# Creating the ideal journalism graduate: Reconciling views from media employers, lecturers and students in Indonesia

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The aim of this study was to identify potential gaps in Indonesian journalism education in relation to opportunities for graduate employability, through the perspectives of prospective employers, journalism lecturers and students. The study was undertaken to examine the specific graduate skills deemed most important by Indonesia's three leading media outlets. Utilising Donsbach's five journalistic competence features as well as Cheetham and Chivers' four components of journalistic competency, the study adopted a constructivist-interpretive approach through an analysis of interview data from the three groups of participants to evaluate journalism courses vis-à-vis media companies' expectations at the State Polytechnic of Malang. These interviews helped render participants' perspectives on the factors that these major Indonesian media companies considered crucial when employing new journalists. In the context of vocational higher education in Indonesia, several issues were identified, including high unemployment rate, inconsistent policies, insufficient teaching qualifications, and minimal learning support. Specifically, the findings indicate how the contemporary multiplatform nature of the media industry has challenged journalism educators to question whether they should increase the use of digital media technology in the classroom, or continue traditional pedagogical practices that focus on writing and reporting skills.

## Introduction: Situating the study

In recent years, with the rapid advance of communication technology, mass media companies are increasingly utilising digital platforms to compete with each other in welcoming what Deguchi et al. (2020) termed 'Society 5.0'. Indonesia is no exception, as media companies have adopted an extensive usage of digital platforms. Currently, the major Indonesian media companies are *CT Corp, Global Mediacom, EMTEK, Visi Media Asia, MNC Media, Berita Satu Media Holding, Jawa Pos*, and *Kompas* Gramedia. Tapsell (2017), who divided these into two groups – television and printed media – argued that while television stations can make investments in their previously owned media platforms far more quickly, the electronic platform has become a necessity in printed media in the context of increased digitalisation and a corresponding decline in printed newspaper circulation. While such digitalisation of media enterprises had previously been a restricted activity in Indonesia, it has grown into a massive multiplatform in recent years (Tapsell, 2017).

Yusof et al. (2018) identified two types of modern journalists in the digital era: *mojos* (mobile journalists) and *VJs* (video journalists). These journalists are expected to possess a wide range of skills, including photography, on-camera reporting, audio recording, and graphic preparation. Consequently, modern newsrooms are filled with multi-functional journalists who are proficient in using digital and video cameras, regularly record audio for

potential use in podcasts or multimedia projects, and effectively utilise social networks to engage and attract new readers. The combination of these three elements—communication networks, information technology, and media content—is referred to as *media convergence* in this study.

The changing culture and ethos of journalism highlight the importance of identifying the skills required by today's professional journalists. Stakeholders, including news employers and educators, need to understand the evolving demands of the industry. Competency in journalism encompasses a combination of knowledge, practical skills, personal traits, and values (Bjørnsen et al., 2007; Dickson & Brandon, 2000). To ensure relevant journalism education, educators need to reconsider the most effective contemporary ways to prepare students for the industry and to develop an effective accreditation system which is sensitive to the needs of the time.

The demanded skills of professional journalists discussed above inevitably influence educators in enhancing students' employability, which needs to take into account the importance of having a job that is both personally fulfilling and valuable to society. In 1976, the then UK Prime Minister James Callaghan emphasised the importance of education in fostering both social responsibility and economic (employability) value. He stated:

> The goals of our education, from nursery school through to adult education, are clear enough ... [develop participants] to the best of their ability for a lively, constructive, place in society, and also to fit them to do a job of work. Not one or the other but both. ... There is no virtue in producing socially well-adjusted members of society who are unemployed because they do not have the skills. Nor at the other extreme must they be technically efficient robots. (Callaghan, 1976)

Callaghan's statements about the socioeconomic benefits of education still resonate today, despite the current emphasis on economic outcomes. Thus, understanding potential gaps in journalism education is crucial for addressing graduates' development, job prospects, and evolving demands. In this paper, the researchers looked at three influential media companies where journalism graduates might be hired, as well as the skills and qualities they are looking for in new hires. The three companies were selected on the basis of their popularity in terms of readership and subscriptions. Specifically, the study explores the views of three stakeholders to evaluate course curriculum, teaching, students' expectations, and the graduates' career prospects. To this end, this study conducts a needs analysis of the stakeholders, and thus the following research question is posed:

> What are the gaps in Indonesian journalism education in relation to opportunities for graduates' employability?

The research was conducted in the context of the English for Business and Professional Communication (BIKBP) Diploma IV (D4) program at *Politeknik Negeri Malang* (State Polytechnic of Malang, abbreviated to *Polinema*), which is a vocational higher education institution established in 1982, located in Malang, East Java, Indonesia (OIA Polinema,

2021). The aim of this program is mainly to prepare graduates to be ready for future jobs and to upgrade their careers. The learning activities contain of 40% theory and 60% practice through a 5+1 semester scheme for Diploma-III, or 7+1 semester scheme for Diploma-IV (OIA Polinema, 2021).

This case study involved BIKBP students enrolled for a Diploma 4 (D4), also known as Applied Bachelors. This program provides English for Journalism as the main course taken by third-year students. The needs analysis from this research will inform wider vocational higher education in Indonesia, focussing specifically on the perceived employability skills of three stakeholders – lecturers, graduates, and employers. The results of this study can be used as an empirical basis for evaluating the effectiveness of the journalism courses at Indonesian universities, and by extension, at other similar courses offered in locations that share similar contextual features in their media industry.

