<sup>[16]</sup>

In his speech to the Missouri Publishers' Association, Williams indicated that academic training for journalists needed an area for practical learning, practice, and testing ideas, just like a laboratory or university hospital: »The new departure adds the laboratory to the lecture method, the clinic supplementing of the class-room. It trains to do by doing. The new method loses none of the value of the old. It adds to it.«<sup>[17]</sup>

12 Cf. BVerfG verdict on the *Spiegel* affair of 1965, <http://www.servat.unibe.ch/dfr/bvo20162.html#Rno35> (05.12.2015).

13 Cf. on the roots of this delay in social history Wehler, H.-U. (1987): *Deutsche Gesellschaftsgeschichte. Vol. 1: Vom Feudalismus des Alten Reiches bis zur Defensiven Modernisierung der Reformära 1700 – 1815*. Munich: C.H. Beck, pp. 53-57. »Belastungen des Modernisierungsprozesses«, and on the ideological consequences Plessner, H. (1974): *Die verspätete Nation*. Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp (initially 1935).

14 Cf. Requate, J. (1995): *Journalismus als Beruf: Die Entstehung des Journalistenberufs im 19. Jahrhundert. Deutschland im internationalen Vergleich*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht.

15 Pulitzer, J. (1904): *The College of Journalism*. In: *North American Review*, no. DLXX, pp. 641-680.

16 Williams, W. (1929): *The State University School of Journalism: Why and What*. In: Williams, S. L. (Ed.): *Twenty Years of Education for Journalism. A History of the School of Journalism of the University of Missouri Columbia, Missouri, U.S.A. Columbia (MO)*: E. W. Stephens Publishing Company, pp. 411-417, p. 411.

17 Williams (1929) *ibid.*, p. 411. Wolfgang Streitböcker examined the current degree program in Missouri and the curricula at the Institute of Journalism Studies at TU Dortmund and two further degree programs in the USA and Germany. In Missouri and Dortmund, he found a medium level of integration of theory and practice. He supplements these two terms with the third term »techné,« which is also taken from the an-

In Germany, too, a lot happened at the turn of the 20th Century. In 1895, the modern history expert and former editor Adolf Koch began a series of lectures on press studies, to which he added practical journalistic exercises in 1897 and for which he set up a »Journalistic Department.«<sup>[18]</sup> In 1899, the wealthy publicist Richard Wrede founded the first independent university of journalist training in Berlin, with a program combining theoretical elements on press history and law with style exercises for different journalistic genres.<sup>[19]</sup> In 1916, economist and business journalist Karl Bücher, with whom Max Weber hoped to collaborate on his large-scale, yet ultimately not implemented, press and journalism enquiry in the years before the First World War,<sup>[20]</sup> set up the first Institute of Newspaper Studies at a German university in Leipzig with the support of the publisher Edgar Herfurth.

As early as 1909, Bücher had presented a detailed concept for a program of study that included both a theoretical part and a practical part with exercises in a »laboratory« and a newspaper »teaching editorial office.«<sup>[21]</sup> The First World War initially gave some impetus to these plans, as the nationalistic propagandist press was not accepted without critique by the populations of all the countries involved in the war. Bücher therefore wanted to train (future) journalists at the university to create more objective distance from strategic interests. He closed a lecture at the University of Leipzig in Winter 1915 entitled »The war and the press«, which had previously been published in the Norwegian journal *Samtiden*, with a reminder of the »long-neglected obligation [...] to ensure with public funds the education of a *body of journalists* that measures up to the requirements of the present in every respect, but above all in terms of ethics«.<sup>[22]</sup>

Bücher's fundamental idea was not pure newspaper research, but the qualification of journalists on a scientific basis, not least in the fields of professional ethics and the professional self-image. Even before the First World War, a host of relevant teaching material was available in Germany for this kind of initial and advanced training focused on professional practice, for example in the jour-

tique tradition and describes more precisely what is to be learned in »practical classes« of vocational degree programs in what way. Cf. Streitböcher, W. (2014): *Grundbegriffe für Journalistenausbildung. Theorie, Praxis und Technik als berufliche Techniken*. Wiesbaden: Springer VS.

18 Cf. Kutsch, A. (2010): Professionalisierung durch akademische Ausbildung. Zu Karl Büchers Konzeption für eine universitäre Journalistenausbildung. In: Eberwein, T.; Müller, D. (Eds.): *Journalismus und Öffentlichkeit. Eine Profession und ihr gesellschaftlicher Auftrag*. Wiesbaden: VS Verlag, pp. 427-453, pp. 429, 438.

