

## Training journalists. The development of journalism education in Sweden, 1944-1970

The thesis *Training journalists* analyses the interaction between various interests in Swedish society when the existing apprenticeship system for the journalism profession was to be replaced by a formal journalism education programme. In Sweden, press organisations had a difficult time agreeing on a programme, and the issue was discussed for over 50 years. The profession was seen as a talent, an aptitude that some people had, and there was opposition to formal education. The traditional path to becoming a journalist was to start working as an apprentice, a volunteer, at a newspaper. Following the Second World War, a growing number of courses were developed for journalists that were run by different interests: political parties, private entrepreneurs, colleges and companies developing courses aimed at providing information to journalists. After two internal reports, Sweden's press organisations finally reached an agreement and founded a journalism school run by the industry in 1959. A few years later, journalism education was nationalised, although it was not integrated with the universities, which the press opposed. The press organisations' influence on journalism programmes continued, in part by controlling the selection of students and through their representation on boards overseeing the programmes. However, the two national journalism schools were able to achieve a certain degree of independence, which was strengthened with the late 1960s radicalism of young people. Journalism programmes were integrated in the universities in 1977, which is beyond the period of the investigation. The focus of this study is on the preceding development of an education programme and the fight against this integration.

The thesis is divided into three parts. The first part analyses discussions about journalism education in a post-war context, both in Sweden and internationally. Part two considers extensive investigatory processes in Sweden, in which the structure of journalism programmes was arrived at through negotiations. The third part studies the development of and discussions about the newly founded national journalism schools.

During the period of investigation, 1944 to 1970, there was an expansion of mass media in society. The existing system, with its party-affiliated press organisations, was challenged by the growing commercialisation of various media. The period was dominated by the Social Democrats, who maintained steady control of government. The Swedish welfare state expanded, the educational system was enlarged and university studies became accessible to most classes in society.

### Aim and perspective

This thesis examines discussions about how an education programme should be structured and, subsequently, how the newly established programme should be changed. The focus is on what perceived problems it was thought journalism education could resolve, but also on problems it was thought a programme could create. The journalism profession plays a key role in the dissemination of

information and opinions, which leads to a discussion about how journalism education also touches on questions of what rules apply in public discourse.

The empirical chapter is based on archive materials, literature and interviews. Questions explored include the idea of what knowledge was considered important for a journalist, various views of how a suitable journalist was to be selected, and how, where and by whom journalists should be educated. Some parallels are drawn with the international discussion about journalism education. A key conflict, both in Sweden and in other countries, was between universities and press organisations over the education of journalists. The thesis delves into this discussion, using the methodological and theoretical tools of the sociologist Pierre Bourdieu to analyse the press and academe as two fields. The aim is to try to answer the question of what the fields were fighting for, from what positions and what traditions. The research findings of the sociologist Margaret Archers provide the basis in the thesis for how the development of an education programme can be interpreted. The historian of ideas Sven-Eric Liedman's concept of frozen ideology is used in analysing how old traditions and ideologies were reproduced in the two fields.

## Empirical investigations

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The first part of the thesis considers the period immediately following the Second World War and how experiences of the war brought the issue of journalism education up for discussion, both in Sweden and abroad. The first chapter examines how the three press organisations in Sweden studied the need for a journalism education programme after the war, which resulted in the negative outcome that no formal programme for novices was to be set up. In structural terms, this exploratory process revealed a major division in the journalistic field on the question of education, which was counterbalanced by unanimity, on the surface, toward outsiders as the press rejected educational proposals from other parties. During the war, freedom of the press had been curbed in Sweden, in part with the press's own collaboration. In the discussion about the responsibility of journalists that was conducted after the war in Sweden, there was said to be a new threat to the press that came from within. Growing commercialism and sensational journalism were thought to be threatening the reputation of the press. This led to new demands for self-regulation, with journalism education being advanced as a solution. During the same period, similar discussions were held in investigations carried out in the US and Britain about problems concerning the industrialisation of the press. The solutions proposed were similar to those in Sweden. It was thought that the press needed to take greater responsibility, which could be done through its own regulatory board or better journalism education.

