Journalism Education Reform: A Curriculum Analysis of Universities in Northern China

Anqi Wang[a], Nik Norma Nik Hasan[b]*

[a,b]School of Communication, Universiti Sains Malaysia, Penang, Malaysia
Corresponding Author Email: niknorma@usm.my

Abstract
With the emergence of digital technology, the continuously evolving journalism, and the increasing variety of skills that journalists must acquire, journalism education in China, the source of journalism talent, is undergoing unprecedented reforms. Universities offering journalism programs need to adapt their curricula more quickly to meet the requirements of the developing journalism. This study focuses on the transformations within contemporary Chinese journalism education—both the changes that have been implemented and still required. This study analyses the journalism curricula of leading universities in northern China and in conjunction with interviews from journalism educators, highlights that Chinese journalism education has developed a curriculum pattern focused on teaching foundational knowledge and skills in journalism, while also emphasizing the cultivation of interdisciplinary knowledge and digital skills. China's future journalism programs must continuously adapt based on journalism practices to ensure that the knowledge and skills taught in universities do not become obsolete. The findings of this study indicate technology factors will increasingly be reflected in future journalism curricula, making courses related to digital technologies a critical adaptation to the evolving media landscape. Additionally, universities enhancing collaboration with media organizations by establishing media laboratories and sharing faculty resources is also a significant measure in the future reforms of journalism education.
Keywords: Journalism Education of China, Curriculum, Digital Technology, Education Reforms, Content Analysis, Chinese Universities

Introduction

The emergence of digital technologies in contemporary Chinese journalism has transformed the journalism work along with the entire media landscape. From the initial generation of news-writing robots that could compose news in just 25 seconds (Du, 2017), to the widespread use of virtual anchors for event commentary and news reporting during the Beijing Winter Olympics and Paralympics, there has been significant advancement in the application of digital technologies within the journalism (Zheng & Feng, 2022). Thus far,

Chinese journalism has adeptly integrated advanced digital technologies such as big data and artificial intelligence into various aspects of news information collection, processing, integration, verification and judgment, production assistance, and distribution; it will continue to use technologies like VR and AR further to enhance the quality and efficiency of news production from multiple dimensions (Su & Peng, 2020).

Digital technology has revitalized the journalism industry in China while simultaneously presenting serious crisis. As the application of artificial intelligence in news writing and reporting continues to expand, a growing number of journalists are facing unemployment (Zheng & Feng, 2022). The introduction of new tools in journalism necessitates that journalists acquire more employability skills, particularly digital skills (Liu & Liu, 2018). Furthermore, news organizations are progressively losing public trust due to fake information entering our lives through media platforms (Hao, 2022). During the process of information sharing on social media, excessive data collection places users at risk of having their privacy exposure (Jin, 2021).

Considering these shifts, it is necessary to review journalism education curricula and pedagogical practice according to how roles and jobs are transforming all levels in the journalism industry (Venkatasawmy, 2018). Because high-quality journalism education should not be limited to the conventional, foundational courses typically offered in universities, but should instead include relevant courses that reflect the realities of contemporary media practices (Tully & Vraga, 2018).

The journalism discipline in China has been established for more than 100 years, and journalism education in universities has always played a crucial role in training future journalism practitioners (Xu, 2015). In 2020, Tsinghua University decided to abolish undergraduate admissions in journalism and instead expand the enrollment of master's degree candidates. Some scholars argue that this move dilutes the practical elements of journalism, potentially leading to a disconnect between higher education in journalism and the industry (Zhang, 2020). Conversely, other scholars believe that such reforms are beneficial for the well-rounded development of students (Zhao, 2020). These discussions have sparked reflections on the future direction of journalism education reform in China.

Chinese universities have been actively implementing reforms to enhance the quality of journalism education, aiming to cultivate several high-quality journalism talents to journalism. A report published by the Ministry of Education of China in 2018 indicates that, based on the development of journalism education in the country, China will focus on establishing a group of journalism institutions with world-class standards. China should optimise journalism curricula to improve the quality of journalism education in accordance with the laws of journalism and communication, in order to improve the quality of journalism education and adapt to the new demands posed by globalization and emerging technologies (Luan & He, 2020). At the same time, it was announced that 20 national-level integrated media centers and 50 national-level virtual simulation experimental teaching projects in journalism would be established for teaching (Luan & He, 2020). Some of China's leading universities, such as Capital Normal University and Renmin University of China, have previously engaged in academic research on topics like artificial intelligence and technology ethics, exploring the relationship between humans and technology as a breakthrough point

for reforming journalism education (Zhao, 2020).