19 Cf. Kutsch, A. (2010) *ibid.*, p. 438.

20 Cf. Weischenberg, S. (2012): *Max Weber und die Entzauberung der Medienwelt. Theorien und Querelen – eine andere Fachgeschichte*. Wiesbaden: Springer VS, pp. 109-134. Weischenberg talks amusingly of the intense, rather difficult relationship between the two high-ranking academics who, despite their underlying rivalry, made great efforts to maintain a polite face.

21 Cf. Kutsch, A. (2010) *ibid.*, pp. 442.

22 Bücher, K. (2001): *Der Krieg und die Presse*. In: Pöttker, H. (Ed.): *Öffentlichkeit als gesellschaftlicher Auftrag. Klassiker der Sozialwissenschaft über Journalismus und Medien*. Konstanz: UVK, pp. 220-250, p. 250.

nalistic textbooks and manuals by Johann Hermann Wehle (1883)<sup>[23]</sup>, Johannes Frizenschaf (1901)<sup>[24]</sup>, Richard Jacobi (1902)<sup>[25]</sup>, Richard Wrede (1902)<sup>[26]</sup> and other authors.<sup>[27]</sup>

In France, Switzerland<sup>[28]</sup> and Russia, too, the idea of journalistic initial and advanced training with a scientific basis had been devised and begun to be implemented. Law Professor Leonid E. Vladimirov offered his first journalism studies courses at the University of Moscow as early as 1905, during the time of the Russian Empire.<sup>[29]</sup>

Question: Why did the idea not fall on fertile ground in Germany?

Unlike in the USA in particular, where journalism studies was established at 38 universities as early as 1915<sup>[30]</sup> and many of the now around a thousand inter-company training facilities and more than one hundred journalism studies faculties and institutes with accredited major degree programs were founded in the 1920s,<sup>[31]</sup> the idea did *not* fall on fertile ground in Germany after the First World War.

No new institutions were established during the Weimar Republic – in itself a setback compared to the dynamic development in the USA. The institute in Leipzig founded by Karl Bücher, for example, which was originally dedicated to training journalists, shifted during the 1920s towards empirical, analytical press research seen as academically pure. This would later develop into communication studies. Under his successor in Leipzig, Erich Everth, Karl Bücher's »education of a body of journalists with public funds« was to turn into newspaper studies that explicitly maintained a distance from practice. Everth's 1928 »Studienplan zur Ausbildung in Zeitungskunde« [Curriculum for training in newspaper studies]<sup>[32]</sup> starts with the words:

23 Wehle, J. H. (1883): *Die Zeitung. Ihre Organisation und Technik. Journalistisches Handbuch*. Wien: Pelt; Leipzig: A. Hartleben's Verlag.

24 Frizenschaf, J. (1901): *Die Praxis des Journalisten – ein Lehr- und Handbuch für Journalisten, Redakteure und Schriftsteller*. Leipzig: Walther Fiedler.

25 Jacobi, R. (1902): *Der Journalist*. Hannover: Jaenecke.

26 Wrede, R. (1902): *Handbuch der Journalistik*. Berlin: Verlag Dr. R. Wrede.

27 Cf. Birkner, T. (2012): *Das Selbstgespräch der Zeit. Die Geschichte des Journalismus in Deutschland 1605–1914*. Köln: Herbert von Halem, p. 332f.

28 Cf. Kutsch 2010 *ibid.*, pp. 437–440.

29 Cf. Истoки журналистского образования в МГУ. In: <http://www.journ.msu.ru/about/history/journalism.php?print=Y> (7.11.2020).

30 Cf. Kutsch 2010 *ibid.*, p. 437.

31 On the foundation, development, and current situation of journalism studies in the USA, cf. Starck, K. (2018): What do you tell your daughter who wants to be a journalist? On the future of journalism and journalism education in the United States. In: *Journalism Research*, 1(2), p. 28–45. ([https://journalistik.online/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/starck-what-do-you-tell-Journalistik\\_2-2018\\_en.pdf](https://journalistik.online/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/starck-what-do-you-tell-Journalistik_2-2018_en.pdf), 20. 1. 2020).

32 Thanks to Erik Koenen for access to this concept.

»Newspaper studies is a theoretical subject like all other academic disciplines conducted at the University. (...) There is not a subject of journalism studies at the University of Leipzig; there is only the subject of newspaper studies. (...) Academically, one can only be modeled as a journalist, not trained.«<sup>[33]</sup>

Extra-company training for the journalism profession was only picked up again by the National Socialists, who founded the »Reichspreseschule« in Berlin in 1935.<sup>[34]</sup> After 1945, it was initially continued only in the GDR, where at least two thirds of young journalists passed through the Journalism Studies Faculty (later »Section«) at Karl Marx University in Leipzig. Founded in 1954, the faculty had been set up within the long-standing institute that had between 1933 and 1945 been headed by newspaper studies experts close to the Nazi regime, such as Hans Amandus Münster.<sup>[35]</sup> Heute befindet sich dort das Institut für Kommunikations- und Medienwissenschaft, zu dem auch ein seit Wintersemester 2007/08 nicht mehr grundständiger, auf digitale Technologien spezialisierter Journalistik-Studiengang (»Master of Science Journalismus«) gehört.

Today it is home to the Institute of Communication and Media Studies, which since the winter semester 2007/08 has also offered a journalism studies program that is no longer indigenous and specializes in digital technologies (Master of Science Journalism).

In the Federal Republic of Germany, academic training for journalists only arose in the 1970s, following the push for greater democratization and modernization that came after 1968. The Universities of Dortmund, Munich, and later Eichstätt led the way with the establishment of journalism studies programs. Following radical reform, the University of Leipzig also continued to offer academic journalist training after 1990. Some of these programs – in Dortmund and Eichstätt in particular – would enjoy partial success; others – such as in Leipzig and

33 Everth, E. (1928): *Das Studium der Zeitungskunde an der Universität Leipzig*. Leipzig: Alfred Lorentz, p. 3..

34 Cf. Müsse, W. (1995): *Reichspreseschule – Journalisten für die Diktatur? Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte des Journalismus im Dritten Reich*. Munich et al.: K. G. Saur.

35 As far as I am aware, there is no complete, overall presentation of the checkered history of the Leipzig Institute founded by Karl Bücher, which could serve as an example of the development of journalism studies in Germany. For the National Socialist era, cf. Ehrlich, U. (1991): *Das Institut für Zeitungswissenschaft an der Universität Leipzig 1933-1945: ein Arbeitsbericht*. In: *medien & zeit*, Year 6, Issue 1, p. 22-30; and on a specific aspect Jacob, K. (2014): *Journalistinnen im Nationalsozialismus: Eine Studie zu den Absolventinnen der Zeitungskunde der Universität Leipzig*. Hamburg: Diplomica Verlag; for the GDR era, cf. Meyen, M. (2019): *Die Erfindung der Journalistik in der DDR. Ein Beitrag zur Fachgeschichte der Nachkriegszeit*. In: *Journalism Research*, (2)1, p. 3-31 ([https://journalistik.online/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/journalism-research\\_1-2019\\_en.pdf](https://journalistik.online/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/journalism-research_1-2019_en.pdf); 21.1.2020); also the highly critical report colored by personal experience by Klump, B. (1978): *Das rote Kloster*. Hamburg: Hoffmann und Campe; on the institutional structures Conley, P. (2012): *Der parteiliche Journalist; Die Geschichte des Radio-Features in der DDR*. Berlin: Metropolis Verlag, p. 33-46; the textbook by Kurz, J.; Müller, D.; Pötschke, J.; Pöttker, H. (2000): *Stilistik für Journalisten*. Wiesbaden: Westdeutscher Verlag (extended new edition 2010), is an attempt to update and thus suspend achievements of GDR journalism studies in the field of language and forms of presentation.



Munich – were reduced again or even abolished. All in all, they did not develop into a discipline comparable with other professionally oriented sciences.

The question is therefore not why the Germans did not come up with the idea of creating opportunities for journalists to gain academic qualifications, but why this idea did not gain traction in society in the 1920s and in the democratic Germany of the decades after 1945 as it did in the USA, for example, and even – albeit somewhat later – in the Soviet Union and later in the GDR.

In Moscow, an Institute of Journalism Studies was founded in 1921, which would give rise to the Journalism Studies Faculty at Moscow State University in 1947.<sup>[36]</sup> Following the first wave of foundations with institutes in Moscow, Leningrad, and Minsk, which would soon – in Leningrad in 1961, for example – become faculties of journalism studies, the early 1960s saw another advance of journalism studies in the USSR, at universities including Kazan, Rostov-on-Don, Voronezh and others. Journalism training at the University of Rostov, for example, began in 1960. In 1962, the University set up a »laboratory« (teaching editorial office) and appointed its first professor in Vsevolod N. Bojanovic, to be followed by further specialized professorships (History and Theory of Journalism, Stylistics, Mass Media) and in 1965 by a structured degree program.<sup>[37]</sup>

Hypothesis: German conviction journalism does not permit academic professional training

Journalism became independent of party politics early in the English-speaking world – in the USA no later than the 1880s.<sup>[38]</sup> Publishers there had discovered that independently researched, comprehensibly presented facts allowed them to reach more people and do better business than party-political agendas or religious commitment, which appeal almost exclusively to readers who share the same convictions. Publishers with a commercial and pragmatic way of thinking were able and indeed keen to leave the qualification of their journalistic staff to the university, whose assignment had traditionally also been distance from ideologies, objectivity, and independent thought. Part of the motive was inarguably also the fact that this strategy allowed the costs of journalistic professional training to be paid by society as a whole.