**Indonesian higher education**

The Indonesian Ministry of Education and Culture's Directorate General for Higher Education (DIKTI) historically has been responsible for overseeing the higher education system. Government Regulation Number 4, 2014 categorised higher education institutions (HEIs) based on disciplinary offerings and qualifications. This includes universities, institutes, polytechnics, and academies. Ownership status is another distinction, with state HEIs generally perceived as higher quality. While state HEIs are fewer in number, both state and private HEIs have significant enrolment numbers (Rosser, 2023).

Corresponding with the Regulation, Indonesia follows a dual educational system, offering both general and vocational education. General education focuses on academic knowledge, while vocational education equips students with practical skills for societal engagement. The vocational curriculum includes a blend of general and industry-specific knowledge to ensure adaptability across sectors (Nambiar et al., 2019, p. 18).

In line with such goals of a vocational school, educational institutions are now challenged to provide students with skills to meet labour market expectations of the present. In other words, the type of education that schools and tertiary institutions provide must be suited to the economic changes taking place (Kiel, 2016), which is often not the case in Indonesia.

Currently, Indonesia's education policy framework to support human quality enhancement focuses on five areas: access to education; quality of education; synergies between government, industry and higher education; industry linkages; and incentives (Indrawati & Kuncoro 2021). The government has also been refining the vocational education curriculum to meet actual market demands (Indrawati & Kuncoro 2021).

**Vocational education in Indonesian higher education**

Within the broader context of Indonesian higher education, this study is situated within vocational institutions, which is one of the three main categories of HEIs in Indonesia, as

explained above. The differences between these institutions are based on the time spent on theory and practice in the teaching content, with universities focusing more on theory compared to the other two focusing almost entirely on practice (MRTHE [Ministry of Research, Technology and Higher Education], 2018). Although the curriculum for vocational education still contains theory, it places a stronger emphasis on practice. Examples of vocational education in Indonesia include electrical engineering, automotive technology, culinary arts, tourism and hospitality, agriculture, as well as other applied subjects such as linguistics and English for business and professional communication.

Among these, one type of higher education institution that offers vocational programs is the polytechnic, such as Polinema where this research was conducted. In 2018, Indonesia had 279 polytechnic institutions with about 416,000 students and 14,628 nationally registered lecturers. However, this amount represented the smallest portion of the 8 million higher education students enrolled overall in 2018 (representing only 5.2%) (MRTHE, 2018).

Tosepu (2018) highlighted the significance of effective vocational education for industrial growth in Indonesia. However, the lack of stakeholder understanding and various issues hinder its optimal implementation. These issues include the absence of an organisational framework, theory-dominated learning, ineffective planning, and insufficient vocational content. Suharno (2020) further emphasised the importance of developing methods, reasoning, and skills alongside theoretical values for students' academic achievement.

In Indonesia, the media industry presents challenges to professionalism among practitioners. Only a small percentage of the large number of media outlets are licensed and considered professional by the Indonesian Press Council. These outlets are crucial for improving journalism quality in vocational education, requiring practitioners with the necessary expertise and skills to adhere to professional norms.

According to the Press Council, in 2017 there were 2,000 printed news, 1,166 radio channels, 674 television channels, and 43,300 online media platforms in Indonesia (Eriyanto & Mutmainnah, 2022). However, a 2022 audit revealed that only 16% of these print media outlets were recognised as professional and licensed, including television channels, print media, radio stations, and online news websites (Eriyanto & Mutmainnah, 2022). This study focuses on major media companies such as *MNC Media Group*, *Jawa Pos Group*, and *Harian Disway* to gather insights from key stakeholders. While these three companies may not represent all outlets, their selection is based on their influence and reach, aiming to obtain informed insights from the three stakeholders.

## Media industry participants

The large number of media companies of course opens up plenty of opportunities for recruitment of qualified applicants. For this study, lecturers and students from the Journalism class in BIKBP D4 program at Polinema, as well as senior news employers from the three aforementioned media outlets, were recruited as representatives of Indonesian media and employers for journalism graduates. PT Media Nusantara Citra Tbk

or MNC, being part of the media business within MNC Group, owns and operates 4 national free to air TV channels (PT Media Nusantara Citra, 2023). In recent years, MNC Group has expanded its digital initiatives, gaining significant views and subscribers on social media with over 1.5 billion monthly views and 200 million subscribers. RCTI+ has over 64.4 million monthly active users, targeting 40 million by year-end. MNC is highly sought-after by job applicants in Indonesia.

Another influential media company is *Jawa Pos*, headquartered in Surabaya, East Java, Indonesia. In its business, *Jawa Pos* do not operate only in East Java, but also in Sumatra, Java, Jakarta and Banten, Kalimantan, Sulawesi, Bali and Nusa Tenggara, Maluku and Papua. According to the AC Nielsen survey released in 2021, the readership of the *Jawa Pos* newspaper grew 53 per cent compared to the previous year. Its online portal, *Jawapos.com* succeeded in bringing the virtual version of the *Jawa Pos* newspaper to the 11th rank of online media, and the 16th rank of Indonesian news websites, out of 43,000 online media companies in the country (Ginanjar, 2021).

