

Core Values of Journalism among Students in Bangladesh, Norway and Tunisia: A Comparative Study

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Abstract: The aim of this study is to investigate differences and similarities in transnational journalism values through the eyes of undergraduate journalism students in three countries—Norway, Tunisia and Bangladesh. This study is important as “Globalization processes force us not only to focus more on transnational phenomena in general, but also highlight differences” (Carlsson 2014:8) Our research question is: Could news journalism in three countries in separate parts of the world have common core values? In our quantitative survey 439 students answered 25 questions on journalism practices, ethics and values, roles and functions. We found that all the students put high value on informing and checking facts. Most of them think that there exist global values of ethics. When it comes to journalism relating to power, the Norwegian students prefer a critical position. Most of the Tunisian and Bangladeshi students, on the other hand, regard that journalism should be neutral to power.

Keywords: news journalism, core values, transnational, objectivity, facts, relation to power

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1. Introduction

The aim of the study is to investigate differences and similarities in journalism values through the eyes of undergraduate journalism students in three different countries. Different historical legacies and cultural domination, the level of development and the current political situations have made huge differences among the nations. The globalization and commercialization of the media, international media conglomeration, their digitalization and convergence have brought the people and the journalists around the world together in close interaction. Though borders remain, they ... have been obliterated or softened in many ways" (Loo 2009:156). Our main question of the study is: Could news journalism in three countries in separate parts of the world have common core values?

This in turn leads to some research questions:

- 1) How do the journalism students relate to the notion of objectivity?
- 2) How do they think journalism should relate to those in power?
- 3) How is their notion on fact versus context?
- 4) Do we find common values of ethics?
- 5) Do the students themselves believe there are common core values?

2. Background of three countries

The three countries represented in this study are situated on three continents: Bangladesh in South Asia, Norway in northern Europe and Tunisia in northern Africa.¹ Their history as well as social and political culture and traditions are different. This is a main reason for choosing them as subject for our study for comparative analysis of journalistic values. Bangladesh fought their war of independence in 1971; Norway has been nourishing democracy for 200 years and Tunisia is in a transitional and post-revolutionary process since the uprising at the end of 2010 and the beginning of 2011. On the Press Freedom Index 2015, Reports sans frontiers (Rsf) has Norway on second place from the top, Tunisia on the 125th place and Bangladesh on the 146th (2015)².

The Bangladeshi journalists are still striving to establish journalistic professionalism. Being independent since 1971, Bangladesh has a history of political turbulence. The Constitution guaranties press freedom by article 39, but a series of laws restrain freedom of expression. It has been argued that it is difficult for journalists to be properly independent when their reports are interpreted as partisan in a highly politicized society. The killing of bloggers by religious extremists in Bangladesh, "...has many of the country's online activists running scared" (Iyenger 2015).

In the election for the Norwegian Parliament in 2013, the power shifted to a new government without making disturbance in the country. Norway has freedom of speech and press freedom within the Constitution of 1814. The Norwegian authorities regulate and support the media and both the state and the Norwegian press attach importance to media independency and diversity as stronghold for democracy.

After the fall of the dictator Ben Ali in Tunisia, with a regime that tightly controlled the media, the number of media outlets exploded. Moving away from the media propaganda system and gaining freedom of speech, journalists faced the challenge of professional standards as well as legal voids, lack of transparency and physical attacks (Rsf 2013). Since the uprising, the debates go on in the Tunisian society about the economic challenges. The role of the media in this path towards democracy remains a key question despite the atmosphere of free expression. Although the 2014 elections put an end to the transitional phase, the situation is not stable.