Many tax-payers will have agreed with this, as journalism has always been seen in English-speaking countries as a profession with a social role to play, pro-

36 Cf. <http://www.journ.msu.ru/eng/FacultyofJournalismMSU.pdf> (7.11.2020).

37 Thanks to Alla G. Bepalova for information relating to the development of journalism studies at the University of Rostov-on-Don.

38 Cf. Hoyer, S.; Pöttker, H. (Eds.) (2014<sup>2</sup>): *Diffusion of the News Paradigm 1850-2000*. Göteborg: Nordicom.

viding a useful service for both society and individuals by reliably creating transparency. Missouri founding Dean Walter Williams:

»The argument for the State's support of education is that of self-preservation. (...) The State supports schools that the products of the school may uphold the State. (...) Training is given to physicians that they may save the lives of the State's citizens (...). Shall the State not train in its schools for journalism, the profession that more than any other, is a bulwark for a free government. (...) A weak, cowardly, corrupt press means the downfall of a free State. It is the duty, therefore, of the State to maintain itself by the fostering of schools for the training of journalists.«<sup>[39]</sup>

In a similar way to Karl Bücher, who had learned from American examples,<sup>[40]</sup> Williams saw the academic »training« of journalists as twofold: firstly the practical teaching of technical skills, and secondly the development of a professional attitude maintained by an awareness of what the profession of journalist is there for. »What is journalism for?«<sup>[41]</sup> is a question that is still frequently both asked and answered in English-language journalist training manuals to this day. The answer: to create transparency, publicness, so that society becomes aware of its problems and individuals are able to organize their lives at the level of the options that the culture offers them.

In Germany, the situation following the First World War was very different. Here, too, attempts had been made in the early 20th Century to professionally separate the profession of publicity from politics and battles of conviction.<sup>[42]</sup> Yet in his lecture »Politics as a Vocation,« Max Weber still – or again – classified journalists as a modern special case of »demagogues« under the western figure of the professional politician, even putting them close to »party officials.«<sup>[43]</sup>

The 1920s in Germany were a time of resurgence for conviction journalism. This may be linked to the »delayed nation« in general,<sup>[44]</sup> but can also be explained by the after-effects of military censorship during the First World War<sup>[45]</sup> (Dolchstoßlegende) [myth of the stab in the back] and especially by the

39 Williams (1929) *ibid.*, p. 416.

40 Cf. Kutsch (2010) *ibid.*, pp. 443-445.

41 Sanders, K. (2003): *Ethics and Journalism*. London u.a.: Sage, p. 160; Harcup, T. (2004): *Journalism: Principles and Practice*. London u.a.: Sage, p. 2.

42 Cf. Birkner, T. (2012) *ibid.*, pp. 283-286.

43 Cf. Weber, M. (2001): Politik als Beruf. In: Pöttker, H. (Ed.): *Öffentlichkeit als gesellschaftlicher Auftrag. Klassiker der Sozialwissenschaft über Journalismus und Medien*. Konstanz: UVK, pp. 329-347; pp. 335-338 (zuerst 1919).

44 Cf. Wehler, H.-U. (1987) *ibid.*, Plessner (1974) *ibid.*

45 Cf. Koszyk, K. (2010): Journalismus und »Volksstimmung« im Ersten Weltkrieg. In: Eberwein, T.; Müller, D. (Eds.): *Journalismus und Öffentlichkeit. Eine Profession und ihr gesellschaftlicher Auftrag*. Wiesbaden: VS Verlag, pp. 455-466.

political atmosphere stoked by the humiliating end to the War (Treaty of Versailles).