The development of media education in China has made some achievements, yet it simultaneously faces a multitude of challenges. The educational views in journalism are lagging behind the emerging trends within the industry, resulting in curricula that are often irrational and incomplete, failing to cover the knowledge and skills needed in all aspects of journalism work (Mao, 2019). Journalism curricula focus on theoretical knowledge, however, there is a lack of emphasis on practical skills, particularly in digital skills (Zhang, 2021). Several universities aim to introduce courses related to artificial intelligence or big data; however, they encounter challenges in recruiting qualified faculty and cannot provide the necessary technical equipment and media laboratories for student practice (Wang, 2021; Deng, 2022).

Currently Chinese journalism education is increasingly recognizing the the importance of digital technology on higher education. The latest document from the Ministry of Education emphasizes in Declaration on the Construction of New Humanities that 'to advance the reform of humanities disciplines, it is essential to actively promote the deep integration of advanced technologies such as artificial intelligence and big data with the humanities, and to vigorously develop emerging majors within the humanities'(MOE of China, 2020). This document requires that higher education institutions reevaluate the connotations of humanities disciplines and their objectives for talent cultivation while exploring new educational models to meet the demands of contemporary journalism (Li,2023). As an essential branch of the humanities, journalism must rapidly adapt its curricula to align with the evolving of journalism. Consequently, this article focuses on the transformations within contemporary Chinese journalism education—both the changes that have been implemented and still required. This study examines the pattern of journalism curricula at ten universities in northern China. In order to ensure the scientific and comprehensive of the study, this study also conducted interviews with educators from these ten institutions. These approaches aim to explore the transformations that have occurred in Chinese journalism education amidst ongoing reforms and to identify the future directions for further reform in journalism education.

Literature Review
The Development of Journalism in Chinese Universities and Colleges
In China, journalism education encompasses various ways, including higher education provided by universities, onboarding training for practitioners at news organizations, and media technology skills training by private institutions (Li, 2017). Some articles consider journalism education as part of media professional education, focusing on cultivating professionals capable of engaging in such as information production in the media industry (Li, 2017). According to the actual situation in China, universities represent the primary way for cultivating specialized talent in journalism (Zhao, 2019).

The emergence of journalism education in China can be traced back to 1912. In that year, the China News Association first proposed the establishment of journalism education institutions, which sparked societal interest in the field (Liao, 2022). The founding of the journalism department at Shanghai St. John's University in 1920 marked the beginning of higher education journalism in China (Ge, 2015). Before the establishment of the People's Republic of China, journalism education experienced its first peak, with the number of

institutions offering journalism programs reaching 33 (Xu, 2015). During this period, Chinese higher education institutions developed an educational pattern to cultivate practical talent (Lin & Du, 2024). At the same time, journalism education has the following characteristics: it has gained gradual recognition within Chinese society; the ways of training for journalism education are diverse; it is significantly influenced by American journalism education; and journalism education institutions display a "regionally concentrated" distribution (Xu, 2015; Liao, 2022).

The period from 1949 to 2000 represents a comprehensive development phase for journalism education in China (Lin & Du, 2024). During this time, reforms in journalism education were mainly led by the government, involving extensive systemic changes. For instance, in an effort to optimise the academic structure and enhance the scientific management of educational institutions, several institutions that did not meet the criteria were either closed or restructured and subsequently merged with other journalism institutions (Deng & Li, 2019). Furthermore, the government convened the first National Symposium on Journalism Education, where participants addressed a multitude of issues surrounding the development of journalism education, including the revision of admission policies, improvements in teaching content and methods, and the urgent need to develop a complete set of journalism textbooks (Li, 2020). In addition, the Ministry of Education in China has decided to separate journalism from the discipline of literature, thereby establishing it as an independent academic discipline (Xu, 2015). At this stage, higher education in journalism began to emphasize the theoretical foundations of teaching and learning, continuously exploring talent cultivation models that are distinctive to Chinese characteristics throughout its development (Lin & Du, 2024).

