Germany:  
Formal accreditation provides no answers to future challenges in journalism education  

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A combination of a university degree and practical training on the job constitutes the common educational background of journalists in Germany. There are two tiers of journalism education in Germany: 1. a university degree in Journalism or another field, which is not compulsory but usually expected, 2. practical training on the job through a standardised traineeship (Volontariat) or practical courses at a journalism school. According to a comprehensive study by Weischenberg, Malik and Scholl (2006) – the newest available –, there were around 48,000 full-time professional journalists in Germany in 2005. 68.7 percent of them had a university degree, 62.4 percent had fulfilled a formal journalism traineeship (Volontariat). Most journalists had studied a subject in humanities or social sciences, but only 17.1 percent actually held a degree in journalism or communication studies. Another 13.7 percent had attended a private journalism school (Weischenberg/Malik/Scholl 2006: 353). Due to the current crisis of print media, both the journalism programmes at universities and the conditions for practical training have been gradually scaled back. In Germany, access to journalism as a profession is not formally regulated, and various paths are accepted.

All university degree programmes have to be accredited every five to eight years by independent agencies.¹ In Germany, this is fairly new and was introduced along with the implementation of the bachelor/master system beginning in 2003. This chapter gives, first, an overview of journalism education in Germany and its historical development. Secondly, the German accreditation standards and processes, which apply to most German university programmes, are introduced. Finally, it will be discussed which implications German accreditation standards have specifically for journalism studies programmes.

¹ There are exceptions in some fields, for example in medicine, law, and education. In several German states these fields have neither implemented the bachelor/master system nor do they have to be accredited externally.
Free access to journalism as a guiding principle

The discussion about quality in journalism education has been guided by the strong principle that freedom of the press requires free access to media and publishing professions; thus journalists neither need to be licensed nor are there compulsory degrees for becoming a journalist or editor in Germany.

Journalism is often seen as a profession of “talent” (Nowak 2007: 98f.). There is a strong tradition in Germany to regard the journalistic profession as requiring a natural talent similar to literary writing, which “one cannot learn”. Although this is contradictory even when comparing it to other fields which require talent (such as art or music, which require talent but nonetheless need to be studied and are provided with university degrees), this attitude has led to a widespread belief that journalism could not be studied and has to be learnt ‘on the job’. As a result, university education for journalism has not emerged in post-war Western Germany until the 1970s.

In the middle of the 19th century, most journalists had attended a university; writing for a newspaper was considered an intellectual profession. With the advent of mass newspapers, this trend declined.

During the National Socialist regime (1933–45), access to journalism was strictly regulated. Newspapers and radio were used as propaganda tools by the national-socialist regime, press and radio were under strict control of the government. ‘Political alignment’ was seen as more important than formal education. Among the editors registered in 1936, only a quarter had attended a university (Weischenberg 2004: 14 ff.).

In the GDR in Eastern Germany between 1949 and 1990, access to journalism was regulated by the state. Mandatory for becoming a journalist in the GDR was a degree from the journalism programme at the University of Leipzig, which was modelled after Soviet ideals and which accepted only selected students. Until 1990, newspapers in the GDR were owned by the ruling socialist party SED. Neither freedom of the press nor free access to journalistic profession was granted (Weischenberg 2004).

On the backdrop of this history, not restricting the access to the profession of journalists has remained a guiding principle in Germany. In Germany today, there is no compulsory degree for journalists. Access to the profession is open to everyone, based on Article 5 of the German constitution which guarantees everyone the right to publish his or her opinion. Publishers and broadcasters, however, usually require a standardised practical traineeship (Volontariat) of 15 to 24 months as a prerequisite for hiring a
journalist or editor. In addition, more than two thirds of all full-time journalists and editors today have a university degree, either in journalism studies or another field (Weischenberg/Malik/Scholl 2006).

