What is the nature of journalist training? This is an important question in the context of journalism education, as it encompasses the values, ontology, epistemology, and methodology of the field. The understanding of the essential nature of a discipline directly determines the educational goals, the structure of the curriculum, the construction of educational logic, and the selection of educational approaches within that discipline. Journalist training research is rooted in two important theoretical backgrounds: journalism and education. Journalism is a discipline that is built upon the interaction between theoretical research and professional education, and the cultivation of "ideal practitioners" has always held a crucial position within the academic discourse of journalism.

In light of the cutting-edge technological environment, the theoretical and conceptual work on "digital journalism" and even "digital journalism studies" cannot avoid the topic of reflecting on and innovating the existing journalism education system. In other words, if the development of the journalism discipline fails to incorporate "shaping competent professionals for the future of the news industry" into its core conceptual framework and actively explore a constructive interaction and coordinated development model between journalism education and journalism research, the discipline will lose its uniqueness.

The historical evolution of journalism education

James Carey pointed out that the birth of journalism education coincided with the arrival of the "era of news practitioners." Although, societal demands on the existing journalism education system have evolved over time, the fundamental principles of journalism education have remained stable [1]. That is, it centers around news practitioners and is rooted in the basic functions of the news industry, which involve information gathering, evaluation, production, and distribution [5]. In the field of social sciences, it is rare to find a discipline, like journalism, that places such emphasis on the development of professionals in a specific occupation. Certainly, the distinct vocational and industry orientation of journalism education inevitably creates ongoing tension between journalism research and teaching. Academia often aims to provide support and guidance to the industry, while the industry often perceives these efforts as the academic world's wishful thinking [3].

The "invasion" of digital technology into cutting-edge news production practices has not fundamentally changed this characteristic of journalism education. Instead, it has strengthened and enriched the imagination and expectations of
academia and the industry regarding the "ideal news practitioner." This has caused a certain level of "discourse anxiety" in the field of journalism theory in European and American countries. In the digital age, the concept of the "ideal journalist" is often excessively associated with technological proficiency. While journalists who meet industry standards are still expected to possess traditional professional skills in information production and distribution, these abilities are clearly inseparable from a mastery of cutting-edge communication technologies. The importance of technological literacy has been placed above traditional journalistic competencies, forming a "new tradition" that has been continually shaping the mainstream journalism education system even before the rise of digital technology. It is also a significant source of anxiety in journalism research discourse. Salcetti [7] points out, "The boundaries and value of news practitioners' labor are determined by their technological position within the process of news production." So, what does the "ideal journalist" look like in the digital age? What does this idealized professional identity imply for the development of digital journalism studies? Most importantly, if "digital journalism studies" is to gain legitimacy as a theoretical framework in the foreseeable future, how should this framework accommodate the "ideal digital journalist" and integrate this professional concept into a broader journalistic framework? These are questions that digital journalism researchers urgently need to contemplate.

The close relationship between the idealized news practitioners (and by extension, the news organizations and industry they constitute) necessitates that journalism education continually responds to the technological environment of the cutting-edge news industry, iterating on concepts and teaching systems at a much faster pace than other disciplines. Therefore, two scholars vividly described journalism education as having a "fraught nature", reflecting its inherent anxieties and concerns [2]. Due to the inherent nature of journalism education, scholars can only continuously "compromise" by emphasizing the need to reconcile the traditional skill-based training system with the rapidly evolving technological landscape. They must ensure the stability of their own principles and value goals to solidify the legitimate position of journalism schools within the university structure. At the same time, they must ensure a continuous supply of qualified "future practitioners" to demonstrate their value in societal development. However, satisfying both sides is nearly impossible. As Lynch puts it, journalism education is constantly under the "pressure to serve the interests of the industry," and the most significant manifestation of this pressure in the current context is the concept of "digital first."

Theoretical Basis of Journalism Education

1. Educational Communication

Educational communication is an activity where educators, with specific objectives in mind, select appropriate information and transmit knowledge, skills, thoughts, and concepts to specific educational recipients through effective media channels. It involves the exchange of information between educators and learners. It is a distinct manifestation of human news communication activities. Therefore, this article focuses on the research of journalism education, which is based on the study of human news communication activities.

2. The Relationship between Education and News Communication
Education is fundamentally an information dissemination activity. Teachers serve as “gatekeepers” in the process of educational communication, determining what to transmit and through which channels. Under specific conditions, teaching machines can also act as teachers, known as electronic teachers. For machines to become teachers, they need to meet certain conditions: a) having prompting functions, b) possessing transmission mechanisms, and c) having feedback capabilities. Students, on the other hand, are the recipients of knowledge signals [8].

From the above perspectives, it can be observed that in the era of rapid development of digital technology, machines can also enter classrooms and become teachers who impart news-related knowledge to students. Regarding research on machine classrooms, China is currently in the early stages, and efforts are needed to explore educational research in areas such as AI, VR, and AR.

3. Technological Determinism

The relationship between education and technology is a core issue in the field of educational technology research, and it is also crucial for journalism education. From a historical perspective, technology has had a revolutionary impact on educational transformation. However, while we utilize technology to advance education, we must also be cautious of falling into the trap of technological determinism.

Technological determinism argues that technology, especially communication technology, is the foundation of social development. In its most extreme form, the formation of an entire society is seen as determined by technology. Technological determinism is prevalent in the field of educational technology, to varying degrees, either explicitly or implicitly. For example, we focus on upgrading news education equipment, the number of multimedia classrooms, and the use of new technologies in teaching, but pay less attention to teacher training, the actual effectiveness of technology use, and cost-benefit analysis. The "technological determinism" in journalism is closely intertwined with the "media technological determinism." Marshall McLuhan believed that media is an extension of human beings, and from that perspective, Paul Levinson proposed the concept of "compensatory media." Taking a humanistic approach, he criticized and inherited this theory [4]. As a technological optimist, Levinson also emphasized the role of technology in the development of human society. However, throughout the course of technological development, he recognized the immense role of "humans" in it.

Therefore, we need to find a balance and integration point between journalism education and technology. We should pay attention to the agency of individuals within journalism education, focusing on their educational needs and development. Education should not only be a leader and promoter of new technologies but also a critical evaluator of technology.


The "uses and gratifications" theory, from an audience perspective, views audience members as individuals with specific "needs" and considers their media engagement as a process of "using" media based on specific needs and motives to fulfill those needs [6]. In traditional curriculum instruction, the traditional lecture-based teaching method lacks innovation, has limited means, and fails to develop effective strategies, which has led to criticism of journalism education. Students are
unable to filter and control information based on their actual needs. This lack of initiative and weak self-reflection is a result of the combined pressures of teaching requirements and the established educational environment. It fails to truly understand the inner demands of learners and deviates from the intentions and purposes of teaching.

In journalism education, students are not passive recipients but active and engaged audience members. The process of selective attention, understanding, and memory, as well as the psychological orientations of seeking knowledge, novelty, uniqueness, interest, and aesthetics, necessitate the study and understanding of the audience. By guiding them to meet their requirements, while also harnessing the audience's subjectivity and agency, journalism education can facilitate a two-way interactive communication between communicators and audience members. It involves timely adjustment of the content to achieve the desired communication effect. Therefore, journalism education also needs to study its own "audience" in order to achieve better communication outcomes.

References: