

# The Field of Education Journalism in Chile: Visions and Practices of Journalists and Editors

El campo del periodismo de educación en Chile: visiones y prácticas de periodistas y editores/as

*O campo do Jornalismo Educacional no Chile: visões e práticas de jornalistas e editores*

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**ABSTRACT** | In recent years, education journalism has emerged as a new type of specialized journalism in Chile. Using Bourdieu's fields theory and elements of mediatization studies, the paper aims to characterize education journalism in Chile by exploring its particularities, internal dynamics, and relationships with surrounding fields. Through interviews with 24 journalists and editors who cover educational issues, conducted in 2018, I explore practices and visions of journalists, to describe motivations, routines and perceptions about their own work and influence in other fields. The study concludes that there are differences in levels of autonomy in the field depending on the type of content. In addition, journalists who cover educational-pedagogical topics have higher levels of symbolic capital, and there are influences between the journalistic and educational fields.

**KEYWORDS:** education journalism; fields theory; mediatization; Bourdieu.

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**RESUMEN** | *En los últimos años, el periodismo de educación ha emergido como un nuevo tipo de periodismo especializado en Chile. Utilizando la teoría de campos de Bourdieu, junto con elementos de los estudios de mediatización, el artículo busca caracterizar al Periodismo de Educación en Chile explorando sus particularidades, dinámicas internas y relaciones con campos circundantes. Mediante entrevistas a 24 periodistas y editores que cubren temas educativos, realizadas en 2018, se exploran prácticas y visiones de los periodistas, para describir motivaciones, rutinas y percepciones sobre su trabajo e influencia desde y en otros campos. Se concluye que existen diferencias en el nivel de autonomía del campo en función del tipo de contenido, que los periodistas que cubren temas educativo-pedagógicos tienen niveles más altos de capital simbólico, y que los campos del periodismo y educativo tienen cruces e influencias entre ellos.*

**PALABRAS CLAVE:** *periodismo de educación; teoría de campos; mediatización; Bourdieu.*

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**RESUMO** | *Nos últimos anos o jornalismo educacional surgiu como um novo tipo de jornalismo especializado no Chile. Usando a teoria do campo de Bourdieu, juntamente com elementos dos estudos de midiatização, o estudo busca caracterizar o jornalismo educacional no Chile, explorando suas particularidades, dinâmicas internas e relações com os campos circundantes. Através de entrevistas com 24 jornalistas e editores que tratam temas educacionais, realizadas em 2018, são exploradas práticas e visões de o jornalistas sobre educação para descrever motivações, rotinas e percepções sobre seu próprio trabalho, e influências em outros campos. O estudo conclui que há diferenças no nível de autonomia do campo, dependendo do tipo de conteúdo; que os jornalistas que cobrem temas educacionais-pedagógicos possuem níveis mais elevados de capital simbólico; e que os campos do jornalismo educacional têm cruzamentos e influências entre eles.*

**PALAVRAS-CHAVE:** *jornalismo educacional; teoria do campo; midiatização; Bourdieu.*

## INTRODUCTION

After the irruption of the Chilean student movement that derived in the 2006 and 2011 mobilizations, the role of the media in the public discussion on education intensified and expanded (Bellei et al., 2014; Bellei & Cabalín, 2013). Social networks and traditional media increased coverage of educational issues (Cabalín, 2014a), with news focused on the movement, its demands, the political response, and the structure of the Chilean educational system. There were, likewise, newspapers that created special sections on education (Santa Cruz & Cabalín, 2018).

Some opinion experts, politicians, social leaders, and academics criticized the coverage of the Chilean student movement for not being balanced, focusing on criminalization and framing it mainly from issues such as security and public order (Figueroa, 2013; Arredondo, 2016; Cabalín, 2013; Saavedra Utman, 2019). A similar criticism was directed to the media coverage of the design and implementation of reforms derived from the movement, based on how the media logic affected educational policy, through discourses that commodify education and emphasize competition (Cabalín, 2015).

Biases in journalistic coverage of education have been studied using mainly discourse, visual, and content analysis (Cabalín, 2013; Cabalín, 2015; Cabalín & Antezana, 2016; Cabalín et al., 2019). These authors conclude that a neoliberal political-economic vision predominates in the news, editorials, and images of certain media, with a marked ideological agenda and that they frame education as a technical-occasional problem and not in its political-structural dimension. However, except for the work of Santa Cruz and Cabalín (2018), the professionals' point of view on the production of educational news in Chile and its characteristics has been little explored. Studies of this type can be useful to understand how the educational and journalistic fields influence each other. This research focuses on the dynamics of the field of education journalism in Chile and how journalists and editors perceive their news production work in Chilean newspapers, radios, and news websites. It explores how this process shares some of journalism main characteristics, but given the specificities of the educational agenda and the nature of the field, it is a unique and particular type of journalism. Its nature depends, to a large extent, on the type of medium and the content orientation.

