JPN, A TEACHING LABORATORIAL EXPERIENCE ON THE NEWS DIGITAL PLATFORM OF COMMUNICATION STUDIES IN UNIVERSITY OF PORTO

Ana Isabel Reis & Helena Lima

(University of Porto)

CONTEXTS

The teaching of journalism is a relatively late trend in Portugal, since the first degrees were only launched in 1979 at Universidade Nova de Lisboa and in 1985 at Escola Superior de Jornalismo do Porto (Mesquita & Ponte, 1997) In the following decade, communication degrees where journalism studies were included spread out either in universities or in bachelor degrees from institutes or private schools. Universities globally adopted a more theoretical frame in the choice of their curricula and syllabi, whereas bachelor degrees followed a more practical approach (Pinto, 2004) where the journalism techniques gained a central role, as for instance in the three years bachelor degree of Escola Superior de Jornalismo do Porto. According to Pinto, communication studies emerged in faculties normally shaped by humanistic studies background like history, philosophy, linguistics,

technology and other, while journalism would co-exist with other specialization formation such as public relations, advertising, audio-visual production and so on (2004: 52). Eventually, the bachelor courses evolved for four year degrees with a heavier theoretical component and, in the same sense, universities tried to change in order to accommodate to the market demands (Pearson, 2007).

This converging process somehow expresses the idea that "journalism and a broad academic curriculum should be articulated to one another" (Adam, 2001: 326). Deuze also agrees that in spite of formats or length of studies, journalism teaching "covers practical skills training, on the one hand, and general contextual education and liberal arts courses, on the other hand" (Deuze, 2006: 23). The University of Porto degree reflects this purpose and when it was launched, its name was "Journalism and Communication Sciences", therefore putting the accent on the journalism studies. The reason for this choice stems from the fact that journalism professors came from the professional field and had a clear purpose about the way it should be taught. Matching the critic approach of Adam (2001) on Pulitzer's perspective on this matter, Journalism and Communication Sciences degree was based on the conviction that the core of the curriculum should rely on a comparative journalism study, the identification of best practices and the intense supervision of a range of journalistic tasks, in articulation with "disciplines of the University on the understanding that they would provide the foundational vocabularies and methods of thinking for journalistic practice" (Adam, 2001: 323).

Since its launch in 2000, University of Porto Communication Sciences degree has been known to blend the two main trends in

journalism studies, the theoretical frame and laboratorial skills. The degree has a very interdisciplinary approach that is achieved through a study plan divided between four faculties: Arts, Engineering, Fine Arts and Economics. Therefore, it has the classical humanities courses, but also a large number of laboratorial hours, not only on journalism techniques but also on informatics and design. This perspective puts this grade on the "innovative" mode that teaches students by doing, rather than opting for the classical model (Deuze, 2006). *Journalism Techniques Communication* I and II, *Journalism Ateliers* combined with more technological courses like *Media Technology, Digital Communication and Internet* or *Media Labs* give students the necessary skills that match this more innovative model and JornalismoPortoNet is the peak of this learning process. Conceived as a semi-professional online newsroom and as well as a laboratory, JPN is the synthesis of the three-year grade in journalism specialization. Since its launching in 2004, it has had a very positive evaluation by students, professors and working market. Since the first generation of graduated students' reports enhance JPN as a solid formation platform which is also recognized by media companies. In the final reports, students consider that it creates a "dialogue" between practitioners and newsrooms (Zamith *et al.*, 2004).

Historical background

JornalismoPortoNet (JPN) was launched on March 22, 2004 as a result of one year of preparations and the combined efforts of the professors from the different academic fields that are the backbone of the Communication Sciences degree at the University of Porto, journalism, engineering, design and economics. JPN mainly stems

from the journalism practices and multimedia courses and has as main purposes:

1. The developing of theoretical and practical knowledge that were acquired in the previous years;

2. To provide a space where students could experience journalistic practices and be introduced to the professional routines;

3. To create the means to show the work developed by students during the bachelor and by so providing the building of their portfolio;

4. To create an internal and laboratorial newsroom for the last year students, before they reach the media internship in real newsrooms;

5. The laboratorial environment seeks to produce new and experimental forms of journalism.

The combined synergies and resources of Communication Sciences gave way to the construction of a digital platform for publication and edition that should be both accessible and intuitive for students, professors and technical staff engaged in this project. This platform ought to support the variety of multimedia resources that are normally used by online journalism which, by the time the JPN was launched, were still in an early stage. Accordingly, this online news site included specific spaces for audio and video which recently had evolved to integrated multimedia news and news reports.

Figure 1. JPN homepage in 2014

The technical specifications of the platform construction should respond to the online publications' requirements but, on the other hand, it couldn't imply a very demanding maintenance in the short and middle term. The design requirements "the JPN's interface was based on a structure that didn't aim only for the design, graphics or colour. Instead, its purpose was a visual structure that would support the diversity of the messages" (Zamith *et al.*, 2004: 11).

STRUCTURE AND FUNCTIONING

JPN has a hierarchic structure similar to the professional newsrooms. Teachers hold the director position and they are also area coordinators (journalism, design and engineering). Students

also have a hierarchical structure formed by the editor-in-chief and the executive producer that are elected by the group and rotate ever each month. The newsroom is entirely formed by students, however, this initial format evolved to a semi-professional level. More recently JPN has also included two editors, which are chosen among former students that are now have a fulltime job and perform as certified professional journalists. Apart from the daily editor functions they also produce and publish multimedia news contents.

JPN is also supported by technical staff from the audiovisual lab that guarantees the caption of sound and image as well as edition and post production. Another member of the staff ensures the platform's technical maintenance and the specialized multimedia features of the site and news. The newsroom is normally equipped with computers, telephones and television sets and a specific room for recording telephone calls. Complementary treatment of sound and video are provided by the radio and TV studios and all the available equipment, such as cameras, video cameras, recorders, editing stations and others. All these logistics support the production of audio and video news or other formats, photo galleries, multimedia for JPN, but also for the other courses. This technical structure also allows a weekly thematic newscast.

At the beginning of the first semester two newsroom teams are formed by students of different years whose voluntary work combined with news content produced in journalism classes give a permanent flow of news and other contents for JPN during that period. In the examinations periods and during summer, the editors update contents by publishing news and features. During the second semester, half of the internship is mandatory fulfilled at JPN. In this

period the newsroom is divided in two seven-hour shifts (morning and afternoon) from Monday till Friday. Weekends and nights are covered by rotation or according to the agenda and newsworthiness. Every shift begins with an editorial meeting where the daily agenda is debated and where students present ideas and angles, as well as the subjects that will be treated and deadlines.
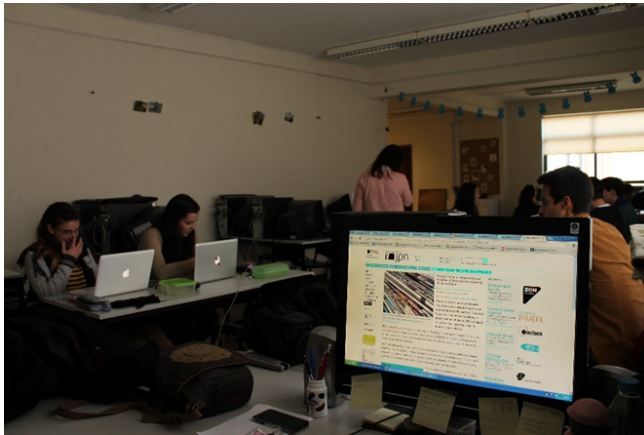
Figure 2. JPN Newsroom in 2014

When the JPN's newsroom is at full activity some professional journalists generally from Oporto news media are invited to become the "Editor for a day". This experience gives journalists the opportunity to lead the team since the morning editorial meeting until the moment that day news are published. For JPN it is an opportunity to show itself and make a stand in the working market and for the "Editor for a day" it is a different approach during which he or she may put in place untraditional practices, teaching professional experiences and giving professional guidance. For

students, this practice is seen as an opportunity to debate journalistic matters and work with professional journalists that, in some cases, return to JPN, as former students.