Approaches to separating journalism from party-political conflict had also been noticeable in Germany before the First World War.<sup>[46]</sup> The fact that these approaches were revised during this phase is evident from representations in newspaper sciences at the time. Otto Groth writes not only of his own, statistically proven, finding that »the number of papers that call themselves impartial or refuse to state a political leaning [had fallen] almost to the level of 1898«<sup>[47]</sup> but also suggests a reason for this unusual development in Germany by noting the »intensification of political extremes« in the Weimar Republic, »resulting in a fierce fight for the press«. Groth continues:

»The buying up of numerous newspapers by powerful groups of economic interests, who provided these papers to right-wing parties, the rise of the German National People's Party, was a considerable loss to the liberal, and especially the democratic, press.«<sup>[48]</sup>

The liberal press in the large cities, led by the *Berliner Tageblatt* and *Vossische Zeitung* newspapers published by the Jewish families Mosse and Ullstein, as well as the *Frankfurter Zeitung* and the *Hamburger Fremdenblatt*, had begun to emancipate themselves from conviction criteria even before the First World War, leading the way in the professionalization of journalism in Germany.<sup>[49]</sup> However, they faced stiff competition both from thousands of provincial papers with national-conservative leanings and from a rich, high-circulation party press machine, including communist and social democratic organs as well as Catholic-led papers loyal to the Center Party.

In his history of the press, which remains the most accurate standard work, Kurt Koszyk classifies numerous newspapers of the Weimar Republic by the colors of the party spectrum, in categories including »conservative groups,« »large liberal publishing houses,« »democrats and national liberals,« »progressive outsiders,« »the German Center Party,« »social democracy and trades unions,« and even »KPD press.«<sup>[50]</sup> Many publishers and chief editors also held office in the party or state politics. Alfred Hugenberg, the »tsar« of the press corporation that bore his name, was also Chair of the German National People's

46 Cf. Birkner, Th. (2010): Das Jahrhundert des Journalismus – ökonomische Grundlagen und Bedrohungen. In: *Publizistik*, 55, pp. 41-54.

47 Groth, O. (1929): *Die Zeitung. Ein System der Zeitungskunde (Journalistik)*. 2nd Vol. Mannheim including: J. Bensheimer, p. 469.

48 Groth, O. (1929) *ibid.*, p. 471

49 Cf. e.g. Gillessen, G. (1986): *Auf verlorenem Posten. Die Frankfurter Zeitung im Dritten Reich*. Berlin: Siedler, pp. 11-34.

50 Cf. Koszyk, K. (1972): *Deutsche Presse 1914-1945. Geschichte der deutschen Presse, Vol. 3*. Berlin: Colloquium, pp. 240-336.

Party (DNVP) and served in Hitler's first cabinet;<sup>[51]</sup> Friedrich Stampfer, Chief Editor of the SPD central paper *Vorwärts*, spent the entire 1920s as a member of the legislature and described his election to the Reichstag as an insignificant shift from the press level to the level of representative<sup>[52]</sup> – he also remained Chief Editor of *Vorwärts*.

The theory goes that *these* publishers and chief editors, who were primarily social democrats, communists, Catholics, national socialists etc., did not want to leave the professional socialization of their journalistic staff to universities – institutions responsible for objectivity. They wanted their staff to represent the leaning of their papers. University training could have driven this out of the young journalists, or at least questioned and relativized it.<sup>[53]</sup> Yet it is impossible to establish academic professional training of journalists without support from publishers or even against the interests of media companies.

Some conflicts regarding appointments and the foundation of institutions in newspaper sciences in the 1920s clearly show how, as well as the non-practice-related tradition of German science, the publishers themselves impeded the expansion of professional journalist training in this crucial phase.

These conflicts did not take the form of publishers explicitly expressing their reservations about objective, academic training for the professional of journalism – instead, they exercised their motives behind the scenes, while publicly claiming that the institution of university itself was *unfit for practice*.

However, the curtain is occasionally lifted to reveal the conflict between academic objectivity and the possibility of exercising political or religious influence. In 1928, it was not Otto Groth – who combined the experience of many years as a newspaper journalist with the outstanding achievement in newspaper sciences at the time<sup>[54]</sup> and thus offered the »integration of theory and practice«<sup>[55]</sup> that formed the basis of journalism studies – who was appointed to the Deutsche Institut für Zeitungskunde (DIZ) at the University of Berlin. Instead, against the will of the Philosophy Faculty but on the recommendation of the associations of the publishers (Verein Deutscher Zeitungs-Verleger, VDZV) and journalists (Reichsverband der Deutschen Presse, RDP), the appointment went to Emil Dovifat, a Catholic publicist who was known to have prolonged the model of conviction journalism from 1945 well into the 1960s and who had continuously adapted

51 Holzbach, H. (1981): *Das »System Hugenberg«. Die Organisation bürgerlicher Sammlungspolitik vor dem Aufstieg der NSDAP*. Stuttgart: DVA.

