

# EMERGING PARADIGMS IN DUAL JOURNALISM EDUCATION: CRITICAL REFLECTION, PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE, AND AI-ASSISTED LEARNING

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## Abstract

The accelerated transformation of media and educational ecosystems calls for a reconfiguration of journalism training models through collaborative and reflective mechanisms. From a theoretical and methodological perspective, the dual educational paradigm is examined as a framework that articulates the relationship between academic training and newsroom practice, emphasizing institutional co-responsibility and shared assessment. Critical reflection is conceptualized as a metacognitive and axiological mechanism that strengthens professional autonomy and supports ethical decision-making. Professional practice is approached as a process of integration into newsroom organizational culture, shaped by mentoring and leadership dynamics. The incorporation of artificial intelligence into learning environments enhances productivity and personalization, while simultaneously generating ethical challenges that require the development of algorithmic literacy and coherent forms of responsible governance.

**Keywords:** *dual educational paradigm, institutional co-responsibility, critical reflection, newsroom mentoring, professional identity, algorithmic literacy, ethical governance.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Contemporary journalism education is shaped within a structural framework characterized by professional volatility, technological acceleration, and the redefinition of the social role of mass media. The dynamics of transformation within the media ecosystem, marked by platformization, audience fragmentation, the algorithmic pressure of digital environments, and the automation of editorial workflows, no longer exclusively influence the processes of content production and distribution. Rather, they fundamentally restructure the modalities of training, assessment, and professional integration of future journalists.

Within this context, a complex space of negotiation emerges between **academic norms**

(*integrity, freedom, equity, transparency, honesty, tolerance, confidentiality, and loyalty*), **professional practices** (*verification and validation of information, convergent production, the responsible use of artificial intelligence (AI) tools, editorial ethics, and social responsibility*), and **emerging technologies** (*artificial intelligence, immersive storytelling technologies such as augmented reality (AR) and virtual reality (VR), and the use of big data*).

The digital era has transformed both practices and perceptions of journalism, a phenomenon also highlighted in the research conducted by Weaver and Willnat regarding the ambivalent impact of social media on journalistic responsibility and professionalism. Although social media provide journalists with unprecedented tools for information gathering and audience interaction, they simultaneously foreground dilemmas concerning the quality and integrity of informational content. This dimension is further examined by Lee in *The Effects of News Consumption via Social Media and News Information Overload on Perceptions of Journalistic Norms and Practices*, which identifies news information overload (NIO) as a major consequence of the expansion of social media, influencing consumer behaviour and shaping perceptions of journalistic norms (Chaudhary, 2025).

Within this reference framework, dual journalism education thus emerges not merely as an alternative organizational model but as an integrative formative and cultural space in which multiple learning logics are articulated. The structured interaction between the university and the media institution generates a training environment in which the student is not only a

recipient of knowledge but also an active agent in a process of professional socialization that is reflective and technologically mediated. This interdependence requires a reconsideration of the theoretical foundations underpinning the educational process, moving beyond descriptive or strictly functional approaches.

From this perspective, an analysis grounded in educational paradigms offers a relevant lens for understanding the mechanisms that structure dual journalism education. Paradigms do not merely reflect practices or conjunctural trends but rather stable modes of relating to knowledge, competence, and professional responsibility.

The article examines *three emerging* directions, as explanatory benchmarks for dual journalism education, with a focus on the factors that condition them, their impact on professional identity, and the institutional effects they generate

1. critical reflection;
2. professional practice;
3. AI-assisted learning.

Particular emphasis is placed on the evaluative relationship between the university and the media institution, understood as a process of co-validation of competencies and as a mechanism for balancing academic requirements, newsroom organizational culture, and the new technological environments of learning.