The main theoretical framework is Bourdieu's field theory, for its relevance regarding cultural production (Williams & Garnham, 2003) and the logic underlying the practices of agents producing and reproducing culture. Likewise, I use elements of mediatization theory for a critical analysis of the interrelationship between media and communication practices, on the one hand, and institutional, cultural, and social change on the other (Hepp & Krotz, 2009).

### **Educational journalism as a field**

Transcending the half-centric perspective focused exclusively on text/content (Couldry, 2012), Bourdieu's field theory provides a useful framework for analyzing cultural production practices and dispositions, taking a relational perspective as a starting point (Bourdieu, 2003). This allows for a balance between agency and structure (Williams & Garnham, 2003), and supports an approach to problematize relationships and balance perspectives, moving away from dichotomous views that confront human agency against social structures (Hilgers & Mangez, 2015).

This relational paradigm, which explores individuals' practices, perceptions, and inclinations, is built around the concept of field (Bourdieu, 1995). Social entities are structured through a series of hierarchically organized fields, each defined as a structured space, with its own operation laws of and power relations. The theory of fields makes it possible to analyze the specific social worlds in which knowledge is produced and reproduced, paying special attention to the institutions, relationships, and material and symbolic resources that surround them (Benson & Neveu, 2005). It also rejects an excessively culturalist approach, which portrays symbolic systems as alien to the social structure (Benson & Neveu, 2005).

Maares and Hanusch (2020) conducted a systematic review of 249 articles that used field theory to investigate different aspects of journalism. They note its use to analyze the stratification of the journalistic field, processes of differentiation, journalistic routines, normative changes, social structures, and power relations linked to the journalistic world, among others. They conclude that, although applying field theory to the analysis of the journalistic sphere is promising, it must be refined, since the use and appropriation of some of Bourdieu's concepts leads to ambiguities and inaccuracies.

### **Field theory and cultural production**

According to Bourdieu (1995), each field is relatively autonomous, but structurally homologous with the others. Autonomy depends on the extent to which the field is determined by its own internal logic, or whether it is more susceptible to external influences. The more autonomous the field, the more intense will be its power of refraction and its capacity to withstand onslaughts from other fields, or from the general field of power (Bourdieu, 2000). On the contrary, its heteronomy is essentially manifested when adjacent events and fields, especially economic and political ones, express themselves and influence it directly.

For Bourdieu, the hegemonic classes seek to maintain their position over the legitimate mode of cultural production (Bourdieu, 1995), using their reserves of symbolic capital. On the other hand, the habitus orients the actions and inclinations of individuals in the field, providing a practical sense of what is appropriate or not

in a specific context (Bourdieu, 1977). Habitus is considered a type of dialectical constructivism, in the sense that all practice is the product of previous dispositions, but constructed in permanent tension. Human agency in this paradigm is multidimensional, complex, and transforming due to the contradictory forces that constitute the fields (Alonso, 2002). Agents generate strategies according to the forces deployed in the field (Bourdieu, 1990). The habitus is characterized because its dispositions, generative and transposable, can influence fields other than those originally acquired (Thompson, 2003).

One of the forces deployed in the field is symbolic capital, i.e., the degree of accumulated prestige, celebrity, consecration, or honor, and is based on a knowledge and recognition dialectic (Johnson, 1995). While the logic of economic capital is profit, that of symbolic capital is distinction. Positions in the fields are composed by difference and domination according to the transfer of different capitals (Bourdieu, 1995). When a field is established, the above dynamics are intertwined and it begins to be governed by implicit and explicit rules and principles of action (Bourdieu, 1998), with individuals or collectives occupying positions and oriented to defend or improve them (Benson, 2006).

For Bourdieu (1998), the journalistic field is inserted in the general field of power, which in turn is within the field of cultural production. In the cultural or journalistic axis, elements such as autonomy, the principles of industry, and investigative reporting are valued, as opposed to factors of the economic axis such as circulation, audience, advertising, and profits (Bourdieu, 1998, 2005; Benson & Nevau, 2005). Other research analyzes fields within the journalistic field. Duval (2005) maps economic journalism, English (2006), sports journalism. Marchetti (2005) focuses on journalistic specializations to construct a series of variables that explain their differences.