3. Methodology

To compare the way of looking at core values in news journalism, and search for patterns that could point towards a national view or that of a global understanding, we had to scrutinize a wide population of respondents. One could argue with Hallin and Mancini that journalistic practice can only to a very limited extent be studied through survey research (2004:304). The journalists' replies in a survey may not fully correspond with their practices, but Bardi and Schwartz (2003) find that values and behavior are substantially related (Bardi and Schwartz in Hanitzsch et al 2010:288). In a survey, several questions were asked to a large number of respondents among the studied countries. Since we intended to investigate how journalism students think about journalistic principles, both the ideals and the core values in practices, we decided that a quantitative survey would be the best way of conducting our comparative research. Schudson argues that journalism culture varies across different departments, different media, different news organizations and genres, and that news is a social and cultural institution far more complicated than an articulate ideology (2002:16). Therefore the culture of making news as such was not studied, but focusing on values in journalistic work and as ideals. The attempt was made to explore the opinions on values in journalism among the students of journalism at bachelor level, both male and female, in the three countries mentioned.

We conducted a side survey among the teachers of journalism at the same three departments, where 25 responded. In addition, we conducted qualitative interviews with students at the three departments, a total of 26 interviewsⁱ. The advantage of qualitative interviews is that the informants have more time to reflect and answer, giving rich information while using their own words (Gentikow 2010:78).

The themes for the survey were news journalism practices, ethics and values, roles and function. As a way to control the coherence in the answers, we asked about same issues in different ways. The answers to the open-ended questions were all written out in the original languages of the surveysⁱⁱ, before they were translated into English. The translation, both when making the survey and when analyzing it, making the interview guide and later converting the interviews into English, were done by members of the research group.

4. Theoretical Approach

Interested in similarities and differences in journalism culture across the globe, Hanitzsch et al find that "... much of the variation in journalism's culture still reflects the traditional distinction between the West and 'the rest'" (2010:288). In 1994, Splichal and Sparks found a desire for the independence and autonomy of journalism among first-year journalism students from 22 states (1994:179). Mark Deuze writes that the journalistic task and the journalist role are tied to more than simply telling the public what happens (2005). Deuze states that "Journalists all over the world voice concerns regarding their freedom to work as they please" (ibid:456). He finds that autonomy is an important ideal among journalists, and that across the globe reporters, "... feel that their work can only thrive and flourish in a society that protects its media from censorship" (ibid: 448), but he also states that "Working in multimedia news teams, journalists have to at least learn to share autonomy" (ibid.:456). Although media scholars and journalists advocate journalistic common values across different media and cultural complexities, Deuze finds that any definition of journalism as a profession working truthfully as a watchdog for the good of society and its citizens, is naïve, one-dimensional and sometimes nostalgic (ibid.:457-8).

Development journalism focuses on positive elements rather than the traditional conflict, and social and culture understanding get priority (Robie 2010:90,102). According to Romano, the journalist could be a nation builder, a partner for the government, an agent of empowerment, a watchdog or a

guardian of transparency (2010:24). Deliberative journalism involves some subjectivity, is more concerned about issues than events and "... provide information that enables people to make choices for change" (Robie 2010:89). Some will argue that developing forms of journalism often take another point of view than traditional, mainly so-called Western journalism. Others will claim that it is advocacy journalism or has an interventionist impulse (Hanitzsch 2007:373). It could also be argued that speaking for the speechless is not characteristic only in development journalism, but also a core value of (traditional) journalism. Then again, in Tunisia for instance, people reproach the journalists for "... lack of professionalism as they don't go into deep journalistic investigations, don't practice proximity journalism, do not reflect the main preoccupations of the Tunisians and don't give mouth to voiceless people" (El Bour 2013:96).

Eric Loo writes about best practices of journalism in Asia that "... journalists see themselves as an objective mediator between the reader and the event or issue" (2009:XI). At the same time, Loo believes that journalists translate and interpret issues and events (ibid.:153-4). It could seem Loo is as confused about objectivity as many journalists and journalism researchers are. Objectivity has declined in the Western world for decades, but "... it still works in part" (Munõz-Torres2012:567). This endless misunderstanding Munõz-Torres compares to Sisyphus' repeating rolling a stone up a hill just to watch it roll down, and then starting over (ibid.). Gaye Tuchman claimed objectivity was a strategic ritual and said goodbye to naïve empiricism (1972, 1978). Objectivity is an abstraction, Schudson claims:

"No journalist worthy of the name fails to seek trustworthy facts collected according to the best standards of objective reporting. But neither is there a journalism worth more than a radio headline service that is not also an act of play and imagination" (2002:109-110).