Entering the 21st century, journalism education in China entered a phase of stable development. Subsequent reforms in journalism education were initiated as localised changes within higher education institutions, influenced by the advent of the Internet and advancements in media technology (Li, 2017; Lin & Du, 2024). The emergence of the internet has provided journalism with enhanced opportunities for growth, resulting in a surge in journalism positions that necessitate higher education institutions to cultivate a large number of journalism talents for the industry (Liu & Liu, 2018). Currently, there are 719 universities with journalism-related programs in China (Lyu & Li, 2021). Along with the rapid expansion of universities offering journalism programs, universities are beginning to rethink and redefine journalism education. Some forward-looking journalism universities are now offering a specialized track in 'online news' within their journalism programs. This indicates that students, after completing foundational courses, can select specific areas of focus based on their interests and capabilities (Li, 2017). Almost all journalism universities are now engaged in the trend of reforming media education (Li, 2017). This includes some universities implementing curriculum changes by introducing courses in international news, online news, and new media editing; others have recognized the necessity for extensive practical training in journalism, incorporating media technology-related teaching equipment, establishing media laboratories, and providing students with internship at media organizations (Huang, 2018).

Research on Journalism Curricula in Chinese Universities

Currently, there is a limited quantity of research concerning journalism curricula in China. According to the Catalogue of Undergraduate Programs in General Colleges and Universities (2012) issued by the Ministry of Education of China, journalism and communication studies is classified as a primary academic discipline encompassing majors such as journalism, advertising, communication, publishing and editing, and radio and television (MOE, 2012). Most of the research on journalism education curricula in China is centred on 'journalism education' in the broader sense, that is, curricula for journalism and communication related majors (Zhou & Luo, 2019). Journalism, on the other hand, as the discipline with the longest history of development among journalism and communication disciplines (Xu, 2015; Liao, 2022), has received less scholarly attention in recent years in terms of the development and change of its curriculum.

In the research on journalism curricula, a part of the article involves comparative studies utilizing two samples to identify the existing issues within journalism curricula and propose solutions. For instance, Liao (2021) and Ye (2020) conducted a comparison of undergraduate journalism curricula (sports news) in universities from China and the United States; Chen and Chang (2020) investigated journalism curricula and student satisfaction in China and South Korea. Additionally, some researchers have analyzed the journalism curricula of several universities located in regions where economic and educational resources are limited, or where the level of journalism education is relatively underdeveloped, which presents numerous challenges for the advancement of the journalism discipline. Zhang (2019) conducted a text analysis of the curricula for journalism programs at five undergraduate universities in Guizhou province, aiming to enhance the quality of journalism education in that region; Wang (2024) investigated the journalism curricula in private universities in Shandong Province, addressing the challenges faced in journalism education at these institutions, and contributing to the enhancement of educational quality in China's private higher education institutions.

In these researches, essential areas of investigation include course content, educational objectives, and training requirements. Through the analysis and comparison of these aspects, common issues present within the sample can be identified: the irrationality of curricula design, such as the insufficient hours dedicated to practical teaching, which is a concern shared by most researchers (Wang, 2021); the outdated of course, indicating that traditional journalism knowledge and skills have persisted, lacking the inclusion of new media theories and emerging technologies (Liao, 2021; Ye, 2020); and the lagging educational objectives, referring to the mismatch between the competencies cultivated by higher education institutions and those demanded by the journalism industry (Zhang, 2019; Wang, 2024). Colleges and universities should move with the times, constantly update their educational views, and constantly revise their education objectives according to the changes in the development of journalism so that journalism education can be conducted under the guidance of well-defined goals (Li, 2017).

Methodology

This article contained two research sections that were explored using two different research methods: qualitative content analysis and in-depth interviews. The study includes the following research questions :

RQ1 What is the pattern of journalism education curricula in northern China's universities?
RQ2 How have journalism curricula in northern Chinese universities changed compared to previous years?
RQ3 What is the trend of future reform of journalism education in China?