The choice of journalists is made among those with a wide experience either in radio, newspaper, television or online journalism and who can easily communicate with young students. Their main task is to supervise the newsroom and make suggestions or propose different angles for news reports. Alternative methods in the news gathering and reporting processes are also encouraged as means to improve the students' skills.

Figure 3. Germano Almeida, Maisfutebol journalist was JPN 'Editor for a day' in the World Football Cup 2014 opening

Some of these journalists already knew JPN and are regular readers, but others only met this project the very day that they were invited

for this task and began planning the agenda. By the end of the day, the JPN's newsroom is praised in terms of professional and personal experience and it is often seen as surprising.

Amílcar Correia, *P3*'s editor sees JPN as a unique case in the Portuguese online news and considers it "an interesting experience that is not limited by being a university site. Students have to deal with updates, talk to sources and produce news reports that show as much quality as any other media"[33]. This uniqueness is also marked by Raul Santos, journalist at Rádio Renascença that also points out the students' constant challenge in working with news sources and checking information, since JPN "isn't well known or very important, but they eventually get there"[34]. The editor for a day role may also be surprising for journalists that normally don't perform that kind of task, such as Pedro Mesquita, also from Rádio Renascença, whom also appreciates the work done by the team: "Still, I think that the novelty factor is important and I consider myself surprised by the JPN team"[35].

Some of the journalists such as Manuel Molinos already knew JPN's page and work due to the students that made the internship at *Jornal de Notícias*: "In my point of view the site is like a journalism lab, an interesting project within the University of Porto, that allows Communication students to interact with the real world that they will meet in the future"[36]. Paulo Pimenta is a photo reporter

---

[33] In http://jpn.up.pt/2011/03/31/amilcar-correia-o-jpn-e-um-caso-unico-na-imprensa-portuguesa/

[34] In https://www.facebook.com/video.php?v=10150652933810326&permPage=1

[35] In http://jpn.up.pt/2011/05/24/jpn-pedro-mesquita-e-editor-por-um-dia/

[36] In https://www.facebook.com/video.php?v=10200511789492712&permPage=1

from the newspaper *Público* that finds "important to come and share professional experience with students, giving them the work perspective, the street beat, to show how to tackle a story or shooting pictures. It was a great challenge to be within such a well prepared group"[37]. Inês Nadais, also from *Público* welcomes the idea that JPN works as a live training laboratory, which compensates a handicap felt by her generation, when the journalism teaching was marked by the disconnection between theory and practice. Furthermore, she points out other differences: "I felt a big difference between 'coordinating' a team of professional journalists and the JPN team, made by senior students. What distinguishes them is the curiosity and anxiety about what may be the in the future"[38]. The enthusiasm of JPN practitioners is also highlighted by Miguel Carvalho, from news magazine *Visão* that saw the experience as a flashback to the beginning of his professional career "with a lot of creative brainstorming, much debate and proposals. You have some of the best Porto's information, through different angles"[39]. The novelty of JPN's approach and the team eagerness are also stressed out by the television journalist Luís Miguel Loureiro: "in there is the spirit that should exist in every newsroom and it's good to know that trainees are willing to go out and make contact with the world. By doing so, they help to create a sense of identity which states credibility. It is reflective and quality journalism"[40].