After successfully leading *Jawa Pos*, the former CEO of *Jawa Pos* established a magazine-style multiplatform newspaper called *Harian Disway* which is the third media participant in this study. Apart from its popularity in East Java, the researchers chose *Harian Disway* because it had collaborated with the Polinema in 2022, especially in the form of collaborating in the practitioner lecturer program in teaching journalism class at Polinema where this research is located. Care was taken to ensure no conflicts of interest arose from this previous collaboration.

## Review of literature

To better understand the theoretical orientations adopted in this study, this section problematises four distinct but interrelated items: first, previous studies related to journalism competency, employability, and journalism education curriculum. Second, a historical overview of media convergence vis-à-vis how it has affected skill requirements. This is followed by a discussion on features commonly considered in journalistic competencies in the light of work by Donsbach (2014) and Cheetham and Chivers (2005), which inform the interview questions, and later, the analysis of the current study. Finally, the intertwined roles of three stakeholders - news employers, educators, and students - in relation to career opportunities and journalism employability in the media industry - are discussed.

### Journalism: Employability, competency, and curriculum

Previous studies conducted in other countries have investigated 'ideal' candidates for working in news and media companies. For example, Guo and Volz's (2021) recent study analysed a new conceptualisation of journalistic competencies in the context of US broadcasting job announcements. The study showed the importance of a bachelor degree and work experience for entering broadcasting media professions. It also highlighted the increasing demand for candidates with multimedia skills, such as big data knowledge,

website development, social media publishing, and audience analytics, in current job postings.

In data analysis, Guo and Volz borrowed Cheetham and Chivers' (2005) model to break down journalistic competency into four dimensions: knowledge/cognitive competence, functional competence, personal/behavioural competence, and values/ethical competence. The data analysis and findings of this study prompt our study to problematise and understand journalism competency in current day Indonesia by adapting Cheetham and Chivers' (2005) model and adding categories emerging from the study's data to describe items that fit into journalistic competency in the present day Indonesian context.

Thomson et al. (2022) conducted a study on journalism jobs in the US, examining qualifications, background, software competencies, skills, and experiences valued by hiring managers. They analysed applicant resumes and cover letters for a visual journalism position, revealing the types of individuals who applied, their abilities, and the techniques they used to respond to job descriptions. These findings inform our study on students' perspectives and expectations regarding job vacancies in Indonesia.

In the context of Malaysia, Yusof et al. (2018) studied media professionals' perspectives on journalism education, and found that students receive high-quality education relevant to the dynamic journalism sector. However, there is a disagreement among the authors regarding the importance of industry input in curriculum development. The study identified five key themes: strong general knowledge, appropriate skills, interest in the field, adaptability, and specialised knowledge. These findings highlight the need to update the curriculum to meet both academic and industry requirements. Yusof et al.'s (2018) study helped identify gaps between the journalism industry and vocational higher education in Indonesia, guiding the development of a suitable curriculum model for journalism courses in Indonesia's vocational higher education context.

Elsewhere, Vasilendiuc and Sutu (2020) conducted research in Romania, focusing on the perspectives of future employers from local and national media companies and journalism graduates from the University of Bucharest. The study found that students often struggled to fully comprehend and adopt the professional values of journalism upon completing their formal education. The outdated curriculum in Romanian academic institutions was identified as a contributing factor. This study utilised semi-structured interviews and thematic essays to explore the expectations of news employers and the experiences of journalism graduates between 2016 and 2019. The findings highlighted a lack of communication between journalism schools and media outlets, resulting in a mismatch between students' expectations and the requirements of employers. Vasilendiuc and Sutu's (2020) research informed the classification and formulation of interview questions for students, lecturers, and employers in the present study.

Additionally, Pham et al. (2018) addressed challenges encountered by international students in Australia during work-integrated learning (WIL) and their subsequent employment pursuit. This included issues such as language proficiency, employer

sponsorship difficulties, and the need for (English) language support. The study also suggested re-evaluating workplace norms to harness the intellectual diversity international students bring and emphasised a balance between technical and non-technical skills in assessing employability. However, the study's Australian context created gaps in understanding, particularly regarding the needs analysis of specific educational systems, and local employment dynamics. To address these gaps, interviews with three stakeholders – lecturers, graduates, and employers - are crucial for tailored strategies to meet the specific needs and challenges of Indonesian journalism students.

As the above studies were conducted in the US, Malaysia, Romania, and Australia, we note a scarcity of empirical research into this area elsewhere, including in Indonesia. The current study is conducted particularly to reveal potential gaps in journalism education and opportunities for graduates' development in Indonesia and sought to find out what major news employers in Indonesia considered important when hiring new journalists, as part of a wider investigation to assess the course, teaching, students' expectations, and their career prospects.

## Media convergence

Indrati et al. (2018) noted that it was expected that digital media convergence will unite journalism practitioners, and various media platforms, including television, online, and print journalism. With the increasing adoption of digital technologies, previously print-based media sectors started expanding their business to digital forms. Multimedia trends created by communication technology and the Internet, prompted this format modification. To address changes in trends in the global media industry, media executives from large conglomerates began implementing successful business models which focused on identifying their consumers' needs.