52 Cf. Koszyk, K. (1999): Friedrich Stampfer. Abwägend und ausgleichend. In: the same: *Publizistik und politisches Engagement. Lebensbilder publizistischer Persönlichkeiten*, ed. by W. Hömberg, A. Kutsch, H. Pörtker. Münster: LIT, pp. 457-460, p. 458.

53 Protection of interests remains enshrined in German law to this day – based on the Works Constitution Act, journalists can be dismissed if they do not follow the line of the relevant medium.

54 Groth's four-volume standard work *Die Zeitung (1928-1930)* subtitled *Ein System der Zeitungskunde (Journalistik [!])*, Mannheim incl.: J. Bensheimer.

55 Cf. Meier 2014 *ibid.*; on criticism of this formula cf. Streitböcker 2014 *ibid.*

his short textbook *Zeitungslehre I and II* to the dominant convictions between 1930 and 1960.<sup>[56]</sup>

Another example: The fact that the Institute of Newspaper Studies, which at the time could still have become a school of journalism, was founded in Dortmund rather than at the University of Münster, where Karl Bücher's employee in Leipzig, Johannes Kleinpaul, had as a lecturer attempted to set up practical courses with a scientific basis, is not least down to the fear of the then »Nieder-rheinisch-Westfälischer Zeitungsverleger-Verein« (NWZVV) that the »intellectual« interests of the publishing houses could be neglected at the university. The background to this fear was an act, demanded by the journalists' association RDP and already available as an official draft, that was to restrict the right of publishers to determine the content of their newspapers. Here, too, a Catholic publisher and simultaneously member of the Reichstag for the Center Party, Dortmund man Lambert Lensing sen., fought especially vehemently against both the act and the implementation of the Institute of Newspaper Studies at the University of Münster. Dortmund at the time did not have a university at all, and would only gain its Institute of Journalism Studies after 1975. Publishers there hoped that it would be easier for them to achieve journalist training of their own if something like it were to become established outside of companies. A letter from NWZVV Chair Otto Dierichs to the members of the association on April 19, 1926 shows that this was in part motivated by an interest in influencing convictions:

»Unfortunately, a large portion of the public today (...) is of the view that in the press the publisher largely only plays the role of the businessman, while having relatively little to do with the intellectual element of the newspaper. This interpretation can, as the draft journalist bill showed, be very dangerous for German publishers. That is why we believed that the organizations of German publishers (...) have a duty to dedicate themselves (...) also to maintaining the intellectual standard«.<sup>[57]</sup>

As the publishers' association represented members of different political views, this was wording that allowed the interest that all publishers share in influencing the programs of the editorial offices – what we would today call »protection of interests« or, in Austria, the »paper's line« – to be maintained.

It remains to explain why the idea of academic journalist training fell on fertile ground in the Soviet Union and the GDR, for example, even though journalism in those countries was certainly anything but impartial – in line with the

<sup>56</sup> It would be worth investigating a precise reconstruction of this series of metamorphoses .

<sup>57</sup> Quoted in Maoro, B. (1987): *Die Zeitungswissenschaft in Westfalen 1914 bis 45. Das Institut für Zeitungswissenschaft in Münster und die Zeitungsforschung in Dortmund*. München incl.: K. G. Saur (=Dortmunder Beiträge zur Zeitungsforschung, Bd. 43), p. 185.

Leninist motto that the newspaper should be »not only a collective propagandist and collective agitator, but also a collective organizer«.<sup>[58]</sup>

The answer is clear: Where the university was in the same hands as the media, namely those of a single political party running the state, there was a willingness to leave journalistic professional training to the university. After all, the university held the same convictions as the media – those that the directors of the media expected from the journalists.<sup>[59]</sup>

## Conclusion: Historical consciousness as the engine of development

Institutions can be replaced from one day to the next. Turning points like this in Germany have included the liberation from the Nazi regime by the Allies on May 8, 1945, the foundation of the two German states in 1948/49, and – in East Germany – the fall of the Berlin Wall on November 9, 1989 and the resulting reunification of Germany on October 3, 1990.

These dates were institutional turning points in the media system and journalism, too – in particular the freedom of the press legally guaranteed in the Basic Law of the Federal Republic of Germany, which was accepted by the victorious powers on November 1, 1949 and applied in the same form to the area of the former GDR on October 3, 1990.