Practical journalism skills: Standardised traineeships

The standardised practical traineeships are determined by media industry employers and journalism unions and usually have a duration of 18 to 24 months. Journalism schools, which offer an alternative to the traineeship, may be commercial or non-profit and are usually run or sponsored by the media industry, sometimes foundations or the church. They offer non-degree courses, often to train the companies’ own future journalists. Some standards are set for the contents and goals of the traineeships and journalism schools which are negotiated between media industry employers and journalism unions. However, neither the traineeships nor the journalism school programmes have to be accredited, and there is no mandatory quality assessment of the traineeships.

Trainees in journalism (Volontäre) are usually employed with a regular salary at newspapers, magazines or broadcasting stations. The two German unions for journalists (DJV and ver.di) have negotiated collective agreements, for instance with the newspaper publishers’ associations, in which salaries, goals and standards for the traineeships are set nationwide. Trainees should get to know various different departments within the institution and have to be sent to at least four weeks of training courses at journalism academies (DJV 2016). Such agreements between unions and publishers exist since 1990. According to the journalists’ union DJV, more than 80 percent of beginners in the field of journalism today go through such a traineeship (DJV 2018). Even though a traineeship can be considered a prerequisite for a permanent job in journalism, the traineeship is not a guarantee for a permanent job.

A need for more theory: Journalism studies at universities

Time and again, the principle of free access to the profession for everyone has been contested, for example, by concerns about ethical standards of journalists, a perceived lack of quality in journalism and the (under-)representation of minorities or a diversity of political, social and cultural views...
in journalism. Also, the lack of democratic legitimation was a concern regarding the perceived power of the media (Donsbach 1982: 39). One reaction to such concerns was the founding of the German Press Council (Deutscher Presserat) in 1956, which established a system of voluntary self-regulation for the print media, modelled after the British press council, and is executed by representatives of publishers and journalists’ unions. In 1973, the press council established a code of ethics for print journalists, which most newspapers have adopted as voluntary standards. The press council convenes about ethical complaints, and most newspapers agree to publish ethical violations (Deutscher Presserat 2018).

Another reaction had been a demand for a more founded, university-based journalism education. In the Federal Republic of (Western) Germany, the discussion about reforming journalism education only began in the 1970s. Practical training did not seem to be sufficient to prepare students for their tasks in society. The existing communication science programmes, on the other hand, were not laid out to prepare journalists for their jobs. The new journalism studies programmes were supposed to combine practical training with theoretical and research-based knowledge about journalism.

Practical training alone was increasingly seen as too narrowly focused by publishers in the 1970s. On the other hand, the traditional communication and media studies programmes had a very theoretical focus. This led to the foundation of specific journalism studies programmes in Dortmund, Munich and Hohenheim in the 1970s (Weischenberg 2004). The curricula were developed in co-operation with publishers, journalism unions and scholars, but the programmes did not have to be accredited until about 2005. Today, only very few full universities and universities of applied sciences offer “pure” journalism studies. Often, journalists study another field (such as politics, history, economics or any other) in addition to some further training in journalism.

The curricula of journalism degree programmes at universities are quite heterogeneous and are determined by the universities. At public universities, the programmes are then approved and financed by the states (Bundesländer). Despite the variations, journalism studies in Germany encompass mainly four elements:

- communication and media studies as well as journalism research;
- factual knowledge in relevant fields (e.g., economics, law, sociology);

2 For further information and discussions about the role of the German press council, see also Fengler 2016.
• practical training;
• internships and trainee-programmes incorporated into the curricula.

Journalism Studies in Germany do not have a common curriculum, but there are some main elements which aim at developing skills in journalism (Weischenberg 2004; Nowak 2009): professional skills, orientation knowledge (basic knowledge about social contexts), operational competences and academic reflection.

The ‘Dortmund model’, which was adopted later, for example, by the University of Leipzig in the 1990s, combined theoretical knowledge and methodological skills in communication science and journalism studies, background knowledge (sociology, media history, media economics, media law and an elected second subject such as politics, history, economics, arts or any other) and practical journalism training. The Dortmund model was developed closely with news publishers and public broadcasters. It was supposed to fulfil both the standards of the media employers and of journalism researchers, but, as opposed to most other university programmes in Germany, it had a very strong emphasis on the professional standards set by the media industry. Some journalism programmes in Germany produce actual newspapers, radio or TV programmes, or online portals. In these ‘teaching newsrooms’, the students fulfil all roles and tasks of ‘real’ journalists and publish media products which are actually distributed.