Chapter two explores the international issue of freedom of information at the United Nations and how this idealistic project was whittled down during the Cold War. Proposals to train journalists as ambassadors of peace were presented as a partial solution, a feasible solution in this great policy

debate. Proposals were put forward to train such journalists, who would provide accurate information that was free of any kind of propaganda or warmongering. The chapter clarifies the view that existed then, that formal journalism training was critical in educating journalists, who were considered to be capable of controlling people's view of reality and in the long term also controlling their actions. In the international debate, the academic training of journalists was suggested as a means of producing this ideal journalist, an idea that had a lukewarm reception in Sweden. From a structural perspective, the period described demonstrates a successful international coming together of the journalistic field against the supranational involvement of UN bodies, on education as well as other issues. The national press organisations also had a strong influence on their own governments. However, the Cold War did not fail to affect the press, which was politicised in both the east and the west.

The second part of the thesis examines the development of the Swedish educational community, where different initiatives for training journalists coexisted. Proposals for a basic journalism programme were submitted by various contributors, including colleges, the Social Democratic party, the Nordic Council and students at different universities, described in chapter three. Stockholm College at first got the press organisations to go along with it and formulated a joint proposal for a journalism programme with an affiliated press research institute. But the press subsequently rejected collaboration with the college and started its own investigation. The industry finally managed to reach an agreement to start its own journalism school in 1959, which consisted of a purely practical programme without any research link. On a structural level, the process demonstrates how the journalistic field encompassed a variety of proposals and found it extremely difficult to reach an agreement. There was considerable variation in the notion of what a profession like journalism entailed and how a journalist should be trained. Nonetheless, the field united in its ambition to exclude other initiatives for programmes which were considered to encroach on its autonomy.

Chapter four presents an analysis of how the nexus of investigations became a battleground for various interests over the education of journalists. A government inquiry was commissioned to find professional training programmes for university graduates with degrees in the humanities. At that time, there was a debate over what was called a humanities surplus, the feared overproduction of university humanities graduates. The committee explored the idea of establishing a university journalism programme since the journalism profession was considered a future labour market for this group. In the end, the committee arrived at a different conclusion. Appointed to resolve the universities' problems of a feared surplus of humanities graduates, it ended up with the establishment of two national journalism schools, which mainly trained students without a university degree. It was apparent from this that the press and the Social Democratic Minister for Ecclesiastical Affairs (who was responsible for education) had a shared interest in starting independent journalism schools at a time when the political aim was to reform the universities. The journalism schools also provided a solution for the Social Democratic government's aversion to starting a national university programme in advertising. Through a political process, the proposal for a university programme in advertising was

transformed into a programme for objective consumer information to be offered by the two journalism schools. In this chapter, the journalistic field and the academic field conflict in a struggle over which field's educational capital would apply in the education of journalists, both in selecting students and designing the content of the programme.

The third part of the thesis examines the situation in the 1960s in the new national journalism schools in Stockholm and Gothenburg and the change processes that were underway. Two inquiries about changing the existing journalism programmes are considered in chapter five. This is a process in which the fight was about whether the journalism programmes should be integrated with the universities or not, about theory and practice in the programmes, and about how students in the programmes were to be selected. The schools developed their own ideal of how critical, independent journalists were best trained. The tension between theory and practice that was embodied in the organisation of the journalism schools found its own arbitrary resolution as the programmes became increasingly independent. Teachers at the schools changed the theoretical content on their own initiative. The journalism schools wanted to go their own way and not be subjected to the rules in either the journalistic field or the academic field, which led to criticism. The national journalism schools were also a problem for party-affiliated newspapers, which had previously trained their own journalists. The Social Democratic party explored the possibility of providing journalists with continuing education since Social Democratic journalists did not have the same degree of experience with the labour movement as before. It is made clear here how a person's political formation in the 1960s was packaged in terms of education.

The final empirical chapter investigates the psychotechnical selection process and youth radicalism in journalism programmes in the 1960s. In 1967, the schools were renamed journalism colleges, although they were not integrated with the universities. The programmes became increasingly autonomous, and students endeavoured to influence the structure of their programme, both through actions and negotiations for direct democracy. Future employers could be described as outside interests that should not be allowed to influence journalism education. The chapter includes an in-depth study of the selection process through interviews with 1967 applicants in order to analyse what types of people were considered suitable for the journalism profession. Urban youths from the upper classes were dominant among those applicants granted an interview and those accepted. Precedence was given to personal qualities like being articulate, being able to establish good contact with people, taking initiative, being independent and not being afraid of authority. During the period, journalism education, especially the Journalism College in Stockholm, faced strong criticism from the press. The goal of educating journalists who think critically was supported by the social climate of the era, when a generation of young people were radicalised, and was likely reinforced by the psychotechnical tests selecting independent, critical, fearless people as being suitable for the profession.