The positivist paradigm suggests that scientific knowledge must necessarily be a reflection of the image of the reality and the researcher is able, using the appropriate methodology, to understand reality in a way totally 'objective'. This paradigm is widely refuted as cognitive psychology and constructivist theory have long demonstrated that it cannot be strictly objective, especially in social sciences, because reality is apprehended by the researcher through his own frame of reference, values, attitude and mental images. Ekström and Nohrstedt look for an alternative to the postmodern relativism (1996:277-279). They write that the ideology of objectivity has a Janus face: One side of

it is criticizing naïve empiricism, while the other half is fighting for journalism's symbolic power in society (1996:259–261). Hanitzsch (2007) operates with an "... absolute sense of objectivity" (376), which could be mirrored. It goes hand in hand with "... the view that one can and should separate facts from values" (ibid.). Or as Charfi explains it, the "... journalist does not create the news, he announces them" (2010:69). The opposite position is that there is no absolute truth and news is a representation of the world (Hanitzsch 2007:376). These two positions suit the two opposite empiricism stands; that facts speak for themselves or the opposite view that truth is independent of the facts (ibid.:377). Then Hanitzsch also writes: "... the two extremes, empirical and analytical journalism, rarely appear in practice" (ibid.). Another dimension that also is interesting to our approach is his two positions regarding interventionism. The passive one being a neutral gatekeeper, which in its turn is linked to "... the principles of objectivity, neutrality, fairness, detachment, and impartiality ..." (ibid.:372). The intervention side consists of journalists taking a more active role, being advocate and missionary in their journalism (ibid.:373). The fourth dimension that is interesting to our study is power-distance, the way the journalists deal with power. "The adversarial journalism has a long tradition in liberal democracies and is often understood in terms of serving as 'fourth estate' or as countervailing force to democracy" (ibid.), that means journalists serving as watch dogs. The other pole is loyal, whether the journalists are inclined to favor consensus, or they are prohibited by press restrictions from challenging those in power (ibid.).

5. Results and Analysis

Now we will present our results and discuss them, starting with the notion of objectivity.

5.1 Objectivity

In our survey we defined objectivity as the belief that a journalist may cover a story independently of his/her personal thoughts, background, beliefs and knowledge. We asked: To what extent do you find it possible to achieve objectivity in news journalism?

Table 1: Percentage distribution on the perception of 'Objectivity in journalism practice' by the students of Bangladesh, Norway and Tunisia

Perceptions	DU, Ba %	HiOA, No %	IPSI, Tu %
Always	12	2	37
In most cases	34	23	30
Sometimes	32	18	25
Rarely	16	32	7
Never	6	26	1
Total Number	202	133	100

Most bright shines the objectivity paradigm over Tunisia. The answers indicate that the Tunisian students are saying objectivity is achievable, while the Norwegian students think "There does not exist any sort of clean objectivity" (Norwegian student 2014). In Bangladesh, the students are divided. Journalism teaching at University of Dhaka deals with objectivity at the first and second year level where the teachers emphasize achieving it and allow the students to get to know the basic. Gradually students are offered a critical view of journalism in the upper classes where objectivity as a journalistic goal is debunked and objectivity is emphasized from the perspective of journalistic methodological point of view rather than ontological discussion, which is never achievable.