### **Education and journalism**

In terms of educational journalistic coverage, some authors emphasize the interaction between educational public policy and the power of the media, highlighting the effects of journalism on the educational debate. According to Rawolle (2010), the presence of the media is widespread in the field of educational policy. These are designed and implemented accompanied by press releases and advertising campaigns. This author uses the mediatization theory to explain the media's influence in educational public policy, in institutions or as practices, in other fields of the social structure (Livingstone & Lunt, 2014). The media become increasingly relevant to build everyday life, society, and culture (Krotz, 2009).

This work is also framed in the tradition education mediatization studies (Rawolle & Lingard, 2010, 2014; Rawolle, 2005, 2010), which postulates that

there are specific and verifiable links between globalization processes and the mediatization of educational public policy, called mediatization effects (Rawolle & Lingard, 2014), related to the promotion, distribution, and adoption of policy concepts. Thus, the mediatization of education combines two sub-processes: the shaping and changing of educational policy to meet the needs of different forms of journalism, and the shaping and changing of educational policy through the emergence of new forms of communication technologies (Rawolle & Lingard, 2014).

To discuss the mediatization of education, Rawolle (2005) also employs a Bourdeusian approach. He argues that cross-field effects are phenomena and practices that cannot be classified into a single field, but result from interrelationships between fields. He concludes that between the press and educational policy there is a relationship of contestation, but also symbiotic, with structural and conjunctural effects between the two, which has meant, for example, that educational policy must submit to certain media logics and practices.

Similarly, Hjarvard (2017) points out that mediatization research should consider the institutional interdependence between media and the field to be analyzed. Thus, there is not only the mediatization of politics, but also the inverse process of politicization of the media. He exemplifies the above using not only politics but also the educational field, warning about a possible educationalization of media.

At the Latin American level, Santa Cruz and Cabalín (2018) study news production in Chile from the views of journalists covering education using a Bourdesian framework. They point out that, although education journalists recognize that it is a topic of high interest for the elite, they also tend to minimize or ignore the political nature of their work, avoiding questioning the influence that it could have on educational governance, and the legitimization of certain opinions, narratives, and social representations. It is relevant to highlight that they focus on newspapers, and that the field of education journalism is little problematized in itself, seen as something homogeneous, where differences of opinion among journalists, power struggles, capital mobilizations, disputes for autonomy, or tensions with neighboring journalistic fields are not observed.

In the same way that the field of journalism is crossed by tensions between autonomy and uses of different capitals, education journalism, understood as “that journalistic activity that contemplates as its formal objective to contribute to society to know and know objectively [...] areas of education, teaching, training, formal and informal culture, at all academic levels and stages of life” (Crespo, 2005, p. 10) is a specific and specialized way of constructing news, with its own characteristics, practices, and sources, distinct and distinguishable from other journalistic forms (García, 2018).

## METHODOLOGY

To characterize the field of education journalism from the vision and practices of journalists and editors, I used an interrelated and integrated qualitative approach (Flick, 2014). Twenty-four semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted with media professionals, 19 journalists and five editors, who cover or covered education in media outlets in Chile. These were conducted between March 1 and May 15, 2018.

Participants integrate the field of education journalism in three ways:

- They cover or covered exclusively education for the media in which they work.
- Only ones responsible for reporting on education issues, although sometimes they cover other topics.
- Exclusive editors of the education section.

A purposive snowball sampling of key informants was used to access details of other information-rich cases (Patton, 2002). Thirty-two cases of journalists and editors covering education in Chilean media from 2008 to May 2018 were identified. Of these, 24 agreed to be interviewed and work or worked in seven different media outlets, with one or several people dedicated to covering education issues. To find out which media outlets have journalists covering education, the following actions were conducted:

- Search for sections labeled “education” or similar on media websites and print newspapers.
- Contact with media without an explicit section and inquiries for journalists covering education, especially for radio stations.
- Ask interviewees from other colleagues and media.

The following media were selected:

- Newspapers:
  - › **El Mercurio** (education section).
  - › **El Mercurio** (political/national section).
  - › **La Tercera** (education section).
  - › **La Tercera** (political/national section).
  - › **Las Últimas Noticias** (education section).



*La Tercera* and *El Mercurio* have journalists covering education for the education section and for the political or national section.

- Radios:
  - › *Cooperativa*.
  - › *Bío-Bío*. › *ADN*.
- News web sites:
  - › *El Dínamo*.