## Conclusions

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The thesis demonstrates that journalism education was often presented as a solution to other perceived problems than the press needing more professionally trained labour. Journalism education was proposed as a solution to problems associated with commercialisation, sensational journalism, politicised journalism and war propaganda. In Sweden's investigative phases of the early 1960s, journalism education was used to resolve problems that lay far beyond the interests of the profession: finding a market for students with a humanities degree and avoiding the introduction of a university-degree programme in advertising. There were also hopes that major security policy problems like the risk of international conflicts could find a partial solution through better education for journalists. In the investigation, one view at the time is clear – trust in the formative power of social communication in an era when the media were expanding rapidly in society. The hope was that journalism education in the long run would affect readers.

Different interests wanted to promote different values through a journalism programme. This might include companies wanting to inform journalists about their products, courses on different social issues and to enhance Nordic cooperation, and political parties that wanted to give journalists political training or moral edification through various kinds of education. The focus was not on professional technical skills but rather on everything other than what a journalist should know. Journalism education could also play a role as a corrective means, a way of counteracting tendencies in the press that different elements in society did not like. The press could also promote journalism education as a potential form of self-regulation to avoid stricter laws that could affect the work of journalists.

The question of influencing the shaping of opinion both in Sweden and internationally was linked to journalism education to the extent that education was seen as a method of affecting the way the “free” press worked. For the same reason, the education of journalists was sometimes considered dangerous, that journalism students were streamlined in a separate education programme based on homogeneous values, which could be a threat to the freedom of expression. These fears could also be reproduced with the help of academic theories on professionalisation, which are discussed in the thesis.

For a long time, the Swedish press was unable to agree on a formal educational path. There was an ideal of self-education in the press, that people with the right talent created themselves through various experiences as journalists. The idea of journalism having its own path of self-education conflicted with what was seen to be a vital education programme. Another explanation for the press's inability to agree on a journalism programme was the great internal diversity in the journalistic field. Journalism could constitute different professions, depending on the type of editorial staff, geographic location of the newspaper and political affiliation. Apprenticeship training allowed better control over the knowledge base of journalism that various newspapers aimed to reproduce.

At the same time, the journalistic field demonstrated unity to the outside world when it came to rejecting other proposals to set up journalism programmes. These proposals were seen as a form of

control and encroachment on the autonomy of the press. While there were instances of collaboration with universities and colleges on journalism courses, the press usually retreated whenever there was close contact. Journalists frequently expressed disdain for university graduates, who were considered to have the wrong type of personality to become a journalist. Students who wanted to become journalists had to first demonstrate their suitability through practical work on a newspaper staff.

Using Bourdieu, the difficult relationship between the journalistic field and the academic field on education is interpreted as a struggle between two forms of capital over which kind of knowledge is to be valued, called educational capital in the thesis. Marks and formal degrees went face to face with an experienced-based tradition of self-education. When the national journalism schools were founded, these two forms of educational capital were incorporated in their structure. The conflict persisted, formulated as a difference between theory and practice. The struggle also involved what and who would determine the selection of students in journalism programmes.

In the radicalisation of the 1960s, a critical job was formulated that was rooted in the liberal freedom of the press at the two national journalism schools. Accordingly, the traditional job of the press, its doxa, was realised in a new, radical era. The journalism schools thus came into conflict with the tradition that prevailed in the press. This is interpreted in the thesis as a struggle over which rules would apply in the journalistic field.

Finally, the thesis discusses the conflicts between the academic field and the journalistic field that tended to be reproduced in journalism education programmes, both in Sweden and in other countries. Both fields used the metaphor of a knight for their operations, and there was kinship as well as competition between academic freedom and the freedom of expression. Both fields believed they had a specific vocation, and these tended to collide in journalism programmes. On a higher level, the struggle between academe and the press was formulated as a battle of symbolic royalty over what values were to be regarded as true in public discourse. There was a frozen ideology in both fields that became relevant in different eras and could exercise control, even if the circumstances under which it was created were long since gone. The battle could be described metaphorically as a civil war where two knights battle with swords that have become increasingly rusty in the era of information technology.