## **2. THEORETICAL PREMISES AND METHODOLOGICAL ORIENTATIONS**

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Dual journalism education can be defined as an educational model grounded in institutional co-responsibility and the integration of organizational culture, in which the university and the media organization contribute complementarily to professional training, competency assessment, and the integration of students into journalistic culture. From this perspective, the organizational culture of media newsrooms functions as a space for the internalization of professional values, ethical norms, and collaborative practices, directly influencing the professional identity of future specialists in the field (Deuze, 2007). Complementing traditional forms of professional

practice, the dual model integrates editorial experience into the curricular architecture, with explicitly defined objectives, criteria, and experiential learning outcomes.

The concept of educational paradigm is employed as an analytical instrument used to capture coherent constellations of values, practices, and evaluative mechanisms that structure the training process. In Kuhn's sense, a paradigm denotes a stable interpretative framework that shapes the production and validation of knowledge within a given field of study. In education, it reflects institutionalized modes of relating to competence, responsibility, and professional performance.

Moreover, in the same scholar's view, the contemporary understanding of science describes it as a specific mode of knowledge production and maintains that scientific inquiry is inevitably shaped by human values, that scientific knowledge is produced rather than merely discovered, and that scientific observation is dependent on theoretical frameworks (Irez & Han, 2011).

Paradigms do not operate as sequential stages but as interdependent registers that shape the production, internalization, and application of knowledge in real professional contexts. In journalism, they simultaneously reflect the ethical and epistemological requirements of the profession as well as the organizational and technological pressures of the contemporary media environment.

Methodologically, the analysis adopts a theoretical-analytical approach and an interpretative perspective on the university-media institution relationship, structured around three main reference points: 1. professional socialization and the formation of journalistic identity; 2. shared assessment of competencies; and 3. integration of artificial intelligence as an environment for augmented learning.

## **3. THE PARADIGM OF CRITICAL REFLECTION: CONDITIONS AND FORMATIVE EFFECTS**

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Critical reflection constitutes one of the essential paradigms of dual journalism education,

as it enables the development of a conscious and responsible professional identity. Beyond critical thinking, understood as a cognitive ability to analyse and evaluate information, critical reflection entails a metacognitive and axiological dimension oriented toward examining one's own decisions, values, and professional positioning.

Critical reflection represents a complex process of meaning-making resulting from the deliberate integration of experience with academic content. It deepens and broadens understanding by challenging simplistic conclusions, comparing diverse perspectives, examining causal relationships, and generating more nuanced and exploratory questions.

According to researchers Eyler, Giles, and Schmiede, critical reflection is:

- **Continuous** - for deep learning to occur, reflection must be a permanent component of the educational process. Within the context of concrete experience, continuity implies that reflection unfolds before, during, and after the experience.
- **Connected** - reflection must link experience to other fields of participants' learning and development. Connected reflection creates bridges between theoretical content, personal reflections, and direct experiences.
- **Challenging** - challenging reflection reformulates prior questions, is designed to reveal novel perspectives, and generates additional lines of inquiry. Nevitt Sanford's conception of the balance between challenge and support is essential to this dimension.
- **Contextualized** - when designed with attention to context, reflection establishes the connection between thought and action while preparing for future actions. The context of experience should guide the selection of reflective forms and processes (Jacoby, 2010).

This paradigm is conditioned by institutional, cultural, and technological factors. At the academic level, critical reflection presupposes curricular frameworks that encourage debate, ethical analysis, and the social contextualization of journalism. At the level of media institutions, however, the accelerated pace of production, economic pressures, and the logic of measurable performance may

restrict the space available for reflection, favouring rapid decision-making and standardized solutions.

Jack Mezirow, an American sociologist and professor emeritus of adult education, considers critical reflection a precursor of transformative learning, capable of generating changes in personal understandings and, potentially, in behaviour. Students can employ the practices of critical reflection in order to engage in metacognitive processes, as argued by Chris Eames and Richard Coll in *Cooperative Education: Integrating classroom and workplace learning*. Erica Smith emphasizes that such reflection is associated with a range of learning outcomes, including enhanced thinking, improved learning processes, and a strengthened capacity for self-evaluation and for evaluating social systems. John Dewey maintains that, although we cannot learn or be taught to think automatically, we must learn how to think well and, in particular, cultivate the practice of reflection. To employ knowledge critically, situations must not be accepted at face value, rather, one must develop the capacity to look beyond the surface in order to identify the factors shaping a given situation, thereby achieving greater depth of critical understanding (Lucas, 2012).