Media convergence has led to the replacement of print newspapers with digital and online systems. It involves collaboration between print, online, radio, television and mobile platforms. Media companies in Indonesia need to embrace convergence to stay relevant, maximise profits, and adapt to changes. Understanding media convergence is essential for preparing journalism students with the necessary skills for the present and future (Briandana, 2020; Kencana, 2020).

## Evolving journalistic competence features

The media industry begins the hiring process by creating position descriptions that list required skills. Applicants compete to be shortlisted and present themselves directly to the organisation. As a result of the fast-changing media industry, scholars have explored contemporary journalistic competence features in response to the changing media industry.

In 2014 Donsbach, who defined journalism as a "new knowledge profession", developed a framework made up of five journalistic competence features—general competence,

subject competence, process competence, journalistic skills, and professional values, as described in Table 1.

Table 1: Journalistic competence features by Donsbach (2014)

| Competency | General competency | Subject competency | Process competency | Journalistic competency | Professional values |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Definition | Insight; Analytical thinking | Expertise | Communication skill knowledge | Journalistic skills | Norms; Professional ethics |

General competence encompasses an overall understanding of journalism as a field and the responsibilities of journalists in society. Subject competence refers to expertise in specific areas or beats that journalists cover. Process competence involves effective information gathering, evaluation, and analysis. Journalistic skills encompass practical abilities such as interviewing, reporting, and multimedia production. Professional values include upholding ethical standards such as accuracy, fairness, and accountability (Donsbach, 2014).

Earlier, Cheetham and Chivers (2005) identified four components of professional competencies, outlined in Table 2.

Table 2: Cheetham and Chivers' professional journalist competencies (2005)

| Knowledge/Cognitive competence | Functional competence | Personal/Behavioural competence | Values/Ethical competence |
|---|---|---|---|
| *Technical/Specialist*<br>• Technical knowledge<br>• Subject knowledge<br><br>*Tacit-Practical knowledge*<br>• News judgment<br>• Multilingual proficiency<br><br>*Knowledge application*<br>• Big data<br>• Marketing | *Occupation-specific*<br>• Writing<br>• Editing<br>• Shooting<br>• Reporting<br>• Interview<br>• Ad lib<br>• Design<br>• Social media publishing<br>• Web development<br>• Multimedia<br><br>*Process/organisational/management*<br>• Researching<br>• Content strategy<br>• Organisational<br>• Audience analytics<br>• Meet deadline<br><br>*Physical*<br>• Physical ability<br>• Working long hours | *Social/Vocational*<br>• Interpersonal communication<br>• Networking<br><br>*Personality traits*<br>• Sociability<br>• Enterprising<br>• Conformity | *Personal/Professional*<br>• Diversity<br>• Ethics<br>• Coaching |

The first of these - knowledge/cognitive competency - refers to theoretical and applied understanding of a subject, which can be further divided into three categories: technical knowledge, tacit-practical knowledge, and knowledge application. When used to describe a journalist's ability to accomplish a variety of job-related duties, functional competence in broadcast journalism refers to a collection of practical competencies, such as video recording and editing. Personal/behavioural competency describes a broadcast journalist's capacity to translate positive traits into professional conduct, while values/ethical competence is the knowledge of organisational values and professional ethics that enables a journalist to make accurate assessments of how well their work is being done. Together, these competencies have informed the analysis in the current study.

According to Guo and Volz (2021), journalists require core competencies like technical skills, news judgment, writing, editing, shooting, and reporting. Front-line reporters focus on practical skills, while managerial roles demand experience in areas such as audience analysis, website management, marketing, mentoring, and emotional intelligence. Ideally, both practical and leadership competencies should be included in journalism curriculum.

Generally, the Indonesian higher education curriculum encompasses content, study materials, instructional methods, and assessments for learning activities in universities (Arianty & Purwanto, 2018). Arianty and Purwanto (2018) found that the Indonesian vocational education curriculum tended to prioritise technical skills over theoretical knowledge to meet industry demands, as reflected in a curriculum structure with a larger emphasis on practical courses than theoretical courses.

Given these media transformations, educators recognise the importance of adapting vocational education to meet industry demands in the ever-changing media landscape. Keeping up with media convergence, students need to be familiar with the tools and infrastructure shaping the industry. Effective communication with news employers is thus vital for aligning education with industrial needs. Vasilendiuc and Sutu (2020) emphasised that employers expect candidates to possess job-specific competencies. In Indonesia, communication gaps between journalism schools and the industry results in disparities between students' expectations and industry requirements. This study emphasises the necessity of enhanced collaboration to bridge this gap and equip students with the desired competencies.

## Journalism students' employability

The competencies expected by companies as described above, of course become a consideration for educational institutions to prepare their students' employability, and are espoused in realistic and strength-based conceptualisations of employability. These include "the ability to find, create and sustain meaningful work across the career lifespan and in multiple contexts" (Bennett, 2020, p. v), and "being capable of making well informed plans for the future and having the ability to execute them in a changing world" (Bob Gilworth, 2018, reported in Grove, 2018).