[37] In http://jpn.c2com.up.pt/2014/04/29/paulo_pimenta_foi_editor_do_jpn_por_um_dia.html

[38] In http://jpn.up.pt/2015/04/25/media-ines-nadais-elogia-laboratorio-do-jpn/

[39] In http://jpn.up.pt/2014/03/21/10-anos-jpn-bastou-um-dia-para-eles-revolucionarem-a-redacao/

[40] In http://jpn.up.pt/2014/03/21/10-anos-jpn-bastou-um-dia-para-eles-revolucionarem-a-redacao/

Some of the editors for a day were former students of Communication Sciences of University of Porto that returned to JornalismoPortoNet, their first training camp. In a retrospective look they now see JPN differently and find that changes took place, as it is shown in Joana Felize's statement: "I realize the difference between what we did in the first year with less means, but the will and the passion to make news remains intact. I was not expecting to see this as professional, organized meeting and assigned work, in my time it was not so much"[41]. Manuel Bento considers that the project is now more solid and he is pleased by the "professionalism" shown[42].

Ivo Costa sees the students' experience as his own, very important: "For me JPN was very important to learn things that later were very useful"[43]. What can be improved? The answer is unanimous: "The updating and the speed".

Students do not always show enthusiasm for being coordinated by a professional journalist, although they are curious about the topics or approaches that might be proposed. At the end of the day, the perception changes and they realize that it was a unique opportunity to learn more about the profession: "I liked the realistic approach that the editor has given to the issues, we are still gaining experience and we think that everything is news. The editor helped us to get that sense of reality"[44]. Another student

---

[41] In http://jpn.up.pt/2014/03/21/10-anos-jpn-bastou-um-dia-para-eles-revolucionarem-a-redacao/

[42] In http://jpn.up.pt/2014/03/21/10-anos-jpn-bastou-um-dia-para-eles-revolucionarem-a-redacao/

[43] In http://jpn.up.pt/2014/03/21/10-anos-jpn-bastou-um-dia-para-eles-revolucionarem-a-redacao/

[44] In https://www.facebook.com/video.php?v=10153966713040422&theater

marks the public's point of view: "It helped us to put ourselves in the other side: does a reader read this? What is the best format? This was crucial"[45]. For another one "it was an opportunity to be in contact with the journalism's real world"[46]. In some cases there is a higher enthusiasm: "It was fantastic to have someone with so much experience to pass on important knowledge" or "It's not every day that we have a journalist with whom we can exchange ideas"[47].

Sometimes is when they are put in contact with people from outside the University that students are aware of the importance of JPN as part of the journalism teaching project: "When I had to do the preview of the Guest Editor, during the interview I realized that there are people who value JPN and follow it daily"[48].

For JPN Editors, this is also a valuable experience: "In terms of dynamics it is very different to write for the normal newsroom or having a professional journalist as editor". The young editors consider that they also learn and grow. So, when students put questions and hear valid advice in a different environment, they also listen and learn: "It helps us to have another perspective and to do other things"[49].

THE SENIOR STUDENT'S TESTIMONIALS

Since 2004, JPN brand has consolidated its place in the Portuguese academic journalism as an example of laboratory practice that

---

[45] In https://www.facebook.com/video.php?v=10153966713040422&theater

[46] In https://www.facebook.com/video.php?v=10153966713040422&theater

[47] In https://www.facebook.com/video.php?v=10153966713040422&theater

[48] Gerivaz, Sara (2014). "Relatório de Estágio Curricular". p. 31.

[49] In https://www.facebook.com/video.php?v=10153966713040422&theater

provides students the opportunity to experience what they have learned throughout the course, but still under the supervision of professors. The JPN is a middle ground between education and the labour market as it provides students a first contact with the professional routines, still under the professors' 'protection' and guidance, even though keeping the responsibility of their work.

In the internship reports from 2004 senior students "considered the experience a solid preparation for an external internship and future employment. It is in fact the intense 'dialogue' established between external trainee students in media newsrooms and the students from JPN that provide comments to the published news" (Zamith *et al.*, 2004: 24). Over the eleven years of existence of the JPN the stage of final reports continue to reflect this vision. The cyberjournal is aimed to the students at the first stage of their career as journalists.

For professors, some of them journalists or former journalists, it is a way of bringing together academia and newsrooms and to show what is produced within the University. For the media JPN is a laboratory where future professionals are formed. These different levels can be assessed in students' internship reports and the way they evolved since 2004.