Yet turning points like this do not occur in culture, even in journalistic culture. People do not change the way they behave from one day to the next, as they rely on communication using language and other systems of symbols. This permits only gradual change, as a flexible core of signs has to remain decipherable out of habit in order to enable communication. In addition, those carrying the culture, the actors at the base, are not usually replaced abruptly – most of those who lived in Germany in June 1945 or in the former GDR in November 1990 had also done so the year before. Cultural assets based on habitualized ways of thinking or acting are therefore often much more durable than institutions. Research into the history of mentalities reconstructs continuous streams in the cultural substratum,<sup>[60]</sup> with institutional turning points initially triggering ripples on the surface at most.

Social history teaches us that the end of an epoch shaped by authoritarian pat-

58 Lenin, W. I. (1976): Womit beginnen? In: *ibid.: Werke, Bd. 5, Mai 1901 - Februar 1902*. Berlin: Dietz, pp. 5-13 (<https://www.marxists.org/deutsch/archiv/lenin/1901/05/womitbeg.htm>; 5. 12. 2015).

59 The relationship between the Party and university journalism studies was admittedly not entirely free from conflict under Stalin, as a 2015 recollection from the winner of the Nobel Prize for Literature shows: »Before the War, my father studied at the Institute of Journalism Studies in Minsk. He said that, when they returned after the holidays, they often found not a single one of their previous lecturers, as they had all been imprisoned.« Alexievich, S. (2015): *Secondhand-Zeit. Leben auf den Trümmern des Sozialismus*. Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, p. 13.

60 Cf. e.g. Note 13.

terns began culturally not in 1945, but only in the early 1960s, when the cohorts directly responsible for the Nazi regime began to hand over power.<sup>61</sup> This delayed change is also clear to see in media and journalism. Plans by multiple Interior Ministers of the 1950s for press laws that would have enabled bans on newspapers and individual journalists,<sup>62</sup> the state television mooted by Chancellor Adenauer, and the activities of the government authorities in the *Spiegel* affair are all evidence of continuity in official discourse in the post-War democracy. Although the Federal Constitutional Court broke this subcutaneous continuity institutionally with its principle rulings on the organization of television in 1961,<sup>63</sup> and the *Spiegel* affair in 1966,<sup>64</sup> it continues to pop up sporadically to this day.<sup>65</sup>

When it comes to the tradition of conviction journalism,<sup>66</sup> empirical studies by Wolfgang Donsbach<sup>67</sup> and others meet the condition of allowing critical consciousness of this problematic tradition. Although they have not remained unchallenged,<sup>68</sup> these studies still attract attention, including in the media themselves, to the fact that German journalism has a stronger tendency towards conviction journalism than in the USA, for example.<sup>69</sup> The fact that this critical (self-)awareness, initiated by communication sciences, has encouraged the tradition of conviction journalism to fade, is clearly demonstrated by the significant rise in the proportion of journalists committed to the ideal of objectivity that followed publication of Donsbach's studies in the 1990s in Germany.<sup>70</sup>

61 Cf. Doering-Manteuffel, A. (1983): *Die Bundesrepublik Deutschland in der Ära Adenauer: Außenpolitik und innere Entwicklung 1949–1963*. Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft; Schildt, A. (2007): *Die Sozialgeschichte der Bundesrepublik Deutschland bis 1989/90*. München: Oldenbourg; *ibid.*; Siegfried, D. (2009): *Deutsche Kulturgeschichte. Die Bundesrepublik – 1945 bis zur Gegenwart*. Munich: Hanser.

62 The draft for a Press Act by the Federal Ministry of the Interior in 1952 said: »Newspapers and magazines orientated against the constitutional order of the Federal Republic or the concept of understanding among nations or which contain encouragement or incitement to disobedience against laws or legal ordinances can [...] be banned. This is decided by the State Minister of the Interior responsible for the publication location of the newspaper or magazine. Where distribution of the newspaper or magazine is not limited to the area of a state, the Federal Minister of the Interior can issue the ban.« Quoted in Buchloh, St. (2002): »Pervers, jugendgefährdend, staatsfeindlich«. *Nensur in der Ära Adenauer als Spiegel des gesellschaftlichen Klimas*. Frankfurt a. M.: Campus, p. 64.

63 Cf. <http://web.ard.de/ard-chronik/index/6222?year=1961>; 5. 12. 2015.

64 Cf. Pöttker, H. (2012): Meilenstein der Pressefreiheit – 50 Jahre *Spiegel*-Affäre. In: *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte (APuZ)*, 62(29–31), pp. 39–46.

65 As the case brought against the research blog [netzpolitik.org](http://netzpolitik.org) in 2015 based on the treason paragraph 94 StGB showed, which punishes not only primary betrayal of confidential information, but also secondary publication thereof.