I acknowledge the difficulty of operationalizing Bourdieu's postulates empirically (Swartz, 1997), that the debate about what constitutes a field is open (Friedland, 2009), and how to employ the conceptual tools of field theory correctly, as well as its limits (Stahl, 2016). Still, this study uses the concepts of autonomy/heteronomy, habitus, symbolic capital, and field to generate operationalization subcategories to construct the interview questions (Seale, 2005). Some of these subcategories are: perception of the field and surrounding fields, expertise and specialization, power struggles, professional principles and routines, educational specificities, selection of sources and topics, content construction, control, censorship and self-censorship, among others. In addition, considering mediatization studies, I inquired about effects through fields, external influences, and media or institutional logics. Thus, for example, questions were asked about work routines, vision of one's own work, selection of topics and approaches, relationship with sources, work with editors, perception of nearby fields, editorial line and challenges to comply with it, among others.

The interviews were analyzed using the inductive critical thematic approach (Braun & Clarke, 2006) seeking to identify, examine, and report distinguishable patterns within the data based on recurrent and unifying ideas of the topics consulted. Coding was performed using theoretical categories from the conceptual framework.

## RESULTS

### Content orientation and field dynamics

The field, in general, has a variable level of autonomy. For the interviewees, "education" is a highly predictable source of news, since during the year there are regular specific milestones. For example, the beginning of the school year, the communication of standardized test results (SIMCE and PSU), the admission process to universities, etc. This implies a rigid routine with limited room for



innovation or individual initiative. For many, this implies that everyone knows what to expect, with the same counterparts (universities, Ministry of Education, etc.), and with similar approaches. This news is aimed at a broad and indeterminate mass and is largely dependent on external factors. On the other hand, there was a high degree of agreement among interviewees that when education news intersects with political issues there is a wider range of coverage options. For example, educational reform processes, legislative changes, opinions of the Minister of Education, etc. However, given the political nature of the topic, they depend to a great extent on the political field and institutional contingency.

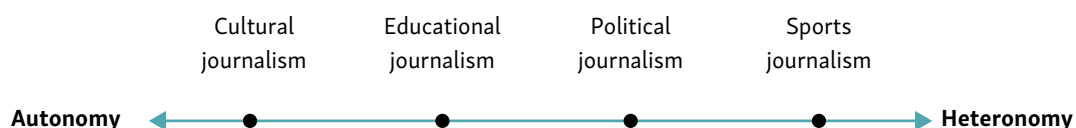
Given these two types of content, it could be said that the field should be positioned in the heteronomous pole. However, this can be problematized by considering other types of educational media content. News about good teaching practices, innovative learning programs, or technology in the classroom are some examples. It is an example of a certain degree of autonomy in the field, since it is not anchored in the institutional educational temporality and escapes the politically determined discussion. Some journalists expressed that this type of news should be the essence of educational journalism, which would indicate that its practice is a type of symbolic capital. Those who produce this type of content are more comfortable with their own work and claim to be doing what education journalism should be. Similarly, those who focus on political content, or educational milestone content, expressed that news about the school or the classroom are examples of quality education journalism. Those who do this work consider it special, because it gives them the opportunity to be on the ground, show the real world of education, and report not only on education policies, but also their implementation by individuals. Some stated that this type of journalism requires an understanding of pedagogy and technical-educational aspects, which confers a special status to their practice. Finally, for some of the interviewees, articles on this type of topics not only consider a wide audience, but also teachers, principals, and researchers. They state that this type of news has limited effects on the public, on the image of the media, and among advertisers. It can be said that, for this type of content, the logic of niche, typical of an autonomous field, could be implied.

Therefore, it is possible to say that educational journalism has an unequal level of autonomy (figure 1). Content on pedagogical news and features, as in classroom and school news, has a higher level of autonomy than that on educational politics/policy or the agenda of educational milestones. Journalists positioned on the autonomy side have more symbolic capital than their colleagues closer to the heteronomy one.



**Figure 1. Types of content in educational journalism on the autonomy/heteronomy axis.**

*Source: Own elaboration.*



**Figura 2. Otros campos del periodismo y su posición en el eje de autonomía/heteronomía**

*Fuente: Elaboración propia.*

As for spontaneous mentions to other types of specialized journalism, the most common was political journalism, especially due to a tension detected between that field and that of education journalism, which will be addressed below. According to the interviewees, in terms of practices and behaviors, both fields are very similar in relation to journalistic routines, except in news about schools and classrooms. This type of content would give more freedom and autonomy when reporting. Other fields mentioned were sports and cultural journalism. They state that sports news have the largest audience, high presence of commercial bonds, and are the most attractive to advertisers. Culture sections were mentioned as a niche field, especially when related to the arts. Given their specificity and limited audience, they commonly associate them with an elite audience and can be described as the field with the highest level of autonomy (figure 2).