The brief overview presented above sets the scene for a discussion of the current study relating to journalism graduate employability in Indonesia, involving employers, lecturers, and students. We analyse the requirements for becoming a journalist, essential qualities, knowledge, and skills by news employers, as well as the professional mission of journalists from lecturers' perspectives. Additionally, we investigate Indonesian news employers' perceptions of professional values, employment requirements, and specific skills in the current context.

In voicing possible solutions, in this study we base the analysis on the above discussed frameworks by Donsbach (2014) and Cheetham and Chivers (2005). This allows us to break down journalistic competencies in relation to a professional journalist's job description in this era of convergence in Indonesia. The findings of previous studies (Guo & Volz. 2021; Thomson et al. 2022, Yusof et al. 2018, Vasilendiuc & Sutu, 2020) are also considered in the data analysis. Specifically, this enables us to formulate questions to gather students' perspectives while responding to job vacancies, to diagnose curriculum needs, and to select potential questions for all three stakeholders in this study.

## Method

The study used a qualitative case study approach, collecting descriptive data through interviews with the three groups of stakeholders. These interviews facilitated the rendering of their perspectives about what major news employers in Indonesia viewed as essential when hiring new journalists, compared with learning activities and materials used in class. Using a constructivist-interpretive approach, it explored participants' viewpoints to evaluate course curriculum, teaching, students' expectations, and the graduates' career prospects.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted as this method offered the potential to discover rich descriptions on the personal experiences of participants' data, beyond the scope of pre-set categories (Shaukat & Chowdhury, 2020). Preparing the interview questions in advance (Appendices 1, 2 and 3) allowed the interviewer to appear competent and prepared, while also enabling participants to freely express their views in their own terms, ensuring reliable and comparable qualitative data.

Using this qualitative approach with semi-structured interviews, senior editors and news directors were interviewed (N=5) to explore the importance of graduate skills and attributes when recruiting new journalism graduates (Appendix 1). In addition, lecturers (N=3; Appendix 2) and students (N=9; Appendix 3) who teach and study English for Journalism were interviewed to accommodate opinions and data from the university. The interview procedures involved audio recording for documentation purposes, which were then transcribed to maintain accurate records. Interviews generally lasted between 40 minutes to an hour and were conducted within the period of one month to ensure consistency and relevance.

The sample was purposive as the researchers sought the opinions of the most senior representatives of the three largest news employers in Indonesia. This was necessary to

facilitate a broader view by considering the experiences and influence of these people in the context of Indonesian journalism. The survey responses included four respondents from two printed and online newspapers (*Harian Disway* and *Jawa Pos* Group), and one respondent from *MNC*. Communicating with top employers to identify potential skills and qualities for students is one of the most efficient ways to reconcile the gap between industrial needs and vocational education (Calero López & Rodríguez-López, 2020), as was done for this study.

The study used interviews to gather perspectives from news employers, lecturers, and students on materials and journalist competencies. It aimed to understand hiring criteria for journalism graduates in Indonesia and assess the course, teaching methods, students' expectations, and career prospects from vocational institute. Thematic analysis was applied to analyse the interview data and identify key themes, following a widely used method in journalism studies (Poepsel, M., 2021).

## Findings and analysis

In correspondence with the three stakeholders, the findings of this study are reported in three sections. Despite overlaps in their statements, this approach was considered as the most productive in enabling us to critically discuss variations in the perspectives.

### Lecturers' perspectives

Based on the interviews with the three journalism lecturers (Appendix 2 and Appendix 4), it was observed that although they all operated with a standardised curriculum, their approaches to designing activities, preparing material, and responding to the objectives of the course differed. This indicates that there is room for lecturers to exercise their own agencies in pedagogical creativity and innovation towards making the courses more engaging and effective.

It appeared that lecturers perceived any form of collaboration with the media as a positive aspect of the course, as it provides students with exposure to the industry and real-world experiences. Such collaboration is also viewed as a tool to bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical skills and prepare students for their future careers. As Journalism lecturer 2 explained:

> I have some knowledge about the journalism profession from a short internship at
> *Okezone (MNC)*…, as well as my collaboration with an industry lecturer. During the
> internship, the lecturers wrote and published an article for media.

An emphasis on writing news articles as the main activity is an important aspect of the course, as it was seen as a fundamental skill required for journalists. Two of the three participant lecturers made a dummy newspaper using a web-blog and designed a role play similar to a company's working atmosphere, which helped to simulate the real-world work environment and prepare students for the challenges they may face in their future careers.

It is interesting to note that all lecturers provided more news in Indonesian language, which reflects the readership in Indonesia. However, this may limit the opportunities for students who want to work for English-language media companies. Therefore, it is important for students to have proficiency in both Indonesian and English to expand their career opportunities.

The different approaches to seeking knowledge before making a syllabus for journalism courses highlight the importance of continuous learning and professional development for lecturers. This can help to ensure that the course content remains up-to-date and relevant to the industry.

Besides these curricular approaches, the need for a journalism studio with complete multimedia equipment and reliable Internet is deemed to be crucial, as it can provide students with more opportunities to develop technical skills and produce high-quality multimedia content. Lecturers expect cooperation with media outlets, especially those that publish news in English, which can help to address this issue. As Journalism lecturer 2 explained:

> We offer facilities, but they haven't been maximally utilised due to time and resource constraints. We also haven't learned about layouting yet. There should be a continued partnership with the media to mentor the students and help them write and publish their articles. The campus Internet connection is also slow.