Journalism programmes at Universities of Applied Sciences have an emphasis on job training and often combine journalism with other subjects (e.g., business or public relations); meanwhile some private universities of Applied Sciences are discovering journalism as a field which is still in demand by prospective students. The private universities offer very practical job-oriented training, while their curricula contain very little theoretical and scientific background knowledge and research.

Between 2005 and 2010, the former diploma degrees were replaced by the two-tier bachelor/master system. This applied also to the journalism studies programmes. During this time, some universities which had offered full-range journalism programmes before, continued to offer only master programmes without a preceding bachelor course (Hamburg, Leipzig) or discontinued their journalism programme altogether (Munich, Bremen). Among the full universities, only the Technical University of Dortmund and the Catholic University of Eichstätt still offer both bachelor- and master programmes in Journalism Studies. (Hochschulrektorenkonferenz 2018)

Currently, full (research oriented) universities in Germany are partially withdrawing from journalism education. Despite internationally renowned
research in the field of journalism research and the success of journalism studies alumni in German journalism, and despite the continuing interest of students in the field, some universities have reduced their journalism programmes. This is unfortunate because in today’s media world it seems more important than ever to uphold professional, scientific and ethical standards in journalism.

**Accreditation of university programmes in Germany**

So, how are quality standards evaluated in the German university system? The answer is complicated, because in the federal German system, in order to maintain regional cultural traditions and to decentralise power, the 16 states are autonomous regarding education policies. Thus, there are 16 different education systems in Germany.

Universities have different levels of autonomy in this system. Some states (e.g., North Rhine-Westphalia, Hesse) allow full autonomy to public universities, including budgets, hiring of professors, implementation and cancellation of courses and programmes. Others, such as Lower Saxony and Bavaria, keep the public universities on a short leash; for example, budget or some parts of it, the hiring of professors and/or the implementation of study programmes have to be authorised by the state government. Most states now require an independent accreditation of all study programmes with a bachelor’s or master’s degree before authorising them.

Accreditation of study programmes in general is a fairly recent occurrence in Germany. Based on the ‘Bologna Declaration’ signed by 29 European education ministers in 1999, the 16 German states started to transform the German university system. The aim of the declaration was to implement until 2010 a two-tier system with comparable degrees and a convertible credit point system. A ‘European sphere of higher education’ was supposed to be created, in which students and professors can be easily mobile, cooperate in quality assurance and intensify the European dimension of education (Bologna Declaration 1999). Later, goals such as ‘employability’ and a focus on ‘student focussed learning’ were added. To achieve these goals in Germany, between 2003 and 2010, the former diploma and magister degree programmes were replaced by the two-tier bachelor- and master-degree system modelled after the Anglo-Saxon system. At the same time, the German culture and science ministers demanded that these new programmes should be accredited by independent external reviewers (Kul-
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Until then, most German university programmes had not been accredited externally. Today, most German state (Länder) governments require both public and private universities to have their study programmes accredited before they are authorised by the governments.

Thus, two major changes happened in the German university system at the same time: The diploma degrees were replaced by the two-tier bachelor/master system. And the university programmes now had to be accredited. Although the European agreements prompted the changes, the standards for accreditation in Germany were home-made. The German education ministers implemented fairly strict and narrow formal regulations which had to be applied to traditional as well as new university programmes and which now had to be evaluated regularly.

In general, despite a lot of criticism, the reform of the German university system has been seen as a modest success by higher education researchers. The duration a student spent on average with university studies has been reduced from 13.4 semesters in 1998 to 10.8 semesters in 2012 (bachelor and master combined) (BMBF 2018). The drop-out rate has remained stable: In the years 2010, 2012, 2014 and 2016, between 28 and 29 percent of all students left the university without a degree (Heublein/Schmelzer 2018).