The answers totally oppose Robie's linking of objectivity to the Western world, and more linked to what he would call the third world (2013:91-97). In Norway, the teachers talk about impartiality, a neutral style in the news language, fairness and balance. Journalism is not a mirror of the world; it is a reconstruction and an interpretation of events (Tuchman 1978; Schudson 2002), and for that reason objectivity is not possible. Most of the Norwegian teachers confirm this view, and only one believes it is possible in most cases. In Tunisia some of the teachers have focus of objectivity in news, while others state in theoretical courses that absolute objectivity does not exist. It is an ideal that we try to approach without reaching it: each individual observes and perceives reality through his/her own frame of reference. Still, no Tunisian teacher answers "rarely" and "never" to the question "To what extent do you find it possible to achieve objectivity in news journalism?"

In all the three departments, objectivity is used as an argument for removing subjective words and angles in news journalism. The control question about

objectivity was: Do you believe that your personal values influence the way you write an article, take a photo or chose your sources?

Table 2: Percentage distribution on the perception of the ‘Influence of Personal Values’ in journalism practice by the students of Bangladesh, Norway and Tunisia

Influence of Personal Values	DU, Ba %	HiOA, No%	IPSI, Tu %
Totally agree	32	69	38
In between	22	20	22
Totally disagree	45	11	39
Total Number	194	132	99

The Norwegian students answer in coherence with the question above, and the majority does really think it matters who they are as a person. Also for the Bangladeshi students there is coherence, they are as divided here as in the question above. For the Tunisian students, there is no coherence: They believe in objectivity, but in answering about their own values’ influence on their news stories, they are split in three different categories. It seems to us that the students of IPSI have the most problem with objectivity. One of them says “Objectivity is to be neutral. It deals with information without prejudice and bias. Unfortunately, Tunisian journalists don’t have the choice. They are obliged to follow the editorial line of the media for which they work” (Tunisian student 2014).

The notion of objectivity is complicated. Because, the interpretation of the concept by students are ambiguous; some may, for instance, perceive it as synonymous to impartiality or neutrality of the journalist. Shifting paradigms and transitional processes could make the question more complex. In pre-revolutionary Tunisia the authorities “... dominated the press and made it a tool of political marketing and deceptive propaganda” (INRIC 2012:13). Now there has been accusation of journalists not being neutral and rather acting as “journalists of shame” (Frey 2016:181) and at the same time focus on implementing international standards of journalism. Pushing journalism away from serving power, objectivity could become a tool, but Robie argues that it is not used as such in revolting times (Robie 2013:98). Being a highly debated and inconclusive matter (Munõz-Torres 2012:567-8), objectivity seems to be a tool built on misunderstanding and an insufficiently defined concept (ibid.).

Regarding the question of objectivity, we find no common value between the three countries.

5.2 Relating to power

How journalists relate to power and those in power is an important question when studying journalism core values. Therefore, one research question is: how do the journalism students think that journalism should relate to those in power?

Table 3: Percentage distribution of the opinions regarding 'Journalists' Relation to Power' by the students of Bangladesh, Norway and Tunisia

Opinions on Relation to Power	DU, Ba %	HiOA, No %	IPSI, Tu %
Challenge and defy it	15	23	8
Take a critical position	22	71	26
Be neutral	49	7	64
Be loyal	9	-	1
Promote power	5	-	-
Total Number	202	123	99

Table 3 shows that the majority of the students from Tunisia and Bangladesh think journalism should be neutral to power. As for the Norwegians, 94 percent of them mean that journalism should take a critical position or challenge and defy power. A student says "I like to believe that Norwegian journalists rarely promote power" (Norwegian student 2014). One could say that the students in the two transition countries have more reasons to challenge and defy power than the Norwegians. On the other hand, challenging power is not as dangerous in Norway, as it could be in many other places around the world. For the Tunisian students only 8 percent state that journalism should challenge and defy power. The majority – 64 percent – answer journalism should be neutral to power, as do almost half of the Bangladeshi students. Both Tunisia and Bangladesh had a turbulent political and violent situation during the year of the survey and these findings may relate to the respective cultural and political context.