The data for the first part of the journalism curricula was collected from ten universities in northern China that offer journalism programs. This part of the study aims to assess the best journalism education curricula structure in China. This part used purposive sampling, selecting Northern China as the research area due to the presence of 53 universities offering journalism programs, making it the region with the second-highest number of journalism universities in the country (ShanghaiRanking, 2023); the region also includes the province of Beijing, the capital of China, which has the highest quality of education resources. Two universities (one public and one private) with the highest-ranked journalism programs in each of the five provinces covered by northern China (Beijing, Tianjin, Inner Mongolia, Shanxi, and Hebei) were selected. Because the higher the ranking of the journalism program, the better the quality of journalism education at the university. And private universities, like public universities, are both integral parts of the Chinese education. Therefore, a total of 10 universities were selected. The collected journalism curricula were coded and analysed in Nvivo based on a coding sheet, while qualitative content analysis allowed the findings in this part to address RQ1, which is to explore patterns in journalism curricula. Furthermore, this study only analysed the professional courses related to journalism, excluding general courses such as English, computer science, and entrepreneurship that are commonly offered across universities.

The data for the second part was collected through semi-structured interviews with journalism educators from 10 universities, the interview questions were designed based on the findings of the first part of the study. These interviews were conducted anonymously, meaning that the participants' names and the names of their respective universities are not be disclosed in the article. And the research passed the Humanities Ethics application at Universiti Sains Malaysia. Participants in the research study must meet the following criteria: (1) they must hold the position of dean or deputy dean of a journalism program at a higher education institution; (2) they should possess a minimum of ten years of experience in journalism education; (3) they must have been involved in the construction of journalism curricula at least once or twice. These criteria ensure that participants can provide insights into the changes associated with journalism curricula reforms and offer direction and perspectives on the future of journalism education reform in China during the interviews. From this, the findings from the interview were used to respond to RQ2 and RQ3. The interview content was initially preserved in audio format, and upon transcription into text, it was subjected to coding and thematic analysis using Nvivo software.

Findings
Qualitative Survey on Journalism Curricula
Curricula are a fundamental component of journalism education; the educational objectives and anticipated outcomes for cultivating journalism talent at a higher education institution must be explicitly reflected in the specific courses offered. In the collected sample, ten universities collectively offered 127 journalism courses. These courses are classified into four categories: journalism basics courses, journalism practice courses, interdisciplinary

courses, and digital courses.

Journalism Basics Courses

Among the four categories of courses, the one with the highest number of offerings was the 'journalism basics' category, featuring a total of 57 courses. These courses encompass topics such as journalism and communication theories, the history of journalism, journalism ethics and regulations, and research methodologies. The study also summarised the number of courses offered at ten universities, and 9 courses had more than half of the universities offering them. All universities provided courses in *Journalism Theory* and *Communication Theory*; 9 universities offered *Introduction to Internet & New Media*; 8 universities taught *News History of China & Foreign Countries,* and *Marxist Journalism*; 7 universities included courses on *News Ethics and Regulation*, *Advertising Theory*; and 6 colleges covered *Public Opinion Studies* and *Principles of Radio & Television*.

Journalism Practice Courses

34 journalism practice courses were offered across 10 universities, making this the second most prevalent category of courses. These courses are designed to help students in transforming theoretical knowledge of journalism into practical skills through hands-on experience, thereby equipping them with the essential skills needed for journalism work. This part of the study conducted a review of the journalism programs at ten universities, revealing that all universities offered courses in *News Commentary*, *Practice of News Interview & Writing*, and *News Photography*. 9 universities provided *Media Operations and Management*, followed by *News Editing* (offered by 8 universities), and *In-depth Interviewing* (7 universities), *Non-linear Editing, Visual Communication,* and *Audio/Video News Production* (6 universities). The remaining courses were offered at less than 50% of the universities.

Interdisciplinary Courses

Interdisciplinary knowledge has become mainstream in journalism education in China, with numerous universities offering interdisciplinary courses in their journalism programs. This paper summarized the interdisciplinary courses based on data collected from ten Chinese universities, as presented in Table 1. Due to confidentiality policies, some universities' journalism curriculum are considered internal documents; therefore, the names of the ten universities have been replaced with letters and numbers, with the same letter representing the same region.

