


Journalism education as scientific education

LEENA RIPATTI-TORNIAINEN
Ph. D., Research Fellow
Faculty of Information Technology
and Communication Sciences
Tampere University
Twitter: @LeenaRipatti



A modern lounge with large windows and people sitting in armchairs. The room has a high ceiling with a grid of lights and a polished floor. Several people are sitting in red and grey armchairs, looking out the windows. The atmosphere is bright and airy.

I completed all degrees,
the PhD included,
in Journalism

Two academic paths
developed:
one in Media and
Communication Studies,
another in Higher Education
Pedagogy

The research project "TAJU" (2021–2022):

- Emphasis on the **scientific part of studies** in Journalism & Communication degree programmes at two research universities in Finland
- Funded by the Helsingin Sanomat Foundation
- Led by Leena Mikkola, Associate Professor in Communication, Tampere University

"The development of scientific thinking during the university studies in Journalism and Communication"

An underinvestigated research topic

- Most journalists worldwide receive education in tertiary journalism programmes (Joseph 2020)
- Recent studies still emphasize the professional, even vocational orientation of university studies in journalism
- The studies mainly stay outside the international scholarly debates on higher education



Journalism degrees at research universities in Finland:

- BA + MA + PhD
- All degrees involve research studies: the MA and PhD theses are extensive and time-consuming
- Yet, the journalism degrees are clearly more practical and labour market bound than most other research university degrees in Finland



A scholarly context:
Influential debates stressing theoretical knowledge:

- theoretical knowledge enables students to investigate and analyze the society

(Ashwin 2020; Maton & Moore 2009; Muller & Young 2019; Young 2008; Wheelahan 2010)

- theoretical knowledge is the necessary premise for the developing expertise of students

(Kallio 2020; Quincy, Imants, Dankbaar & Segers 2017; Tynjälä, Kallio & Heikkinen 2020)



A societal context: The structure of higher education in Finland:

- The division between research universities and universities of applied sciences:

the Law reserves clearly distinct profiles and assigns clearly distinct tasks for each of the two

*(The Universities Act 2009;
The Universities of Applied Sciences Act 2014)*

- Both types of university provide degrees in Journalism
- Our project focuses on the research university degrees