### Types of media and their position in the field

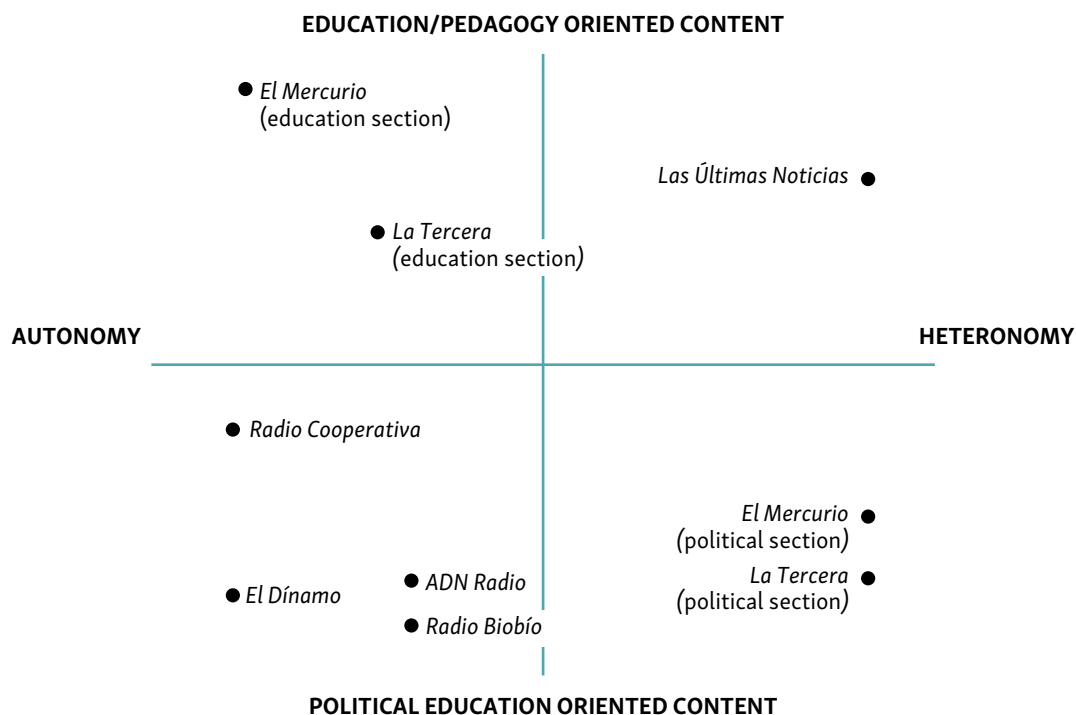
It is relevant to note that, after the 2006 student movement, *El Mercurio* and *La Tercera*, two of the most influential and dominant newspapers in Chile (Navia & Osorio, 2015; Santa Cruz, 2016), created a special education section with dedicated journalists, according to interviewees' testimonies. Later, other media included education as a specific section, with at least one specialized journalist.

Significantly, the analysis of the interviews revealed that sometimes the same media can be classified in different places in the field, according to the way in which the information is treated, resulting in varying degrees of autonomy/heteronomy. The above, considering that in some media the content on education is sometimes published in the education section and others, in general news or in the political section.

This can be exemplified in the newspapers *El Mercurio* and *La Tercera*. The education section of the former focuses almost exclusively on articles about classroom experiences, innovations in pedagogy, learning and teaching programs, and the practical consequences of implementing the reform, among others. They also publish interviews with academics, education experts, program implementers, and teachers. News on educational policies, educational reform, etc., are covered by journalists working in the political or national section. In *La Tercera*, the education section –which disappeared some years ago– also covered pedagogical aspects, but had a wider variety of topics, also giving space to the political-institutional field. Moreover, according to the testimonies of journalists of this media, the news related to political aspects of education had more external repercussion and internal impact. Therefore, we could place them closer to the poles of political orientation and heteronomy (figure 3). Consequently, general news on education in both newspapers, published by the political or national section, would be located in a quadrant of political orientation and heteronomy.