Internship reports reflect on JPN, the work that has been done and its articulation with the curriculum. These reflections and critics are the basis for changes and adaption on technical and editorial issues in JornalismoPortoNet. What students write at the end of JPN stage in their internship reports? Some quotes from internship reports 2003/2004, first year of the JPN:

<u>Strengths</u>

- "To coordinate a group of friends is not always easy, we had to learn how to impose, we had to forget the friendship and, when necessary, ask friends to reason"; "To establish the basis of a project and make it work is a reason for pride"[50].

- "We were the first, JPN will always be 'our' site"[51].

- "The JPN managed to cross the walls of the Faculty and the barriers of the course, and this was one of the greatest achievements of those who were involved in the project"[52].

- "There, we stopped being students, but we were not journalists yet, we were in the middle"[53].

- "The JPN gave us freedom and added responsibility. The texts were published and this carried the obligation to be objective and rigorous"[54].

- "Now, in a back view, I recognize its importance in my learning process and assimilation"[55].

- "I feel more complete (…) more curious"[56].

- "I was the forerunner of a new idea that can live a trace"[57].

---

[50] Abreu, Andreia (2004). "Relatório de Estágio". pp. 5-6

[51] Abreu, Andreia (2004). "Relatório de Estágio". p. 16

[52] Abreu, Andreia (2004). "Relatório de Estágio". p. 18

[53] Morais, V. André (2004). "Relatório de Estágio". p. 20

[54] Morais, V. André (2004). "Relatório de Estágio". p. 20

[55] Morais, V. André (2004). "Relatório de Estágio". pp. 20-21

[56] Morais, V. André (2004). "Relatório de Estágio". p. 23

[57] Amorim, Bruno (2004). "Relatório de Estágio". p. 3

Weaknesses

- "The amount of work and the long hours"[58].

- "We didn't have a personal agenda or technical resources"[59].

- "We had to live every experience personally, we did not have anyone to follow or observe, it was just us and the professors"[60].

- "I was often relegated to a second place by the sources, out casted by PRs whom spoke only with professional journalists"[61].

- "The lack of means, especially reporting equipment"[62].

- "Delay in publication of texts that would lose the newsworthiness because JPN lacked someone with authority to re-read and publish"[63].

---

[58] Abreu, Andreia (2004). "Relatório de Estágio". p. 21

[59] Abreu, Andreia (2004). "Relatório de Estágio". p. 16

[60] Abreu, Andreia (2004). "Relatório de Estágio". p. 8

[61] Abreu, Andreia (2004). "Relatório de Estágio". p. 9

[62] Amorim, Bruno (2004). "Relatório de Estágio". p. 16

[63] Bento, Manuel (2004). "Relatório de Estágio".

Quotes of internship reports when the JPN site was renovated in 2006/2007:

Strengths

- "It was the daily production of news content that made me create a rhythm of work, live the routines, assimilate the journalistic culture and gain some professional experience"[64].

- "The internship in JPN made me more insightful and confident"[65].

- "I created the habit of thinking of an alternative way to explore stories that were already dead"[66].

- "Equal status excluded competition and privileges, there was a team spirit and camaraderie"[67].

- "There was a strong team spirit and mutual support, all of us gave it all to JPN"[68].

- "The site has been renovated and I could take advantage of other features, which was an asset because it allowed me to experience other things"[69].

- "Only after living JPN I realized that it was on the favorites' list of some journalists from quality media and it was read by them"[70].

---

[64] Posse, Patrícia (2007). "Relatório de Estágio". p. 20

[65] Posse, Patrícia (2007). "Relatório de Estágio". p. 20

[66] Posse, Patrícia (2007). "Relatório de Estágio". p. 9

[67] Posse, Patrícia (2007). "Relatório de Estágio". p. 9

[68] Queiroz, João (2007). "Relatório de Estágio". p. 7

[69] Queiroz, João (2007). "Relatório de Estágio". p. 13

[70] Queiroz, João (2007). "Relatório de Estágio". p. 18

Weaknesses

- "The main problem was time management and working with time great pressure"[71].