66 Cf. Pöttker, H. (2009): Verspätete Modernisierung. Zur Tradition des (politischen) Gesinnungsjournalismus in Deutschland. In: Averbeck-Lietz, S.; Klein, P.; Meyen, M. (Eds.): *Historische und systematische Kommunikationswissenschaft*. Bremen: edition lumière, pp. 485–496.

67 Cf. e.g. Donsbach, W. (1999): Journalismus und journalistisches Berufsverständnis. In: Wilke, J. (Ed.): *Mediengeschichte der Bundesrepublik Deutschland*. Bonn: Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung, pp. 489–517.

68 It is particularly problematic that the question that they habitually pose, or a similar one, of whether journalists see themselves either as social watchdogs or as objective reporters, assumes a problematic alternative; it is of course possible for journalists to see themselves as whistleblowers on abuses in society by objectively determining and uncovering abuses in society.

69 An issue that was exacerbated further by the superficial implementation of the English-speaking model after 1945 and the associated covert nature of political discourse in the media.

70 Cf. Weischenberg, see also 2006 *ibid.*, pp. 102, 107. According to this, an impressive 89% of German journal-

Unlike the tradition of conviction journalism itself, the acceptance deficit of journalism studies as its consequence has so far remained oblivious of its historical roots. When key journalists like Detlef Esslinger turn against journalistic professional training at universities, they do so based on the argument that universities are unfit for practice – an argument that has been in common usage since the 1920s. They appear just as unaware of the tradition in which they act as they are of Germany's unusual position internationally in this regard.

Advancing the academic professional training of journalists both in Germany and Austria will take more<sup>71)</sup> than simply uncovering the similar historical roots of the precarious situation of the subject in these two countries – although this is also necessary. Their politicians like to stress that the two countries have gone (or are still going) through similar processes of Westernization and democratization, and this is also recognized by social historians. The familiar rise of xenophobia, the fragmentation and brutalization of public discourse that digitalization has brought with it, and the fading of liberal ethics of responsibility to be replaced by rigid conformity to rules – often called the 'decline in values' – show, however, that this process is neither complete nor irreversible.

One step towards this completion could be to promote professional training for journalists based on social sciences, which would also help to secure the quality of journalism through necessary innovations against the background of the media crisis triggered by the digital transformation. Like full employment, the rule of law, self-determination, or market regulation, public life is a regulative idea whose implementation needs care if it is to develop productive effectiveness for society and the individuals in it. This calls for a science oriented on the value axiom of this idea, conducting research into the conditions of its implementation *sine ira et studio*. By placing it on a rational and empirical footing, such a science can contribute to the effectiveness of the profession that has a duty to perform its role in public life – not least using professional initial and further training that incorporates the results of its research.

The vocational university subject of journalism studies is not irrelevant to the quality of journalistic practice, as can be seen in the USA, not least in the crisis that has been triggered there by the digital and cultural transformation. What journalists learn at American universities is clear, for example, from the fact that even tabloid newspapers like *USA today* present the results of opinion polls in a way that the German Press Council continues to demand, albeit with little success.<sup>72)</sup> Furthermore, as well as professional working techniques, American

ists in 2005 wanted to »inform the audience in as neutral and accurate way as possible;« in 1993 this figure was just 74%; and in 2005 only 58% wanted to »criticize abuses,« while the figure for 1993 was 63%.

71 This includes further factors such as a professional association of those active in journalistic initial and advanced training.

72 OPINION POLL RESULTS – In publishing the results of opinion polls, the press shall disclose the number of people surveyed, the time of the opinion poll, the client, and the question asked. It must also disclose



students also take a minor in »ethics,« which is considered particularly important and teaches them what society needs them for.<sup>[73]</sup> This is clear evidence that, alongside judges, it is particularly well trained, professional journalists who are aware of their role and (not least at the large quality papers) who keep the hope alive that democratic structures and forms of action can be maintained, even under the Trump administration.

In Germany, the evidence of this situation is clouded more than in other countries by historical legacies. It is important to remember that.

## Über den Autoren

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whether the results are representative.« JOURNALISTIC PRINCIPLES (PRESS CODE), Section 2, Guideline 2.1. ([https://www.presserat.de/files/presserat/dokumente/download/Pressekodex2017light\\_web.pdf](https://www.presserat.de/files/presserat/dokumente/download/Pressekodex2017light_web.pdf); 25.1. 2020)

73 In journalism studies in English-speaking countries, questions of professional ethics are based around the question: »What is journalism for?« Cf. e.g. Sanders, K. (2003): *Ethics and Journalism*. London incl.: Sage, p. 160; Harcup, T. (2004): *Journalism. Principles and Practice*. London incl.: Sage, p. 2.