Regarding radio stations, the analysis shows that both *ADN* and *Radio Bío-Bío* have an almost exclusively political focus. Pedagogical issues arising from schools, classrooms or universities are not, in general, publishable news sources. Journalists explain that this absence is due to the characteristics of radio news, expressing that they are fed by current events, based on immediacy and dependent on temporality. Therefore, the news must respond to what is happening and to topics about which people are discussing. Thus, coverage focuses on educational issues imbricated with the political agenda. However, interviewees expressed respect for journalists from other media who publish pedagogically-oriented articles. They state that such news is valuable and provides important information. They perceive that only newspapers have the time and space to achieve the depth and complexity required by these types of articles. This characteristic of radio is nuanced in the case of *Radio Cooperativa*. Despite the influence of the political agenda of education, its approach is slightly more inclined towards pedagogical orientation. Journalists of this media highlighted the production of programs on educational/pedagogical topics, especially on teaching, learning, and good practices in educational environments. It is normal for them to go to schools, talk to teachers, students, and parents to produce news. It is important to clarify that this type of programming (*Agenda Calidad, Buenas Escuelas, Elige Educar*, among others) is financed by NGOs and government agencies, not necessarily subject to regular funding from advertisers.

The education section of *El Dínamo* website offers content that leans towards the politically oriented pole. Its informants explained that its contents, selection decisions, and approach are more linked to web metrics of visits and permanence. The content is defined by political content, according to their testimonies, because it performs better within the digital and editorial logic, the main production criterion:



**Figure 3. Positions in the field according to type of content and level of autonomy.**

Source: Own elaboration.

When there is something political, we make sure the issue can reach more people. Generally, policy differences in education have a better reach than very abstract things (Journalist, education section).

Finally, *Las Últimas Noticias* coverage of education is based on articles on tertiary education and employability. For example, undergraduate or postgraduate pay, rankings on the cost of higher education programs, careers with the highest employment rates, etc. According to its journalists, they provide relevant information about their future to people seeking educational opportunities.

It is also clear that this type of content is important to provide the market with certainty about professional development and employability. It is a content with a strong economic incentive and its sources of information (universities and technical institutes) are also an important part of the newspaper's income through advertising. Therefore, it is located on the heteronomy axis. It is not that *Las Últimas Noticias* does not produce news on the political or legislative aspects of education, but that they are not produced by journalists exclusively dedicated to education.

In summary, it can be said that newspapers can be located on the heteronomy axis, although their education section is much closer to the autonomy pole. Radio stations are located on the autonomy axis, but only in the politically-oriented segment (figure 3).

### **Tensions between political journalism and educational journalism**

As stated, an important part of the news on education comes from the political agenda. All the media of which the participants were part produce news about the political aspects of the educational sphere. Almost all journalists covering education from the politically-oriented pole mentioned the tension and unresolved conflict with journalists covering politics.

At a first level, the problem is about who should be responsible for reporting stories where the educational and political sides are not clearly distinguished. In most cases there is no clear and defined criteria for assigning topics and the decision is made on a case-by-case basis, which creates disputes and tensions between the two sides. At another level, the problem is related to the treatment of information when political journalists cover these issues. For education journalists, their colleagues are not fully prepared to understand and adequately communicate educational issues. They believe that they often only report on the surface of the problem, in a superfluous and decontextualized manner.

Political journalists in general know very little about school, especially those who work in chronicle (Journalist, education section).

It was complicated to separate topics. I would look at current affairs and the education section would focus on long-term analysis, something that was not so happening that day. But coordination between journalists or editors did not always work out. In the requests for topics, we crossed paths (Journalist, political section).

In addition, journalists in the education sections claim an excessive focus on political controversies and disputes, without considering the consequences for the educational field. In this conflict, demonstrating knowledge of educational issues is a form of symbolic capital that can be used to acquire status and gain the assignment of stories and focus.

Some testimonies show that education journalists perceive a certain disdain and condescending treatment from colleagues in the political section. They affirmed that, despite their experience and knowledge of educational issues, journalists from political sections enjoy a better status and are always closer to power in the organization, as they are closer to decision-makers and would have greater influence and action range:

Politics was always the center of the newspaper, we were far away. We were considered a section of little importance and light, like culture or sports. We were not taken much into account (Journalist, education section).

According to these perceptions, the field of political journalism would be much closer to the general field of power than the field of educational journalism.

### **The field and editorial guidelines**

According to previous research (Cabalín, 2014b; Cabalín, 2015; Cabalín & Antezana, 2016), major Chilean newspapers seek to reflect the political-economic beliefs of their owners through editorials, articles, and front pages. To explore the field characteristics and its internal dynamics, it is also essential to analyze how journalists approach editorial positions and understand how they shape their practices and visions.