The impact of critical reflection on journalism training is substantial, as it contributes to the development of professional autonomy, the capacity to navigate ethical dilemmas, and resilience in the face of organizational pressures. Within dual education, this paradigm functions as a mediating mechanism between academic norms and newsroom practices, reducing the risk of uncritical adaptation to dominant organizational cultures. At the same time, critical reflection supports the formation of professionals capable of understanding the social implications of journalistic activity and assuming responsibility for editorial decisions.

#### **4. THE PARADIGM OF PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE: ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE AND THE FORMATION OF JOURNALISTIC IDENTITY IN THE DUAL MODEL**

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Within dual journalism education, professional practice transcends its traditional

applicative meaning, becoming a **process of cultural integration** into the organizational environment of the media institution. The newsroom functions not only as a space for content production, but also as a **milieu of professional socialization and a site of situated academic learning**, where theoretical training continues directly within the context of editorial practice. In this framework, norms, values, routines, and models of journalistic behaviour are internalized, while the learning process unfolds through active participation, reflective observation, and the integration of professional experience into the curricular logic of university education.

In this regard, it is important to emphasize that organizational culture decisively influences how students learn in order to understand the profession. Dominant values, such as: orientation toward the public interest, editorial responsibility, competitiveness, speed, or the emphasis on visibility and metrics, shape the perceptions of journalistic quality and of professional roles.

Organizational culture encompasses personal abilities, namely those specific competencies expected to be applied by organizational members in performing work tasks and in their external relations, activated meanings and ways of interpreting everyday events and professional duties, as well as metaphors and symbols configured in ideas, emotions, lived experiences, or self-images and representations of organizational phenomena manifested in daily practice (Vlasceanu, 2003). Within the dual model, direct engagement with a modern, efficient, and person-centred organizational culture enables contextualized learning and facilitates the consolidation of professional identity.

### Particularities of organizational culture in dual journalism education

**Skills and ethics:** integrating journalistic competencies with professional responsibility and adherence to deontological standards.



**Newsroom-university:** a formative partnership between the academic and professional environments aimed at developing journalistic competencies.

**Openness and collaboration:** an organizational culture grounded in dialogue, cooperation, and the exchange of knowledge.

**Traditions and mission:** the continuity of journalistic values and the assumption of the profession's social role.

**Integrity and innovation:** upholding ethical principles while adapting to technological and media innovations.

*Source:* conceptual framework developed by the author; image generated with the support of AI-based tools

The factors that condition this paradigm are primarily organizational in nature: leadership style, hierarchical structure, the availability of mentors, and the openness of media institutions to their educational role. In the absence of an organizational culture oriented towards mentorship and reflection, professional practice risks being reduced to marginal or repetitive tasks with limited formative impact.

In Edgar Schein's perspective, organizational culture is closely dependent on leadership style, as leaders are the ones who articulate the fundamental values of the organization and consolidate them through managerial decisions, professional conduct, and institutional policies (Schein, 2010). In the case of the media institutions, characterized by dynamism, creativity, and innovative pressure, leadership plays a decisive role in shaping the organizational climate. It can foster a collaborative and performance-oriented environment in which students, as future journalists, are motivated to produce relevant and high-quality journalistic content. However, it may equally generate institutional blockages and decreased productivity when value orientations and managerial practices are inconsistent.

From an educational perspective, professional practice within the dual model contributes to the development of technical, editorial, and relational competencies, as well as to the internalization of professional norms. Nevertheless, the excessive adaptation to organizational culture may diminish the capacity for reflective analysis of current practices. In this regard, the role of the university becomes essential in stimulating reflection on professional experience and in contextualizing internalized organizational norms, so that journalism education remains balanced between professional integration and the responsible assumption of academic values.

## 5. THE PARADIGM OF AI-ASSISTED LEARNING

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Artificial intelligence has the potential to address some of the most complex challenges of contemporary education, to innovate teaching and learning practices, and to accelerate progress towards Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4). At the same time, rapid technological developments inevitably generate multiple risks and challenges that, to date, have outpaced the evolution of public policy debates and regulatory frameworks (UNESCO, 2021).

The integration of artificial intelligence into both traditional and dual journalism education outlines an emerging paradigm characterized by a transition from the instrumental use of technology to its conceptualization as a mediating learning environment. AI intervenes in the formative process through the automation of specific tasks, support for data analysis, and the personalization of educational pathways.

Information technologies, particularly artificial intelligence, are transforming contemporary education. AI algorithms and educational robots are currently embedded in learning and training management systems, providing support for a wide range of teaching and learning activities. Numerous applications of artificial intelligence in education (AIED) have emerged. For instance, the Khan Academy platform offers *Khanmigo*, an AI-based tutor that employs GPT-4 capabilities to provide personalized learning support and intelligent feedback across diverse domains. The company *iFlyTek* provides intelligent assessment systems adapted to various evaluation contexts. AI-based learning management systems (LMS), such as Absorb LMS and Docebo, integrate multiple AI functionalities to support educational activities, including intelligent content creation, the automation of administrative tasks, and the personalization of learning processes (Wang et al., 2024).

This paradigm is conditioned by technological, educational, and ethical factors. Access to AI-based tools, levels of digital literacy, and algorithmic transparency influence the manner in which technology is integrated into the educational process. From an ethical perspective,

the use of AI generates a series of dilemmas related to editorial responsibility, algorithmic bias, and the risk of excessive delegation of professional decision-making. In this context, each paradigmatic dimension is shaped by

specific structural features grounded in its professional formative potential, while also reflecting the ethical risks and vulnerabilities associated with the expanding integration of artificial intelligence into journalism education.

**Table 1. The integration of artificial intelligence into learning and editorial practice: a paradigmatic approach**

Paradigmatic dimension	Structural features	Formative and professional potentials	Ethical risks and vulnerabilities
The technological paradigm of Human-AI convergence	Integration of AI tools into educational and editorial workflows; Human-machine cognitive collaboration.	Optimization of research, analysis, and media production processes; Increased operational efficiency.	Dependence on algorithmic infrastructures; Technological opacity and reduced human control.
Personalization and adaptivity of learning	Intelligent educational platforms and data-driven recommendation systems.	Differentiated learning; Development of digital and analytical competencies.	Excessive standardization of the learning experience; Reduction of cognitive autonomy.
Automation and augmentation of editorial processes	Use of AI in the generation, editing, and distribution of journalistic content.	Increased productivity and diversification of media formats.	Algorithmic bias, interpretative errors, and diminished editorial responsibility.
Ethical governance and professional culture	The need for responsible AI-use norms and algorithmic transparency.	Strengthening ethical competencies and critical thinking in the digital environment.	Dilemmas related to authority, responsibility, and data protection.
Transformation of professional identity	Reconfiguration of the roles of journalist and mentor within the digital ecosystem.	Development of hybrid competencies: creative, technological, and reflective.	Risk of partial substitution of human expertise and content uniformization.

The paradigm of AI-assisted learning is configured as a process of structural transformation of both education and journalistic practice, in which technological efficiency and innovation within the educational process must be correlated with rigorous ethical governance. Such governance is essential in order to ensure a balanced relationship between automation and professional responsibility, as well as between algorithmic performance and the preservation of human critical judgment in both educational and editorial practice.