Based on the interviews and analysis above, we classified journalist competence features proposed by lecturers in three categories (see Appendix 4): writing, communication, and soft skills or professional values. In the category of writing, according to lecturers, it is necessary for journalists to write communicatively and have sufficient knowledge in the general competency category. News writing and editing then become specific competences for the professional journalist. In addition, in order to fulfil the communication category, lecturers prefer to have class discussions, so that students are able to formulate interview questions and fulfil professional values in interpersonal communication. Soft skills or professional values cover the competencies in research, organisation, audience analysis, and deadline meeting, while it is also necessary to possess professional ethics as professional values. The lecturers' perspectives highlight the importance of collaboration with industry practitioners, the need for continuous learning and professional development, and the importance of providing students with opportunities to develop their technical and practical skills.

## Students' perspectives

The research findings on the knowledge and competences required for a journalist in Indonesia were based on responses from nine students (Appendix 3). These responses highlighted various essential skills and qualities that a journalist needed to possess to be successful in the profession. Despite a lot of variation in their stories, all students emphasised the importance of the combination of having a degree in journalism or a related field, strong writing and communication skills, and practical experience through

internships and other relevant work experiences. Personal attributes such as problem-solving, broad insights into the genre of news, and a willingness to learn and adapt were also deemed to be important.

Students' responses reveal that only a degree in journalism, communications, or a related field can provide a solid foundation in theory and practice of journalism in the first place. In addition, students should possess strong writing skills, be able to conduct research, have excellent communication skills to work with people from all walks of life, under pressure and imminent deadlines.

Practical experience, in their view, could only be gained through internships, part-time jobs, or other relevant work experiences, while portfolios of written news, videos, and photos can demonstrate their skills and knowledge of journalism. They also emphasised knowledge of the ethics of journalism, how to conduct interviews, and master the field of coverage.

Personal attributes such as problem-solving, broad understandings into news genre, the willingness to learn and take on new challenges are considered to be important. They explained that journalism students should keep up with the latest news and trends and have a genuine passion for the field, both personally and professionally. It appeared that students often sought information from practitioners and lecturers, attended guest lectures, and read job applications in newspapers to stay informed about the industry's changing requirements and competencies.

The interviews revealed a multi-faceted and versatile sense of ethics and mission for a journalist today, which included providing accurate and comprehensive information to the public, while adapting to new technologies and platforms. In addition to these skills, students mentioned that journalists must also have the ability to use various forms of digital technology and choose the right platform to reach a wider audience, such as social media or websites. Skills related to visual production, such as photography and videography, were also mentioned. Student 1 explained:

> In today's ever-changing media world, journalists have a responsibility to keep up with new technologies. They need to make sure their news reaches a lot of people and fight against fake news. It's important for them to provide accurate and trustworthy information.

Students were also asked about their favourite journalists and politicians, and their responses varied. Some mentioned Najwa Shihab, an Indonesian journalist known for her thorough research and ability to ask tough questions while remaining respectful and impartial. Others mentioned foreign journalists like Hunter S. Thompson, who was known for his unique approach to journalism and willingness to challenge the conventions of the profession. As for politicians, some mentioned Jacinda Ardern, the former Prime Minister of New Zealand, for her high sense of empathy and advocacy for marginalised groups. These choices indicate students' perceptions of role models from whom they

draw inspiration and whose public engagements they try to aspire to imitate as they prepare for a career in journalism.

Students' suggestions for appropriate and relevant materials and learning activities for a Journalism class were comprehensive and often pragmatic. Student 2 stated:

> The best way to learn about being a journalist is through firsthand experience. We need the opportunity to gather information, write an article, and submit it to an editor, just as real journalists do. We also want to experience the working pressures that journalists face.

Besides, students mentioned the use of textbooks and multimedia journalism, as well as case studies, professional journals, non-mainstream news sources and analyses, research and interviewing skills, and guest lecturers as sources of learning which they believed could provide them with a well-rounded understanding of real-world journalism.

## News employers' perspectives

The findings from semi-structured interviews conducted with media employers (Appendix 1 and Appendix 5) provided valuable supplemental data and deep insights into the changing trends in recruiting and educating employees. While these are often at odds with what the lecturers and students thought, it is noted that the pace of change in employment trends in journalism has never been faster.

The first of these trends mentioned by three out of five employers is multitasking, which is related to the need for media workers to handle multiple platforms such as written and audio-visual, which obviously involved multiple sets of skills. Although it is not expected for media workers to be equally proficient in all platforms, there are cases where journalists mainly tasked with writing content may also need to produce, operate, and edit videos.

The second trend is a consideration of multisource platforms, where the ability to tell stories and capture sources from various groups can enhance the depth and analytical nature of news, particularly in feature news. For example, the Vice Director of *Harian Disway* explained:

> Multitasking does not mean that workers must be able to do everything with the same quality. However, in certain cases, journalists must also be prepared to become video coverage talent (documentary videos), or operate videos. Multisource means that when the media still has a print platform, what readers need is deeper or analytical news. Thus, the ability to tell stories and capture sources from various groups will make the news deeper.