Hanitzsch, pointing especially to cultures in Asia, says that in some cultures "... an adversarial understanding of journalism may conflict with a preference for consensus and harmony" (2007:373). Tight press restrictions could be another reason for journalists not to defy people with power (ibid.).

Loo, on the other hand, argues that critical thinking is a journalistic skill that never goes out of fashion (2013:166). Hanitzsch regards the position of being loyal to power as one of the extreme ends of power distance (2007:374), but we think that the extreme end is promoting power. Only five percent of the Bangladeshi students think journalism should promote power. As for being loyal to power, table 3 shows that only one percent of the Tunisian students and nine percent of the Bangladeshi students think so.

Although the teacher survey is small, we may check if the national division is visible. Norwegian teachers are in favor of challenging power or taking a critical position towards power, a position which "... has a long tradition in liberal democracies and is often understood in terms of serving as 'fourth estate' or as countervailing force to democracy" (Hanitzsch 2007:373). As for the teachers in Bangladesh and Tunisia they are divided between taking a critical position and being neutral, just as their students. The journalism education in all the countries aims to achieve fair, balanced and impartial reporting. In Tunisia and Bangladesh, journalism education's first priority is being neutral. Neutrality is not seen as passivity, submission and total acceptance of the journalist to the official version of events: "Neutrality (...) is not to challenge the power of government, nor to be with the government" (Bangladeshi student 2014).

The journalist should treat the official version in the same way he treats other available sources and not favor anyone. This in turns helps the journalist to be critical. In Bangladesh and Tunisia, being neutral to power means to be neutral in journalism and in filing stories, which may be interpreted as contribution to achieving objectivity in news reporting. It could also be seen as accepting information as trustworthy and reliable, without viewing the statements and facts with sufficient source criticism. While in Norway, critical source analysis is emphasized as a mean of achieving fair, balanced and impartial reporting. In the Norwegian pedagogical approach the word *neutral* in connection to power relations could be understood as passivity in discharging journalistic work, meaning "... rarely question the official version of the story" (Hanitzsch 2007:374). Using the word connected to methodological procedure of making news reports, it could nevertheless be perceived as a positive position while choosing sources or the words to narrate the story.

Regarding journalists' position towards power, another question was asked to them as well: Journalism is often said to have a controlling function towards power. In your opinion, is it a question regarding political power or all types of power?

Table 4: Percentage distribution of the opinions on the Control Function by the students of Bangladesh, Norway and Tunisia

Opinions on Control Function	DU, Ba %	HiOA, No %	IPSI, Tu %
Political power	33	10	16
All types of power	67	90	83
Total Number	186	115	97

The majority of the students in all the countries state that journalism has a controlling function towards all kinds of power. It seems there is a generalization of the perception of power exercise by the journalists. This could be regarded for the Bangladeshi and the Tunisian students as contradictory to the answers of earlier perception showed in table 3. On the other hand, some may argue that as the press¹ is powerful and journalism is expected to have a controlling function to power, therefore journalists have to be more conscious about being neutral. Being neutral towards power may then be interpreted as contribution to achieving objectivity in news reporting.

If we look at journalism’s position towards power, the notion of the watchdog could add to our understanding of the diversity among the students in these three countriesⁱⁱ. When asked to indicate the importance of different roles of journalism, the students expressed their views on watchdog as follows:

Table 5: Percentage distribution of the opinions of students of Bangladesh, Norway and Tunisia on Role as Watchdog

Opinions on Role as Watchdog	DU, Ba %	HiOA, No %	IPSI, Tu %
Least important	12	2	37
Average importance	14	18	20
Most important	74	80	42
Total Number	192	126	99

As shown in the table above, the students in Bangladesh and Norway emphasize the role of watchdog. One student said, “Being a watchdog is the most important position for journalism today. If you are writing a story about someone who has been treated unfairly, when something crazy happens, by publishing the story in the media, you can make a difference” (Norwegian student 2014).