Table 1

Northern Chinese Universities Interdisciplinary Courses Summary

Name of university	Interdisciplinary courses
A1	Research in Law; Political Communication; Public Relations; Social Research Methodology
A2	Anthropology; Sociology of Communication; Narrative studies; Chinese Contemporary Literature; Social Psychology; Public Relations
B1	Chinese History; Chinese Ancient Literature; Social Psychology; Chinese Traditional Culture; Modern Chinese Public Relations;
B2	Chinese Ancient Literature; Chinese Contemporary Literature
C1	Selected Readings in Foreign Literature; Public Relations; Social Research Methodology
C2	Social Psychology; Political Theory; Public Relations
D1	Comparison of Chinese and Western cultures; Chinese Ancient Literature; Chinese Traditional Culture; Modern Chinese;
D2	Selected Readings in Foreign Literature; Study of Marketing; Chinese Traditional Culture; Modern Chinese
E1	Psychology of Interviewing; Political Theory; Modern Chinese; Public Relations; Media Economics
E2	Social Psychology; Study of Marketing; Modern Chinese; Introduction to Sociology

It is evident that all ten journalism universities in China offer a total of 20 interdisciplinary courses. These courses have essentially become an integral component of journalism education in China. They provide students with a diverse knowledge and skills, including fields such as law, sociology, political science, literature, management, history, economics, and psychology. The most prevalent interdisciplinary courses offered were within the discipline of Literature, which included 7 courses such as *Chinese Ancient Literature, Modern Chinese, Chinese Traditional Culture,* and the *Comparison of Chinese and Western Cultures*. Ranking second were the Psychology and Sociology courses, each comprising three courses. The Psychology courses included *Social Psychology, Communication Psychology,* and the *Psychology of Interviewing*; the Sociology courses consisted of *Introduction to Sociology, Anthropology*, and *Sociology of Communication*. Both Management and Political Science disciplines offered two courses each. Management courses included *Study of Marketing* and *Public Relations*. Political Science courses offer *Introduction to Political Theory* and *Political Communication*. Lastly, One course each in the remaining Law, History and Economics courses.

Digital Courses

In recent years, journalism universities in China have progressively begun to introduce courses related to digital technologies, aimed at fostering students' skills in digital media application and online media operations. These courses not only assist students in adapting to the demands of journalism in the digital age, but also enhance their competitiveness and innovative capabilities within the field of journalism. Through the data collected from 10 Chinese universities, this paper summarized the digital courses in Table 2.

Table 2

Northern Chinese Universities Digital Courses Summary

Name of university	Digital Courses
A1	Digital technology application; Data news; Data visualisation; Digital Communication
A2	Data visualisation; Python; Media Technology Base; Digital Media Literacy
B1	Data news ; Human-computer interaction; Intelligent Media Theory and Practice
B2	
C1	Data news; Media Technology Development;
C2	Media Technology Base; Artificial Intelligence & Multimedia Narration; Data news;AI and Multimedia Narrative
D1	
D2	Data news; Digital Journalism Studies; Data Mentality
E1	
E2	Data news ; Digital technology application

The analysis of Table 2 revealed that among the collected samples, seven Chinese journalism universities offered 13 courses related to digital technology. Although the number of institutions providing such courses is limited, the course content is diverse and comprehensive. Every university that offered digital courses includes *Data news, Digital Technology Application* and *Data Visualization* were each offered by two universities, and the rest of the courses were offered by one university. The digital courses offered by universities can be categorized into three types based on courses content: The first category included courses related to big data, such as *Data News and Data Visualization*; the second category included courses focusing on artificial intelligence, such as *Intelligent Media Theory* and *Practice and Human-Computer Interaction*; the third category consisted of courses related to the application of digital technologies, such as *Media Technology Basics* and *New Media Technology Development.*

Qualitative Survey on Journalism Educator

The Continuing Importance of Digital Technology Elements in Journalism Education

All participants agreed that the element of digital technology is an element that cannot be ignored in the reform of contemporary journalism education in China. The rapid advancement of digital technology within journalism urges Chinese higher education institutions to reflect on how to modify journalism curricula to ensure students acquire the employability skills necessary for their careers. One of them asserted, 'Journalism programs must keep pace with technological developments, continuously adjusting and optimizing the curriculum to ensure students master media technologies to meet industry requirements.'