Newspaper journalists stated that they know, understand and, in general, try to apply the editorial line, even when in some cases they do not fully share it. In the case of *La Tercera*, both in the political and educational sections, journalists stated that the political position that the newspaper wants to disseminate is very clear. However, the way of expressing it is subtle, not always direct and sometimes negotiable, depending on the symbolic capital of each journalist. They indicated that experience, negotiating skills or quotas of power in the organization can also be ways of appealing or counteracting editorial decisions that they believe to be wrong. For the interviewees of this newspaper, one of the principles most frequently mentioned by senior managers -section editors, general editors or directors is not to forget that their target audience is a certain elite:

We knew that our audience was almost always an elite... And the main guideline was to defend freedom. In education it is the freedom to choose schools, to know the results of their children or schools, or the freedom to know the results of the university selection test. And in public education it was to make it clear that not everything public belongs only to the State. This also implied always naming the private sector. If we talk about higher education, always try to mention also private universities and the same with schools (Journalist, political section).

Journalists from the education section also mentioned these types of guidelines, which were complemented by editorial guidelines according to the governments in power:

If the right was in government, we had to always be very careful and more cautious in everything we investigated and published. On the other hand, with Bachelet (center-left government), we had much more freedom to look for problems in her policies (Journalist, education section).

In the political section, they state that the editorial line of *El Mercurio* promotes ideas, spaces and voices on the importance of educational freedom and the relevant

role of private entrepreneurship in education. As already mentioned, the education section makes almost no reference to political issues; therefore, the editorial line would be less influential in this section. According to informants in that section, it responds to a certain sense of mission, to contribute to Chilean education and to fulfill its corporate social responsibility. They stated that the newspaper's editorial line, very clear and well-known, is sometimes imperceptible in the education section. The omission of a political discussion of educational issues can also be considered a way of reproducing the editorial line of the media, avoiding debates that can lead to a transformation of the field and, as Cabalín (2014b) argues, understanding education as something merely technical and not political would also be an ideological discourse.

En el periódico *Las Últimas Noticias*, la línea editorial también excluye, según los entrevistados, los temas políticos de la sección de educación. La cobertura proporciona principalmente información sobre cuestiones de empleabilidad y nuevas oportunidades del tercer sector. Sin embargo, los testimonios indican que esta exclusión es reforzada permanentemente por los editores y directores, especialmente cuando se trata de información sobre las políticas educativas de un gobierno de izquierda:

We were told not to publish anything about gratuity (public policy in higher education). We had to lower the tone and try not to promote it. For example, I could not put the number of students who have free education. We were told that it was not news, that we should look for another approach. We were not supposed to emphasize that it was good or that it helped people (Journalist, education section).

In radio, the situation is different and news production presents greater degrees of independence. All interviewees expressed that even when journalists know the position and inclinations of the owner, these are not part of the editorial line. According to the participants of radio *Cooperativa*, the only guiding principle is the obligation to always show both sides of the story, either in the voice of sources or as part of the story.

Interviewees from *Radio Bío-Bío* state that the only condition for reporting is to be as transparent and objective as possible, and that in general the radio does not provide guidelines or established parameters regarding how to deal with issues. They add that the editorial line is expressed exclusively in opinion articles and editorial comments, not in the news story or framing.

In the case of *Radio ADN*, the interviewees expressed that the editorial line of the radio does not exert any kind of pressure on their work, but the vision of the



role and work they have as journalists is loaded with a highly political discourse. According to their testimonies, it is a duty to denounce the injustices, inequalities and anomalies of the Chilean educational system, especially in relation to the growing process of privatization and commodification. According to their opinions, editors and directors have never tried to dissuade them from this approach.

As for the news website *El Dínamo*, the interviewees expressed that the editorial line of the medium promotes publishing attractive and interesting content, which, in the case of educational issues, translates into articles depicting controversies and ideological conflicts between educational actors, especially political ones. In this case, they claim, the journalist covers the dispute, trying to show impartiality and neutrality, unless it is an issue where one position is so obviously unpopular with the majority of the audience that a subtle slant will help increase visits.

We try to show the political differences in education, but we still try to be constructive. We are interested in showing the different positions and that education is not the same thing, but obviously we try to be objective and serious. Of course, unless it is something very crazy; then, we obviously have to take sides to better reach the audience (Journalist, education section).