In practice, the accreditation has been conducted by agencies which were founded in the early 2000s for this purpose. In order to ensure public influence and quality standards, the state governments created a foundation, the Foundation for the Accreditation of Study Programmes in Germany (Stiftung zur Akkreditierung von Studiengängen in Deutschland), in 2005. This foundation has, until 2017, been responsible for accrediting the accreditation agencies and for supervising the accreditation decisions taken by the agencies. The foundation is funded by the states. Its main institution is the accreditation council (Akkreditierungsrat), which, between 2005 and 2017, was in charge of the decisions about accrediting the accreditation agencies. Of the members of the council, four represented universities, four the states (Länder), five the employers, two the students, two were representatives from abroad and one member without vote was from an agency. Thus, neither the state representatives nor the universities/scholars had a majority in this council.

Until 2017, the accreditation agencies were responsible for conducting the accreditation process including the decisions about the accreditation. For this, the agencies created their own accreditation councils which produced the decisions. The Foundation for the Accreditation only supervised the agencies and their processes on a meta-level.
An accreditation or re-accreditation was usually granted for five to seven years. After that, the study programme had to be re-evaluated. The accreditation could also be denied or conditionally granted. In that case, a university would have to meet the conditions within nine months. The universities are free to choose an agency; however, they also have to bear the costs of the accreditation (one programme accreditation costs about 12,000 to 25,000 euros, depending on the agency and the size of the programme). At the moment, there are ten accredited agencies in Germany, some of them specialising in certain fields. With most agencies, the accreditation process has involved the following steps:

- A report (self-evaluation) by the university about the study programme. In this report, the university describes the aims of the study programme, how the criteria are met, how quality is managed and assured. The report is very formal; however, the curriculum and the courses have to be described and explained.
- The agency assembles a group of peer reviewers who represent scholars from the same field from other universities (usually from a different state), a professional from the industry or private sector and a student.
- The peer reviewers review the report and usually visit the university where they speak with different representatives of the university and the study programme in question. An emphasis is put on the statements by students from the field.
- The reviewers produce a report and give recommendations.
- The agency council takes the decision, which usually follows the peer review, but it may deter from the recommendations (Kultusministerkonferenz 2010).

A study programme can be accredited with or without conditions, or the accreditation can be denied. Conditions set by the agencies have to be met within nine months; otherwise the accreditation will be withdrawn. If an accreditation is denied, most state governments will not allow a (new) programme to start or a running programme may be shut down. Before this actually happens, most universities will withdraw their accreditation application and implement changes. This was the case, for example, at the University of Leipzig, where the journalism studies master programme was put on hold for one year in 2017 (no new students where admitted) while the programme underwent a major reform (Beck 2017; Mania-Schlegel 2017).

Across all universities and fields in Germany, there were 8,475 bachelor programmes, of which 5,818 were accredited in 2018, and 9,024 master...
programmes, of which 5,839 were accredited in 2018 (Akkreditierungsrat 2018). This does not mean that the accreditation was denied to the rest of them; in fact, the denial of an accreditation is rare. More likely, the programmes not accredited may not have applied for accreditation (it is not required in all states), or it is possible that the database is incomplete. Of the 11,988 accredited programmes, 6,560 were accredited conditionally only. According to this statistics, in the broader field of media studies there were 162 accredited bachelor- and 127 master programmes in 2018 in Germany (ibid.)

In the future, an accreditation will either be granted or denied; the variation ‘conditional accreditation’ will be abolished. This may prolong the accreditation process, because universities have to make changes before getting a final approval.

Instead of accrediting individual study programmes, universities have the possibility to get an accreditation for the university as a whole, called ‘system accreditation’ (as opposed to ‘programme accreditation’). For the system accreditation, the quality management system of a university is evaluated. If successful, a university may then accredit their study programmes themselves internally; the quality management system is re-evaluated every eight years. While this sounds attractive for a university at first glance, it does require an elaborate quality management system and a lot of administrative work. In Germany, system accreditation only makes sense in states which grant universities autonomy to decide about their programmes.