When further examining the changes that have occurred in the current journalism curriculum, most participants indicated that the most significant transformation is the increased prominence of technology in our journalism courses, with its importance in journalism education continuing to rise. One of the most frequently mentioned changes by participants was the removal of outdated courses and the introduction of digital courses.

Until 2019, the journalism curriculum in our school was quite outdated. When the journalism curriculum was reformed, courses like Newspaper Editing and Media

Convergence Practices were removed, and courses related to digital technologies like Data Journalism and Python were added, and when we started discussing the new version of the journalism curriculum in 2023, we added new courses related to digital technologies like Intelligent Communication, compared to the previous one. (B1)

The establishment of new or the enhancement of existing media laboratories, along with the increase in the hours dedicated to practical courses, were notable changes in journalism curricula highlighted by participants during interviews. These media laboratories offer journalism students a practical platform, enabling them to translate the theoretical knowledge acquired in the classroom into practical skills.

We have long desired to develop an Intelligent Communication Laboratory, and the introduction of the *Intelligent Communication* course this year has strengthened the resolve to establish a laboratory in this area. (A2)

Another educator also mentioned that 'the course, *Media Convergence Practice*, which used to be 34 total hours, has now become 68, half of which are practice hours.'

Funding and Faculty as the Biggest Difficulties in Reforming Journalism Education
The reform of journalism education in Chinese higher education institutions has not progressed smoothly, and even in regions with rich educational resources, numerous obstacles remain. During interviews, most participants indicated that funding and assembling quality faculty are the most significant challenges facing journalism education reform. The integration of digital technologies into journalism curricula requires substantial financial and resource backing, which includes the purchase and maintenance of technical equipment, laboratory construction, and faculty training. One participant noted:

I think that not only in our university, but in most institutions offering journalism programs, they encounter a significant challenge related to funding. This is perhaps the most difficult aspect. As educators, we naturally wish for our students to utilize the most advanced technology for their news production in the classroom, but such equipment is too expensive. (B1)

Other participants also expressed that the pace of digital technology's evolution and iteration is accelerating, prompting universities to carefully assess whether the investment in advanced technological equipment is justified. One participant mentioned:

I found that media labs in many universities are underutilised. The equipment that universities spend millions on becomes outdated in just a few years, and it's not realistic to spend so much money every year to update them. (D1)

In the reform of journalism education, a high-quality faculty is a critical factor in enhancing the quality of journalism training and serves as an important driving force for the sustainable development of journalism education. The contemporary transformation of journalism education has led to changes in the knowledge and skills covered by journalism courses, which has imposed new requirements on educators responsible for delivering these courses. The ability to enhance digital literacy and master various digital technologies and

tools has become an essential quality for current journalism educators. One participant expressed frustration, stating, 'Some older educators are not motivated to engage with new technologies in their daily lives, and they are reluctant to be asked to relearn the use of these technologies.' Another participant also noted:

> Another more realistic problem is that although our curriculum has been updated to include some digital courses. But there are too few teachers who can teach these courses. Many of our journalism faculty can handle theoretical knowledge without a problem, but there may only be one or two educators in our department who really know how to use technology for news production, and that's not enough. (E2)

Compound Talents and Strengthened Cooperation with Journalism as a trend for Future Reforms in Journalism Education

The reform of journalism education in the future must first define the educational objectives for journalism students. These objectives serve as the foundation for higher education institutions when conducting pedagogical practice, defining the expected outcomes of teaching activities, and guiding universities in finding a clear direction for reform. During interviews, the majority of participants noted that their institutions expect journalism talents to possess a strong theoretical foundation in journalism, interdisciplinary knowledge, and the skills to proficiently use various digital technologies for news production. This indicates that journalism education should emphasize not only knowledge and skills related to digital technology but also maintain a focus on the core theoretical knowledge and traditional skills essential to journalism, such as interviewing, writing, editing, and communication.