In this context, a key reference point is represented by the *Ethical Guidelines for Educators on the Use of Artificial Intelligence and Data in*

*Teaching and Learning* (EC, 2025), published on the website of the European Commission (European Commission. European Education Area, 2025). These guidelines promote the development of digital competencies and AI literacy, enabling educators and students to critically evaluate algorithmic systems and understand the mechanisms through which educational data are generated and used. At the same time, they reaffirm the fundamental ethical principles that should guide the use of AI in education, namely: transparency, fairness, non-discrimination, safety, and social responsibility. Particular emphasis is placed on data protection and privacy, on the security of educational

information, and on the responsible use of data in support of the formative process.

The impact of AI-assisted learning lies in the increased efficiency of the educational process and in the development of advanced digital competencies. However, there is also a risk of the standardization of journalistic practices and the diminishing role of human reflection. Consequently, this paradigm must be integrated within a formative framework that preserves the journalist as a decision-making actor and that valorises professional judgment in relation to processes of automation.

## 6. CONCLUSIONS AND PERSPECTIVES

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The analysis of emerging paradigms in dual journalism education highlights the configuration of a complex formative model shaped by the interaction between academic culture, the organizational culture of media institutions, and the evolving technological ecosystem. Critical reflection, professional practice, and AI-assisted learning do not operate as independent dimensions but as interdependent registers that shape the professional identity of future journalists and redefine the architecture of the educational process.

Within this context, dual journalism education emerges not merely as an organizational alternative to traditional training models, but as an integrative educational paradigm capable of mediating the tensions between academic norms, professional requirements, and the technological pressures of the contemporary media system. The integration of artificial intelligence, the dynamics of newsroom organizational cultures, and the need to strengthen critical reflection collectively generate a reconceptualization of journalistic competencies, oriented towards the development of hybrid professional profiles capable of articulating technological expertise, ethical responsibility, and editorial autonomy.

Within this interpretative framework, the analysis enables the delineation of several strategic perspectives regarding the reconfiguration of formative processes, institutional partnerships, and the use of artificial intelligence in contemporary journalism education.

**Curricular-pedagogical perspective.** The reconfiguration of journalism curricula is required in order to integrate critical reflection, contextualized professional practice, and competencies for the responsible use of artificial intelligence, so that training moves beyond a purely technical dimension and strengthens the cognitive and ethical autonomy of future journalists.

**Institutional-organizational perspective.** The sustainability of the dual model depends on the consolidation of the university - newsroom partnership, the assumption of the educational role by media institutions, and the development of organizational cultures oriented towards mentorship, shared evaluation, and professional reflection.

**Technological and educational innovation perspective.** The integration of artificial intelligence must be undertaken critically and reflectively, as a tool for augmenting learning and journalistic practice, through the development of algorithmic literacy, advanced digital competencies, and the capacity for the responsible use of emerging technologies.

**Ethical and professional governance perspective.** The evolution of dual journalism education requires the establishment of clear ethical and regulatory frameworks concerning the use of AI, data protection, and editorial responsibility, ensuring that technological innovation remains aligned with the preservation of professional autonomy and human critical judgment.

**Research perspective.** There is an emerging need for comparative and longitudinal studies examining the impact of the dual model and artificial intelligence on journalists' professional identity, on media organizational cultures, and on the relationship between automation and editorial responsibility.

Overall, the evolution of dual journalism education indicates a transition from formative models centred on the transmission of competencies to integrated educational paradigms oriented towards the development of a reflective, technologized, and ethically responsible professional identity. The future of journalism training depends on the capacity of academic and media institutions to construct

flexible and ethically grounded educational frameworks, capable of harnessing technological potential without diminishing the central role of human judgment in journalistic and educational practice.

### Acknowledgment

The article was developed within the research project ANCD 25.80012.0807.40SE "Dual Education in Journalism: The Convergence between Academic Training and Editorial Practice" (Priority IV: Societal Challenges).

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