Criteria 2003 to 2010

The Ministers of Culture and Science of the 16 federal states (Bundesländer), who co-operate in the so-called ‘Kultusministerkonferenz’ (standing committee of the ministers of culture), first established the general criteria for accreditation of bachelor- and master programmes in Germany in 2003. On these guidelines, the agencies subsequently based the accreditation process. In the wake of student protests and a widespread discussion, mainly about the required workload and restrictive structural requirements, the guidelines were amended in 2010. It is a curiosity of the German federal system that these guidelines were set by the state governments but not implemented into law. Thus, they were used as principles for accreditation, but strictly speaking they had no legally binding character. Only the decision by a state government to authorise a programme or not was, until 2017, a legal act. It is possible in some states to start a new programme before the
accreditation is completed or to continue a programme without accreditation. It is the ministries’ decision to withdraw or grant the authorisation. Some states made the external accreditation a prerequisite of such an authorisation, but others did not.

The criteria in the 2010 guidelines entailed mainly formal criteria about the structure and formal requirements for a study programme, such as:

- No less than 180 ECTS credits must be demonstrated for a bachelor’s degree. A master’s qualification requires 300 ECTS credits including the preceding study courses for the first qualification for entry into a profession.

- The scope of the work for the bachelor thesis comprises a minimum of 6 ECTS credits and must not exceed 12 ECTS credits; for the master thesis it should range from 15 to 30 ECTS credits.

- Accreditation of a bachelor or master study course requires evidence that the study course has been modularised and provided with a credit point system. The content of a module must be arranged in such a way that, as a rule, it can be taught within one semester or one year. The higher education institutions must guarantee the coherence of the study concept and the feasibility for study of the contents and scope of the study courses offered, and they have to test and confirm them during accreditation.

- Modules combine subjects in thematically and chronologically complete, self-contained study units assigned with a number of credits. They can be made up of different teaching and learning formats (such as lectures, tutorials, practical work assignments, e-learning, research training, etc.). A module may comprise content which can be taught within one semester or academic year or can extend over several semesters. To reduce the examination burden, modules generally conclude with one examination, the result of which is entered on the degree certificate.

- The content of the examination for a particular module is to be guided by the learning outcomes defined for that module. The scope of the examination should be limited to the extent necessary for that purpose. The award of credits does not depend on an examination but on the successful completion of the module in question. The requirements for the award of credits are to be set out clearly and comprehensibly in the study- and examination regulations and the accreditation documents.
To avoid excessively small modules, which also generate a heavy examination burden, modules should account for at least five ECTS credits.

- Credits are a quantitative measure of student workloads. They cover instruction itself, the time required for preparation and follow-up (i.e., class time and private study), examinations and preparation for examinations, including final and other papers, and in some cases practical work placements. As a rule, 60 credits are awarded per academic year or 30 per semester. One credit assumes a workload (class time and private study) of 25 to 30 hours maximum, giving full-time students a total workload at lectures and outside class of 750 to 900 hours per semester. This equates to 32 to 39 hours per week for 46 weeks of the year. The higher education institutions must present the feasibility of the study course in a comprehensible manner, taking student workload into account in the accreditation procedure (Kultusministerkonferenz 2010).

Challenges in implementation

Bachelor’s degrees even within one field vary between 180 and 240 credits (three to four years) between universities, but the programmes must not exceed 300 ECTS credits, which means that some consecutive master programmes only entail two or three semesters. This again causes problems in student mobility between universities and internationally.

The bachelor thesis is limited to 12 ECTS credits. In the field of journalism studies, this means a reduced scope of the final thesis compared to the former diploma thesis.

There is a contradiction between the requirement that a module “should be completed within a year” and that it may “extend over several semesters. Heterogeneous modules are actually favourable from a teaching perspective (a topic may be analysed in different contexts), but they are problematic in practice because of the requirement to be tested with one single exam. The single-exam-per-module requirement has been widely discussed. The intention was to reduce students’ workload, but in practice it impedes more learning-outcome-oriented testing in smaller steps, and it does not reduce workload, as students have to prepare for one big exam instead of several smaller assignments.