The only role of journalism in society students put higher value on is informing about what happens in society (Bangladesh 86 percent, Norway 87 percent). As for the role of informing the public, the Tunisian students also

put high value on it (71 percent). As for the role of being a watchdog, 42 percent of the Tunisian respondents emphasized it. Simultaneously, 37 percent of the Tunisian students stated that the watchdog was the least important role of journalism. We found that the answers from the Tunisian students were coherent with their answer to how journalism should relate to power, where more than two third of them answered 'neutral'. (See table 5).

Common value regarding how journalism should relate to power could not be ascertained. Further, there were big differences when it comes to the way students perceive the word *neutral* as well as *critical*. When it comes to journalism having a controlling function towards power, the values are more common. To inform the citizens was a core value stated by several students. Bangladeshi and Norwegian students emphasized the role of the watchdog, and a majority of the Tunisian students did the same. At the same time, many of them found that the watchdog was the least important role.

5.3 Facts

The journalists' perception of facts is closely connected to their professional ideology and ideals in news journalism. Given some options when it was asked to journalism students as, 'what do you think is most important when making a news report/news article?', the answers by them came out as follows:

Table 6: Percentage distribution of the opinions by the students of Bangladesh, Norway and Tunisia on Facts as Ideals in News

Opinions on Facts as Ideals in News	DU, Ba %	HiOA, No %	IPSI, Tu %
Let the facts speak for themselves	24	8	26
Give priority to facts	10	14	44
Give the facts a context	4	72	15
Priority to content and analysis	35	5	9
The truth is independent of the facts	26	1	5
Total Number	202	133	99

Munõz-Torres writes that "brute facts" are meaningless unless they are connected with notions and concepts that we interpret (2012:573). Three-fourth of the Norwegian students seemed to agree with him and considered that facts needed a context. Most of the Tunisians thought that 'fact is king' and hand-in-hand with their view on objectivity suggested the majority of the students of IPSI placed themselves in the value-free facticity (Munõz -Torres

2012:569). The Bangladeshi students were divided: About a third of them agreed with the Tunisians, but 51 percent meant that context and analysis should have priority or that the truth was independent of the facts.

This could be an expression of the students' opinion that facts got manipulated, related to media ownership and contradictory ideologies in the country. In a polarized society such as Bangladesh the big question on what truth was, might be complex. The dissimilarity we observed on emphasis with respect to fact and context while writing may be connected to the respective understanding of truth and how to achieve that truth in journalism. This opens up the philosophical debate of truth i.e. what is truth, does truth exist, is it possible to know the truth, and so forth. It has become clearer in journalism literature that journalism is a battleground of truth production (Windschuttle 2010, Kovach and Rosenstiel 2001, Esquenazi 2002). Hence, the Bangladeshi students' understanding of truth as independent of the facts may somehow be connected to the limit of journalism as process and as a profession.

As a control question we made the following scenario: "You are interviewing two important politicians. You also have lots of fact obtained elsewhere. Your editor tells you to shorten the news story", and asked where in the story the students would cut.

Table 7: Percentage distribution of perceptions of the by students of Bangladesh, Norway and Tunisia on Facts and Opinions

Perceptions on Facts and Opinions	DU, Ba %	HiOA, No %	IPSI, Tu %
I will mainly cut facts	20	11	19
I will mainly cut in the opinions	51	24	42
I will cut both in facts and opinions	28	65	39
Total Number	198	123	95

We found these results to be consistent for the Tunisians prioritizing facts, and the Norwegians, as they had been balancing cutting both in facts and in

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opinions. More than half of the Bangladeshi students would mainly cut in the opinions and almost one-third would cut both places. Preference of cutting opinion sounds contradictory with the earlier answer of Bangladeshi students that they would give priority to content and analysis. However, they also responded that they would let the facts speak for themselves; therefore minimal use of opinion might increase the possibility of getting closer to truth through the presentation of facts.