- "The editorial choice was not always clear"[72].

- "The contact with the sources revealed the weaknesses of a project still looking to build credibility and recognition from the public"[73].

- "The big criticism is the excessive hours, from 8 am to 20 pm, which is doesn't result in more work and affects the free time and time to rest"[74].

- "The JPN should consider whether to invest more in journalistic genres such as interview and invest in large timeless themes, not only at daily news"[75].

- "I never felt that the JPN doors were open. I thought it was an elitist space, only for those who were in the last year, but I now recognize that the initiative should part from the students and I don't understand how there are so few people interested in writing in JPN since the first year"[76].

---

[71] Posse, Patrícia (2007). "Relatório de Estágio". p. 9

[72] Posse, Patrícia (2007). "Relatório de Estágio". p. 10

[73] Posse, Patrícia (2007). "Relatório de Estágio". p. 10

[74] Posse, Patrícia (2007). "Relatório de Estágio". p. 11

[75] Posse, Patrícia (2007). "Relatório de Estágio". p. 18

[76] Queiroz, João (2007). "Relatório de Estágio". pp. 15-16

Quotes from internship reports of the academic year 2013/2014:

Strengths

- "JPN's journalist is out of his comfort zone not only in terms of media (video, audio, etc.) and working with different editorial subjects, because there is no specialization which encourages the diversity of work and prepares the trainee for the labour market"[77].

- "Its scope should be cherished and preserved so that future generations can understand the importance of the collaborative spirit, solidarity and creative journalism"[78].

Weaknesses

- "It should cover hard news too, that would make the trainee gain more experience. It, should reintroduce political issues, for example"[79].

- "Editorial conservatism (by not using long narratives)"[80].

- "The site was an obstacle to the use of available resources, it is rudimentary and does not follow the current needs that are taught during the course"[81].

- "The site has discrediting limitations that do not allow the enhancement of resources"[82].

---

[77] Couto, Ricardo (2014). "Relatório de Estágio". p. 9

[78] Couto, Ricardo (2014). "Relatório de Estágio". p. 20

[79] Gerivaz, Sara (2014). "Relatório de Estágio". p. 38

[80] Couto, Ricardo (2004). "Relatório de Estágio". p. 9

[81] Couto, Ricardo (2004). "Relatório de Estágio". p. 10

[82] Couto, Ricardo (2014). "Relatório de Estágio". p. 20

- • "The editorial statute should be clarified"[83].

- • "The evolution of the editorial line part is directly influenced by the views of the editors rather than obey the collective identity built by all"[84].

- • "The site needs urgent revision, the current image has more than seven years, which in the online environment is an eternity, it lacks a complete turn, and adaptation to new devices because it is not the public that has to get to us, we who have to get to the public"[85].

- • "JPN was born in a phase where it could innovate, which it did, but it didn't change with the times"[86].

For the JornalismoPortoNet 10th anniversary, in 2014, the senior students made a special multimedia coverage not only on the anniversary but also about online journalism practiced in the last decade. Former students, professors, and founders that worked on the project were interviewed, as well as the media managers that provide jobs for graduates or host the trainees. Here follows some of the most significant quotes.

The first JPN newsroom hosted around 20 senior students. One of them, Ana Rodrigues, an anchor at a local television from the north, says that at that time "everything was new, nobody had experience or knew how a newsroom or news website functioned,

---

[83] Lau, Afonso Ré (2014). "Relatório de Estágio". p. 12

[84] Couto, Ricardo (2014). "Relatório de Estágio". p. 20

[85] Lau, Afonso Ré (2014). "Relatório de Estágio". p. 12

[86] Lima, Ricardo (2014). "Relatório de Estágio". p. 14

but it worked"[87]. JPN's first editor, Pedro Rios, is now online editor at a national radio and he refers to it as building a project from the scratches: "it was an innovative project, there was nothing like; it was very exciting doing something that depended only on us and live to it; it was a challenge, an adventure"[88]. Both former students highlight the editorial line for adopting a different view of the city, its culture, the education and the University. It was another way of doing journalism perhaps more dynamic, free from prejudice and more independent, actually the advantages of having such a young team[89].

As for the experience, they recognize that JPN's daily work was important to realize "the routines and matters speed before going to do internships in a media organization". Another 2004 student, Ana Pereira, now editor of a local online newspaper, says it was an "opportunity to be a journalist without bad habits, aided by the monitoring of professors"[90].

Eleven years later, how do these former students of Communication Sciences of the UP look upon JPN? "I continue to watch the webpage and follow what is being done"; "It evolved into a news media that makes regular updates during most of the year and it is clear that JPN is more important to the journalism courses now than it was at the beginning"; "When I read the JPN I realize

[87] In http://jpn.up.pt/2014/03/21/10-anos-jpn-uma-viagem-no-tempo-com-os-pioneiros/

[88] In http://jpn.up.pt/2014/03/21/10-anos-jpn-uma-viagem-no-tempo-com-os-pioneiros/

[89] In http://jpn.up.pt/2014/03/21/10-anos-jpn-uma-viagem-no-tempo-com-os-pioneiros/

[90] In http://jpn.up.pt/2009/03/20/video-recuperamos-o-primeiro-video-do-jpn/

the difference between what we did in the first year with less means, and what is done now"[91].

Conclusions

Since 2004 JPN has particularly evolved in terms of structure, functioning and contents. The first trainees pointed failures that have been corrected since then, such are the case of audio and video recording equipment, computers and other essential equipment for current journalistic practices. The guidance in the daily work was also corrected by hiring a full-time editor, and later a second half-time editor, which evolved into the current two full-time editor team. As for the contents, if early critics were focused on the absence of major reports or special subjects that require more planning and preparation time, today we are faced with the opposite criticism, because JPN gives more attention to the major matters or timeless dossiers and less focus on hard news. However, this criticism is not always justified. It was exactly the exhaustive coverage of a current event that gave JPN one of the Cyberjournalism Academic awards. Nevertheless, it is recognized that an increase of daily news on the city might be necessary.

JPN site was redesigned eight years ago and the content management system (MT-Movable Type Publishing Platform Version 5.04) has proved itself to be limited considering the evolution of online journalism, even if it needed almost no maintenance, which is made clear by the fact that JPN has not a computer or multimedia department. The version of MT that

---

[91] In http://jpn.up.pt/2014/03/21/10-anos-jpn-uma-viagem-no-tempo-com-os-pioneiros/

was being used failed in terms of updates so it was necessary to think of a short-term solution. The solution was to include a new multimedia expert in the team, Pedro Candeias, a former student and responsible for the first JPN design. His initial task was to migrate all content produced over ten years on a new platform, WordPress, and adapt the new working environment to the needs and specificities of its functioning demands. Renewing the site will be the next big task. The testimonials and data we gathered about the 11 years of JPN existence led us to make a SWOT analysis presented as a conclusion.

Strengths

- Semi-professional structure that puts students in close contact with routines and journalistic practices, but not necessarily meaning the temptation to replicate the real-life environment of a large newsroom. As students state the daily production of news content creates rhythm of work, routines, and produces journalistic culture and professional experience. The pedagogical purpose is still preponderant over the news logics when guiding the student's production so that they may consolidate their skills.

- Editorial line and subjects focused on different approaches of the national media are referred by students that enhance the thinking of an alternative way to explore stories. The JPN aim is not to compete with national media. It has no means to do so and its goal is to treat events in a journalistic manner but with a different approach from the other media. The aim is to encourage students to see the daily events from multiple

perspectives and thus tackle them from diversified point of views.

- Hypermedia contents are also seen as crucial because JPN allows experimentation and alternative narratives.

- Great reports and dossiers are also cherished because students are given the opportunity to work in different editorial subjects.

- Being a University of Porto project adds credibility, which students realize when they acknowledge that JPN is in the favourites' list of some journalists from quality media.