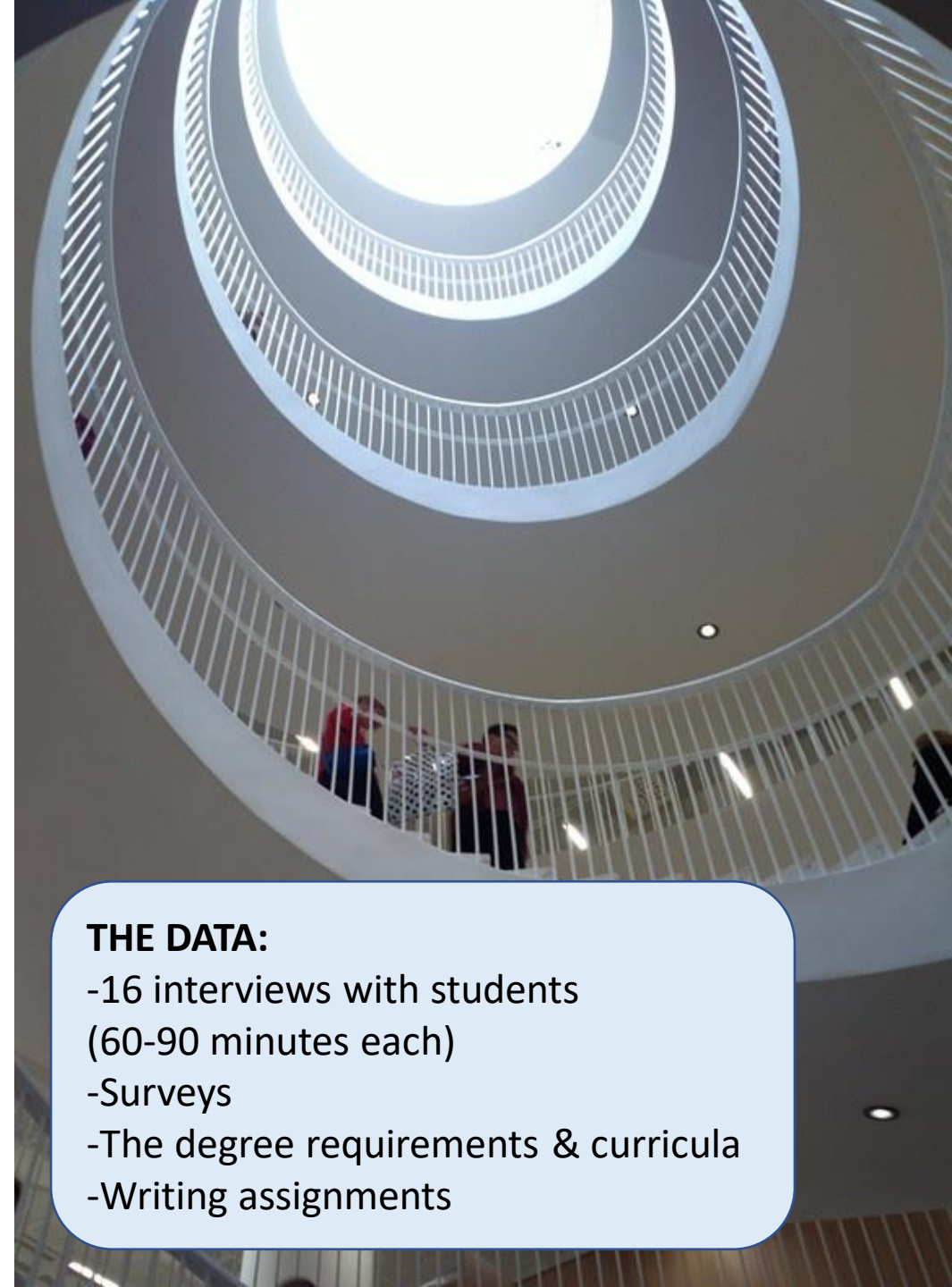


Our project explores, e.g.,:

- Which features characterize journalism education as scientific education at research universities?
- How do scientific studies contribute to the journalistic development of students, as evaluated by themselves?
- Which are the "critical events" for the scientific learning of students? Which elements in degree studies prevent scientific learning?
- What kind of implications does the prevailing emphasis on journalism practice in research university degrees have on doctoral education in Journalism?

THE DATA:

- 16 interviews with students (60-90 minutes each)
- Surveys
- The degree requirements & curricula
- Writing assignments



The background image shows a modern university interior. In the foreground, a staircase with black railings leads down. The middle ground features a curved glass wall that reflects the interior and provides a view of a bright, arched window looking out onto a brick building. The ceiling is curved with recessed linear lighting. The floor is polished and reflects the light.

The studies currently conducted by me:

“Journalism education as scientific education:

The engagement with knowledge by research university students”

(Co-author: Leena Mikkola)

“Becoming researchers?:

How studies in research university journalism programmes relate students to research”

(Co-author: Sanna Kivimäki)

I use situational and socio-cultural frameworks in the studies:

the emphasis is on the journalism programmes as learning environments, as experienced by students

the emphasis is not on the individual profiles or test scores of students





One more journalism-related study currently conducted in the project by Tessa Horila, Marianna Langinoja & Katja Lehtisaari:

“Critical events and the development of scientific thinking in journalism and communication studies”

An outline of results:

The large space given to journalism practice in the research university degrees has major implications on the scientific part of the studies:

- The degree studies don't build into a coherent theoretical knowledge structure
- Students mainly stay outside research practice; however, the thesis seminars and the thesis writing are epoch-making learning events
- The studies robustly equip most students to apply scientific thinking as an ethical, reflective method in journalistic work





Thank you!

Find us in our (Finnish-medium) blog: <https://blogs.tuni.fi/taju/>

Come join us in the closing seminar of the project (the 8th of December) in Tampere and on Zoom (again in Finnish)

Meet me in ECREA, IAMCR, and Twitter @LeenaRipatti

Email to me: leena.ripatti-torniainen@tuni.fi

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