Finally, the definition of the workload (750 to 900 hours per semester) has been widely criticised: by students, because it seems too high, especially when universities try to squeeze the workload requirement into the semester
and maintain longer semester breaks, and because it does not give room for other activities, such as working to finance the studies. From a teaching perspective, the focus on a mandatory workload is very formal and deters from a more open, organic teaching and learning process (Müller 2016).

In addition, peer reviewers evaluate the appropriateness of the study programme to reach its goals, for instance, preparing students to be professional journalists. There are no formal criteria for this evaluation, aside from some common understanding and experiences, because there is no standard curriculum for journalism studies in Germany. The peer advice may be very helpful at times but sometimes also subjective, depending on the reviewers’ background and experience. The accreditation standards in Germany are very peculiar in that regard: There are very detailed regulations regarding the formalities and structure of a study programme, but there are almost no standardised rules at all regarding the contents of a programme.

**Changes since 2018**

The *Foundation for the Accreditation* had wide ranging competencies regarding the definition of quality standards for study programmes. This fact was contested in a Supreme Court ruling in 2016 which stated that the governments should not leave the definition of criteria for state-run public study programmes to a non-governmental institution (Bundesverfassungsgericht 2016). The court’s decision led to fundamental changes of the accreditation process which took effect in January 2018.

First of all, the accreditation criteria, which so far had only been ‘guidelines’, were put into law and are now legally binding. This means: An accreditation anywhere in Germany has to follow the guidelines (and cannot use other criteria). This was achieved by an Interstate Treaty (*Staatsvertrag*) of the 16 states (*Länder*), in which all states agreed to adopt the accreditation framework into state law (*Studienakkreditierungsstaatsvertrag* 2017). A common sample decree (*Musterrechtsverordnung*) was developed, which was then adopted by all states and went into effect in January 2018 (*Kultusministerkonferenz* 2017). This complicated procedure was necessary because of the federal system in Germany, in which all 16 states are autonomous regarding their education policies.

The biggest differences to the former system are that 1. Criteria are set by law, not by agencies, 2. The final decision about an accreditation is not taken by an agency, but by the accreditation council (an institution of the foundation for accreditation). For this purpose, the accreditation council
was reformed and has now a different setup and different tasks. The council now has 23 members instead of 18, the scholars have the majority in decisions regarding the content of programmes. The council now decides about the accreditation for individual study programmes, but does not accredit the agencies anymore. The agencies are directly registered with the European Quality Assurance Register (EQAR). The accreditation foundation was established by the 16 Länder and is based in Bonn. (Studienakkreditierungsstaatsvertrag 2017). The agencies still prepare the reports but do not take the decisions. An accreditation is granted for eight years now. Conditional accreditation is abolished.

Formal criteria have hardly changed and were more or less adopted from the former guidelines. As a new element, there are subject-related criteria concerning the content of study programmes (Kultusministerkonferenz 2017). The accreditation is supposed to consider content criteria more than before, although it is not yet clear how this has to be done. Furthermore, the teaching process now has to be evaluated on the basis of a ‘mission statement for teaching’, which the university has to adopt. Since very few accreditation processes following the new system have been completed so far (as of December 2018), the implications for journalism studies programmes cannot be estimated yet.

Impact on journalism education

What does the general accreditation system in Germany imply for the education of journalists? First of all, the general criteria are implemented by political actors, almost none by academics or journalism professionals. Second, the process is very much characterised and shaped by the bureaucratic demands. The accreditation emphasises formal criteria. Standards from the field of journalism or journalism studies play only a minor role. Thus, the quality of a programme is measured more by abstract formal criteria, such as a certain amount of credit points or students’ workload, than by indicators which constitute good journalism education – neither journalism educators nor researchers nor professionals determine the evaluation.

A third implication is that, in the absence of a standardised curriculum or a standardised set of criteria in the journalism community, peer reviews sometimes lead to arbitrary demands, depending on the personal preferences of the reviewers and sometimes influenced by competition. As private, commercial universities increasingly become players in the field of
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journalism education, it is difficult to implement theoretical academic reflection and methods at these institutions.

A discrepancy between intended goals and adverse effects becomes apparent. The bachelor/master system was supposed to enhance international compatibility and mobility. However, the strict structural format and the sometimes complicated ‘modularisation’ have in some cases reduced the international flexibility. It can be observed that while international student mobility increased in the 1990s and early 2000s, student mobility has actually declined recently. Journalism students still belong to a field in which students are more mobile than in others: 14.2 percent of all German students in 2015 spending time abroad with the Erasmus-programme studied “social sciences, journalism and information sciences”, while they made up only 7.6 percent of all German university students (Burkhart 2017: 92). However, according to a broad survey by the German student unions (Sozialerhebung der Deutschen Studentenwerke), the share of students from Germany in later semesters who have spent some time studying abroad has generally declined from 31 percent of all students in 2012 to 28 percent in 2016 (Middendorff 2017: 19).

While the accreditation is strictly formal and encourages universities in Germany to provide rather complicated programmes, there are also some positive effects of the accreditation process. First of all, the existence of an external quality assurance system in itself is an achievement which did not exist in Germany before 2003. A minimum standard can be secured, and there is some external influence on checking the quality and standards of a university programme.

The most important positive impact is that the internal process leading up to an accreditation requires a university to re-evaluate a study programme every few years. Despite this also being a source of internal conflict, it at least forces universities to reconsider the programmes’ content, timeliness and appropriateness and to justify it to external reviewers. Most universities have established quality management processes and regularly evaluate performance, for example by means of student surveys. This has led to more transparency about learning goals and outcomes and to more reliable, standardised study programmes.

With regard to the two-tier system of journalism education in Germany (university studies and traineeship on the job), the accreditation fails to cover the whole picture. Only the university programmes are accredited, but no such system exists for the traineeship part. There are standards for the traineeships negotiated between journalists’ unions and employers, but these are not evaluated externally.
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All in all, the mixture of consensus between political actors, public universities, academics, unions and industry representatives can be seen as typical for the German political and educational system. Following the democratic-corporatist model (Katzenstein 1985: 32; Hallin/Mancini 2004: 144), the sometimes contradictory goals in journalism education (industry standards, economic interests, public value, media freedom, ethical demands, political ideals, just to name a few examples) are negotiated between the actors in order to achieve compromises. The process of accreditation in Germany is highly institutionalised, formal and transparent (e.g., the criteria and the results of each accreditation are published).

Conclusion

The structure of university programmes and the development of journalism studies courses at German universities have undergone many changes in the past 15 years and continue to be changed formally. The former diploma programmes were replaced by bachelor’s and master’s degrees, and a formal accreditation was introduced and changed several times. Universities have shut down, altered and newly founded journalism studies programmes. The print media have undergone a severe crisis, resulting in less funding for journalism training. The digitalisation has at the same time fundamentally changed both teaching and journalism, requiring today new methods of teaching and new content for journalism training. The accreditation of university programmes, however, has so far failed to even address these changes. Neither the changes in the profession nor the changes in teaching and learning methods have in any way been touched by the accreditation process. The accreditation process in Germany does not provide much information about the quality of a study programme, because modern teaching methods and modern content are not evaluated. For the accreditation certificates to give some orientation to students and employers regarding the quality of a journalism programme, the discussions within the communities of journalism scholars and practitioners about necessary criteria for a good journalism education have to be considered in the accreditation. The content of journalism curricula has, during all these changes, remained quite consistent and stable. This is positive with regard to the continuing necessity of traditional values and standards in journalism and to the discussion of ethics and responsibility. But it becomes apparent that the accreditation process is not laid out to spark academic discussions about curricula, nor is it the...
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proper tool to bring about changes in the way we teach and what we teach to future journalists.

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