> However, there is a common perspective that the journalism program at the undergraduate level differs from the vocational technical schools. The journalism program at vocational technical schools is entirely focused on practical skills. In contrast, our undergraduate education not only emphasizes skills training but also incorporates theory, and critical thinking, fostering a comprehensive and well-rounded competency. (A1)

In order to achieve the educational objective of cultivating compound talents, journalism universities need to enhance collaboration and connections with the media industry. In higher education, the combination of 'theoretical educators + industry experts' has emerged as a popular pedagogical approach. A participant remarked,

> We employ experts from local media organizations to teach the practical parts of the digital courses, and we also invite one or two nationally renowned journalists to give lectures each semester. (C2)

Considering the challenges of faculty shortages and funding constraints in the reform of journalism education, some educators have proposed their insights, suggesting that establishing an integrated platform for 'Industry-Academia research' may be the key to addressing these issues in the future.

> A media company is currently looking to collaborate with us to cultivate journalism

talent and so as to achieve mutual assistance in talents. They have developed a system for news production that includes virtual technology and AI, which is not available in our university. By partnering with this company, our students will have the opportunity to practice using their equipment during classes; senior students can intern at their company, and they can be directly employed by them after graduation.(D1)

Conclusions

As discussed by the participants, the advent of digital technology, the evolving landscape of journalism, and the increasing skills required of journalists necessitate that universities offering journalism programs quickly adapt their curricula. The purpose of this study is to analyse the changes, both achieved and needed, in the reform of journalism education in Northern China. After surveying ten universities in Northern China that offer journalism programs, this study has identified significant changes in the journalism curriculum compared to the pre-reform period. These changes can be categorized into several aspects:

Firstly, the reformed journalism education curricula in Northern Chinese universities focus on teaching fundamental theoretical knowledge in journalism and related disciplines, while emphasizing the development of professional skills in areas such as reporting, writing, and editing. Additionally, it places significant importance on interdisciplinary knowledge and digital technology skills. This curricula pattern is consistent with the knowledge and skills required for future journalism practitioners as highlighted in journalism research (Lu, 2016), and also reflects the new requirements from the Chinese Ministry of Education to promote the deep integration of digital technology with journalism education (MOE of China, 2020).

Secondly, universities are beginning to realize the profound impact of digital technology on journalism education. New technological elements have been added to the journalism curricula, such as data journalism, big data analysis, and artificial intelligence. Through optimizing journalism curricula, these universities are cultivating a new generation of journalism practitioners who are proficient in utilizing digital technologies for news work.

Thirdly, research findings from previous Chinese journalism curricula indicate that, although journalism is a discipline that emphasizes practical teaching, there has been an emphasis on theoretical knowledge over practical skills in the actual teaching process (Wang, 2021). However, the discoveries from this study demonstrate that this issue has shifted in recent years during the reforms in journalism education. Currently, Chinese journalism education places a greater focus on cultivating students' practical skills, evidenced by an increase in the hours dedicated to practical components in courses, and the establishment of new or expanding existing media laboratories.

The relationship between digital technologies and journalism is becoming increasingly intertwined. These technologies are widely applied in every aspect of journalism, which has led journalism education to constantly update its curriculum to meet the needs of journalism development (Kim & Kim, 2017 ; Su & Peng, 2020). The reform of journalism education in China will not cease; in the future, it must continuously adapt based on journalism practices to ensure that the knowledge and skills taught in universities do not become obsolete.

When discussing the future direction of journalism education, educators emphasize that

technological factors will increasingly manifest in upcoming journalism curricula. Offering courses related to digital technologies remains a crucial approach to adapting to the evolving landscape of the journalism industry. Additionally, higher education institutions could enhance collaboration with media organizations by establishing media laboratories and sharing faculty resources. This approach not only addresses the challenges of funding and faculty shortages in universities but also helps to improve students' practical skills and employability, ultimately cultivating the next generation of journalism practitioners for media organisations.

In order to prevent the future of journalism education from falling into the misconception of technological determinism, journalism educators also indicated that universities must find a balance between core knowledge and emerging knowledge within journalism curricula. They discussed whether there is still a need for journalism education and what type of journalism education is necessary. However, they all claimed that technology and fundamental journalism knowledge and skills are essential; neglecting either aspect could hinder the future development of journalism education.

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