### **Media logic and mediatization**

Regarding the selection of topics, the differences, again, are based on the type of media and their orientation. Thus, for example, radio journalists select topics using a personal method, almost always according to their own criteria, which is also the case of the political section in newspapers. However, interviewees point out that it is common for the editor or other higher authorities to propose topics. As for the treatment of information, most of the journalists in the education sections complained about the educational content of other media, especially those that do not have education sections or specialized journalists. They consider that, in general, the coverage lacks depth and a comprehensive and broad approach. Nevertheless, it is interesting to note that some of the criticisms are self-inflicted. About 10 journalists, mostly from print media, mentioned that when they published quantitative information, expressed in performance classifications and rankings, they did not contribute to the educational discussion in Chile. For them, especially for journalists from the education section of *La Tercera*, a common practice, and even an objective, was to try to produce articles based on the interpretation of empirical data, particularly on learning indicators and types of supporters. Thus, reportages on how the private system obtained better learning results, articles on the ranking of schools, or news pieces on the best schools in Chile became common and had great impact among the public. After a few years, voices from academia and the public sector (Equipo de Tarea Comisión SIMCE, 2014) began to criticize

this type of coverage, for falling into decontextualization, simplifying complex problems, being methodologically inaccurate when comparing and, especially, for its danger in stigmatizing certain types of schools. This reproach is shared by most journalists and newspaper editors, and most emphasize that they try not to reproduce this type of content:

At the time we brought out the rankings it was a need for institutions to be accountable and for people to know what was going on in the market. To make up for the lack of information. Over time, I realized that the issue was talked about so much that in the end the schools ended up doing things based on how they did in the rankings. It was worse. We did a disservice to the schools, because they cared about the PSU and SIMCE rankings. It was counterproductive for all students to get ahead and not just some. The media had a negative influence on the school system, since, in addition, the rankings do not present all the variables and it was only performance, but there are others that cannot be measured and that are important (Journalist from [La Tercera](#), education section).

However, some expressed that sometimes it is necessary, either because editors request it or because it is proven content with good audience acceptance.

In this case, we can observe the materialization of a cross-field effect in the process of mediatization of education (Rawolle, 2005), or how the logics of the journalistic field directly affect the educational field. Inversely, with the example of journalists changing their practices and visions following recommendations from education experts on the misuse of rankings and measurements, we could theorize such a phenomenon, following Hjarvard (2017), as a case of educationalization of media, i.e., how the field of education also influences and affects the field of media and journalism.

## CONCLUSIONS

The perception of the editors and journalists interviewed shows that the field of education journalism is not homogeneous. There are differences in the type of news generated by journalists, in the level of autonomy and heteronomy they experience, and in how they relate to editorial guidelines. These differences can be explained by their positions in the field, levels of symbolic capital, and the set of dispositions that mobilize their actions according to their understanding of education in the country (*habitus*). Media with a focus on education news have higher levels of autonomy than those with a political emphasis. In terms of surrounding fields of journalism, for the interviewees, educational journalism is more autonomous than

political or sports journalism, but less so than cultural journalism. Considering the type of media, the research shows that newspapers can be positioned in the heteronomy quadrant, while radio has higher levels of autonomy.

An important result is the problematic relationship between education journalists (especially those with a focus on political content) and political journalists covering education. The analysis shows that education journalists have a certain habitus built around the discourse on the importance of education for society and the practice of a journalism involved in and responsible for the development of the country and its families. This narrative is constructed on the basis of the experience and technical knowledge necessary to report on educational problems.

Regarding how the work of the education journalist is affected by the political biases of the Chilean media environment, the testimonies show that newspapers have a clear editorial line. On many occasions it is present in the form of a mandate to select and deal with content, while radios have more freedom not to reproduce the opinions of the owners.

This research shows that the logics of news production are a source of conflict and concern among education journalists. They are aware that oversimplification, using decontextualized statistics and focusing on conflicts and power struggles can harm the educational field and a better understanding of educational public policy by citizens. The existence, from the point of view of journalists and editors, of cross-field dynamics, in which media logics could affect the educational field, is also detailed; the inverse phenomenon could also occur, in which elements of the educational discourse affect journalistic practice (educalization of media).

As exploratory work, this study is a first effort to better understand the dynamics that occur within the field of education journalism and how its actors understand and construct it. However, as field theory is fundamentally relational, the exploration of surrounding fields is also relevant. Thus, a limit of this exploration is given by the lack of voices and visions from other related fields. For example, other specialized journalisms or even fields linked to education, such as governmental institutions, schools, universities or public policy makers. At the same time, the point of view of content reception is absent, especially the possible consequences of audience interpretations and their feedback to generate news on education. Finally, there is a broad research tradition on journalistic identities, roles, and culture (Hanitzsch, 2017; Hanitzsch & Vos, 2017; Mellado, 2019) that could be used along with field theory, which was not part of this study, but could be relevant for future research.

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