The employers expressed challenges in finding suitable candidates, particularly for entry-level positions. They expect greater cooperation with universities to source more candidates, and recommend the best students to apply to their companies. They noted that many applicants lacked sufficient knowledge and references related to mass media

products, potentially due to a lack of reading or over-reliance on short videos on social media. This might also indicate misalignments between the traditional vocational curriculum and the changing scenario in the needs of the journalism industry.

Based on the interview results, journalistic competence features identified by media employers needed and used in the real world of journalism are summarised in Appendix 5. These competencies range from the most basic to the most advanced, with numbers 1-10 being the competencies that must be possessed by a reporter, and competencies 7-17 being important for editors and news managers (Appendix 5).

The competencies included technical knowledge, news judgment, reporting, interview, writing, meeting deadlines, networking, interpersonal communication, sociability, ethics, research, big data, content strategy, editing, marketing, social media publishing, and audience analytics. The range of competencies emphasises the need for soft skills, such as critical thinking, analytical skills, emotional intelligence, physical health, and intellectual resilience. The ability to multitask and work with multiple platforms and sources is also important in the field of journalism. Employers also value a strong portfolio and sustained interest in the field, as well as a willingness to engage in ongoing learning and development.

Individually, the employers had different preferences to the competencies they deemed required in their employees, although no significant difference was noted among the three employers. One employer sought all functional competence, while another employer emphasised value, personal knowledge, and technical/functional skill. Yet another employer prioritised writing skill, reporting skill, the ability to work long hours, good interpersonal communication, and networking skills.

The three employers recognised the English for Journalism course at Polinema and found it satisfactory and comprehensive. The curriculum integrated theory and practice effectively, with practical materials such as news articles and video reportage. These materials provided valuable reference points for students to enhance their journalism skills before entering the workforce.
To enhance students' understanding of the media industry, participants thought the curriculum should also include an introduction to various professions within media offices, including content writing and advertising. Despite the broad range of topics covered in the course, the employers stressed the importance of prioritising news interpretation and translation. This could entail tasks like translating English news articles into Indonesian or producing English news reports on local events.

In terms of recruitment, all employers regarded having a strong portfolio as a crucial factor in the hiring process for fresh graduates. In addition to basic journalistic skills, such as writing and campus press experience, employers valued soft skills that enable prospective employees to adapt and succeed in the challenging and dynamic environment of professional journalism. These include critical thinking, analytical skills, emotional intelligence, physical health, and intellectual resilience. Prospective employees must also demonstrate a deep and sustained interest in journalism, as well as a commitment to

continuous learning and development. Most of these expectations resonate with the perspectives of lecturers and students discussed above.

## Discussion

Our study highlights gaps in Indonesian journalism education, including an outdated curriculum and a lack of multimedia skills development. This creates a conspicuous mismatch between employer expectations and graduate skills. Combining Donsbach's framework for journalistic competence features, which defined journalism as a "new knowledge profession," with Cheetham and Chivers' model of professional competencies, journalists are expected to demonstrate general competence, subject competence, process competence, journalistic skills, professional values, and a positive self-concept (Donsbach, 2014; Cheetham & Chivers, 2005). These findings serve as a practical foundation for evaluating journalism programs in Indonesian universities and similar media industry settings.

Based on the results, lecturers highlighted the importance of writing, communication, and soft skills/professional values for journalism students. Students, on the other hand, recognised the significance of analytical insights, engaging writing, accuracy, digital technology skills, and visual production in their future careers. Meanwhile, news employers valued candidates with diverse competencies, strong portfolios, and a commitment to ongoing learning. They appreciated the integration of theory and practice in the English for Journalism curriculum. Soft skills such as critical thinking and adaptability are highly sought after. Recommendations include emphasising news interpretation, translation, and introducing students to various media professions.

The findings from interviews conducted with media employers highlighted similar as well as different trends, compared to the findings of Guo and Volz (2021) reported earlier. Both studies emphasised the importance of technical skills, news judgment, writing, reporting, and editing. However, the current study also highlighted the importance of multitasking and the ability to work with multiple platforms, as well as the difficulty of finding candidates who match their expectations. Journalists today must balance engaging content creation with delivering accurate information and adapting to new technologies (Breithaupt, 2020).

Furthermore, while Guo and Volz's study highlighted the difference in required competencies between front-line reporters and managerial/administrative jobs, the current study which includes news employers' expectations listed competencies that are important for both reporters and editors/news managers. Both studies also emphasised the importance of soft skills such as critical thinking, analytical skills, emotional intelligence, physical health, and intellectual resilience.

The news employers also noted the importance of a strong portfolio and sustained interest in the field, as well as a willingness to engage in ongoing learning and development, which aligns with Guo and Volz's recommendation to include enhancing

organisational, managerial, and leadership abilities as learning objectives in the journalism curriculum.

Cheetham and Chivers' concept of professional competence, on the other hand, included knowledge, skills, and attitudes that are required to perform effectively in a professional context. They emphasised that competence is not just a matter of technical proficiency but also includes the ability to *apply* knowledge and skills in practical situations, and the capacity for reflection and self-directed learning.

While there is alignment between this study's findings and Cheetham and Chivers' concept of professional competence, the latter placed a greater emphasis on the *individual's* ability to learn and adapt to new situations, as well as the importance of reflection and self-directed learning. The findings of this study, on the other hand, focus more on the *specific* competencies needed in the field of journalism and the importance of a strong portfolio and sustained interest in the field.

## Conclusion and implications

This study, on understanding gaps in journalism education and potential areas for graduates' growth in Indonesia, provides new insights into what employers are looking for in candidates and how the English for Journalism curriculum can prepare students for a career in the public media industry. The findings indicate gaps including the need for more emphasis on news interpretation and translation, the introduction of other professions within media offices, and the development of practical skills related to digital technology and visual production.

We acknowledge certain limitations in this study. First, methodologically, the respondents were purposively chosen as the most influential media outlets in current day Indonesia, and despite the statistics provided, this can be contested. In addition, the survey we used could predict journalists' actual performance in the field, upon employment. With these reservations in mind, however, this research was able to reveal the priorities of Indonesian media companies.

Several potential areas for further research can be recommended. One direction could be to explore the perspectives of Indonesian journalism students themselves, across several vocational institutes. This could involve qualitative interviews or focus groups to gain insights into how students perceive the strengths and weaknesses of their education and how they navigate the job market. A possibility here is to evaluate the cross-institutional curricula against benchmarks and models of journalist competencies, including beyond Indonesia. This would provide insights into whether these gaps are unique to Indonesia or more widespread. Additionally, the study suggests prioritising news interpretation and translation in the curriculum, introducing students to other media professions, and incorporating practical learning activities to enhance students' skills and knowledge in journalism.

Further research can explore the effectiveness of alternative vocational education approaches, such as apprenticeships and on-the-job training, in preparing graduates for employment. Another direction could be investigating the impact of internships and practical experience on graduates' employability. Furthermore, research can examine how vocational education programs are adapting to the evolving job market's skill requirements. Comparative studies across countries can also identify best practices and areas for improvement in vocational education programs.

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## Appendix 1: Interview questions for news employers

1. Below is the Study Plan for the *English for Journalism* class at our institute. What are your views on the curriculum design for journalism education when viewed from the perspective of media industry needs?
2. What considerations do the media office management take into account when recruiting journalists?
3. What specific skills are expected from fresh graduates applying at your company?
4. Your company and the State Polytechnic of Malang (Polinema) have collaborated in education and research. What are your expectations and hopes when receiving interns from Polinema?
5. Can you provide examples of the journalistic skills most sought after by media companies?
6. What kind of questions are typically asked of job applicants at your company?
7. Based on your experience, what kind of character traits have you encountered in job applicants? Have there been applicants from Polinema?
8. Are the characteristics of job applicants in the media industry today different from the past? Has their level or quality increased or decreased? Why?
9. What do we need to improve in order to better prepare graduates to work effectively in your company?
10. Here is a list of competencies possessed by professional journalists. Rank them from the most important to the least important. Then, mark the journalist competencies (bold/ checkmark √) currently used in your company. You can also add any other competencies if necessary.

## Appendix 2: Interview questions for lecturers

1. What materials and activities do you provide for students in journalism classes?
2. What are your considerations in considering these materials and activities?
3. Are some of these materials and activities from their own choosing (not provided by the school or shared by other colleagues)?
4. What considerations are made in deciding what's relevant and important?
5. What kind of preparation do you take before making a journalism course syllabus?
6. What is the goal of this course?
7. How familiar are you with the profession and field of work of journalists? Why?
8. What are the most important qualities, knowledge and skills for a journalist today? Are these different from 10 years ago? Do you think these will change in the future? Why?
9. What facilities do you need to be able to teach journalism optimally? Does the school provide these? Do students have access to these? Are some students disadvantaged?
10. What do students need in studying journalism? Was it different in the past?

## Appendix 3: Interview questions for students

1. What prerequisites must a graduate fulfil to become a journalist? Are these based on your opinions or on the curriculum/course objectives? How do you know this? Do you care about it? Do you think these are sensitive to current industry needs?
2. What knowledge and skills should a journalist in Indonesia possess? Why? Can you provide examples?
3. What is the mission of journalists today? Why?
4. Who are your favourite Indonesian and foreign journalists/politicians?
5. Please provide suggestions regarding the content and learning activities for journalism classes. What happens in the classes? Is there any simulation? What are the assignments like? What kind of guidance do professors provide? What does the final project entail?

## Appendix 4: Journalist competence features proposed by lecturers

| Categories | General competency | Journalistic competency | Professional values |
|---|---|---|---|
| Writing | Communication knowledge | News writing News editing | |
| Communication | Class discussion | Interview question formulation | Interpersonal communication |
| Soft skills/ Professional values | | Research Organisation Audience analysis Deadline meeting | Professional ethics conduct |

## Appendix 5: Journalistic competence features proposed by news employers

| No | Professionals | Competence |
|----|--------------|------------|
| 1 | Reporters | Technical knowledge |
| 2 | | News judgment |
| 3 | | Reporting |
| 4 | | Interviewing |
| 5 | | Writing |
| 6 | | Meeting deadlines |
| 7 | | Networking |
| 8 | | Interpersonal communication |
| 9 | | Sociability |
| 10 | | Ethics |
| 11 | Editors and | Research |
| 12 | newsroom | Big data |
| 13 | managers | Content strategy |
| 14 | | Editing |
| 15 | | Marketing |
| 16 | | Social media publishing |
| 17 | | Audience analytics |

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