Weaknesses

- Attracting students/ trainees in order to maintain a more or less permanent flow of contents and updates. For students in the 1st and 2nd years, JPN is an extra-curricular activity, therefore depending on their availability and willingness, and not always engage with it due to incompatibility schedules or lack of motivation.

- Website: unattractive design; rigid structure; inflexible segmentation. These factors also influence the content and its image because the website has technical constraints that do convey with innovations in this area. The site has been criticized many times and it is pointed out that it needs revision. It is also out of date in terms of image, more than seven years, which in the online environment is an eternity. The site needs a complete redesign and adaptation to new devices because it is not friendly and it is not attractive.

- Not a consistent team and production, often leading to consequences in editorial consistency. This makes students criticism in terms of editorial guidance, either because they see it as conservative, or they claim it lacks hard news. This factor is naturally related to the changing of newsroom teams and editors which is the normal cycle in the university environment and, moreover, in an extracurricular activity.

- Delays towards reality and some trends, e.g., unresponsive site designs for mobile devices. This comes as particularly relevant, since the age group that produces JPN, but also its readers engage with news contents through mobile devices.

- Being in the University of Porto - dilution in the UP universe.

- Lack of disclosure and marketing campaigns, also limited by the lack of financial resources.

Opportunities

- Experimentation in an academic environment. To tackle the opportunity given by the particular shape of this degree, namely by gathering the research produced by professors from the different faculties, in areas related to journalism and which have proven fundamental to the design of new and old media, news consumption and journalistic contents studies.

- Laboratory space on a more expanded concept, e.g., not just focusing on content but also in software tools that enhance the production and consumption of news, and the study of these processes, their effects and potential.

Threats

- Lack of independent financial resources – therefore back autonomy for making decisions without relying on other decision levels, in particular the technical and human resources. The JPN has no financial independence but its semi-professional structure depends on external entities (an institution within the Rectorate and the four faculties directors) that manage the budget.

- Professional Journalist Certification Commission (*Comissão para a Carteira Profissional* - CCPJ) that grants the professional journalist certification – JPN is a semi-professional organization, thus it is mandatory to be certified by this commission. Sometimes CCPJ raises questions regarding the professional certification of JPN editorial board and the resident editors. The main reason is that only certified journalists can sign news - trainees cannot contact sources or sign the texts they produce.

REFERENCES

Adam, G. S. (2001). "The education of journalists". *Journalism*, 2(3): 315–339.

Deuze, M. (2006). "Global journalism education. A conceptual approach". *Journalism Studies*, 7(1): 19-34.

Mesquita, M.; Ponte, C. (1997). "Situação do Ensino e da Formação Profissional na área do Jornalismo 1996-97". Retrieved from: http://www.bocc.ubi.pt/pag/mesquita-mario-ponte-cristina-Cursos-Com3.html

Pearson, K. (2007). "Start earlier. Expand the Mission, Integrate technology". *Nieman Reports*, 61(3). Retrieved from: http://www.nieman.harvard.edu/wp-content/uploads/pod-assets/pdf/Nieman%20Reports/ProfCorner/teaching-digital.pdf

Pinto, M.; Sousa. H. (2003). "Journalism Education at Universities and Journalism Schools in Portugal". In: Frohlich, R.; Holtz-Bacha, C. (Eds.). *Journalism Education in Europe and North America, An International Comparison*. New York: Hampton Press.

Pinto, M. (2004). "O ensino e a formação na área do jornalismo em Portugal: 'crise de crescimento' e notas programáticas". *Comunicação e Sociedade*, 5: 49-62

Zamith, F.; Leal, P.; Nunes, S.; Giesteira, B.; Lima, H.; Couto, S. S.; Silva, M. N.; Costa, E.; Fonseca, C. (2004). "O ciberjornal como instrumento de ensino: da teoria à prática". Retrieved from: http://www.bocc.ubi.pt/pag/zamith-fernando-ciberjornal.pdf