As we saw above, the students from Tunisia and Bangladesh put high value on facts, as the majority of the Norwegian students find that facts need a context. The Norwegian students believe that even if the facts are correct, journalism actively interprets and forms the news, as Schudson writes about (2002:171). This is the same point of view Loo highlights, that "... good journalists are not merely transcribers, but translators and interpreters of issues and events" (2009:153–4). In the qualitative interviews we asked more questions about facts, and we found that the students from these three countries emphasized checking of facts and verification. The latter is one "... of the most important parts of being a journalist..." (Norwegian student 2014) and fact checking equally important, since "... unchecked false information may lead to social catastrophe" (Bangladeshi student 2014). For instance, one said, "We must look for information from different sources, and we must consult what had been written on the subject." Verification and cross checking of facts is important in order to give a full and a true information" (Tunisian student 2014).

Although it has not been established to find out any common value on facts versus context, but it was observed that verifying and fact checking was a common value among these three countries.

5.4 Ethical standard and principles

The next two tables are shown in comparison, as the questions are control questions towards each other. Firstly, we made a scenario where the students were making a news story and they had ethical dilemmas, and they were asked, "What will mostly influence the way you think about the dilemmas?"

Table 8: Percentage distribution of opinions on the Influence of Ethical Dilemmas by the students of Bangladesh, Norway and Tunisia

Opinions on Influence of Ethical Dilemmas	DU, Ba %	HiOA, No %	IPSI, Tu %
It depends totally on the story I am working on	48	52	24
The principles of press ethics are more important than my news story	52	48	76
Total Number	199	112	100

Then, the respondents were asked in a slightly different way, "In an ethical discussion about your working methods and the result (the published story), what do you think is the most important?"

Table 9: Percentage distribution on perceptions on Ethical Actions and Results (Output) by the students of Bangladesh, Norway and Tunisia

Perceptions on Ethical Actions and Results	DU, Ba %	HiOA, No %	IPSI, Tu %
Acting ethically correctly is most important	55	53	82
The result and the methods cannot be separated	29	45	8
The results means everything	16	2	10
Total Number	192	109	100

The majority emphasized ethical principles and thereupon ethical actions. That could be journalism students going for what they think was the 'correct answer' (Hovden and Ottosen 2013:3). On the other hand, around half of the Bangladeshi and the Norwegian students meant that the ethical approach depended on the story in question. That they were on the side of the story did not necessarily mean that they were unethical. There is a difference between ethics as an ideal and ethics in practice (Ekström and Nohrstedt 1996:200), and journalists tended to explain their choices using different epistemologies depending on which news story they had been defending (ibid.:181).

This corresponds to 48 percent of the Bangladeshi and 52 percent of the Norwegians. The Tunisian students, on the other hand, are in great favor of ethical principles and even more so when it comes to the way they act. At the time of the survey, ethics and media regulation were discussed on a broad scale in public in Tunisia. It seems a natural explanation, that students in a time of their country being at a cross road, should choose a moral and idealistic stand, an ideological point of view. The sense of being ethical, Deuze writes, is in its turn used to legitimize "... journalists' claims to the position as (free and fair) watchdog of society" (2005:449). This does not correspond to what we have found, since most of the Tunisian students did not put much importance on the role of the watchdog.

Acting ethically correctly is a common value. When it comes to practice, half of the students from Bangladesh and Norway give priority to the story over the principles.

The students were also asked if they consider the principles of press ethics that they relate to in their journalistic work, to be national or universal.

Table 10: Percentage distribution on perceptions on 'Acting Ethical whether National or Universal' by the students of Bangladesh, Norway and Tunisia

Perception on Acting Ethical	DU, Ba %	HiOA, No %	IPSI, Tu %
National/mainly national	50	40	23
Universal/mainly universal	50	60	77
Total Number	199	112	100

The majority of the journalism students meant that the ethical principles were mainly universal, and the Tunisian students were mostly on the universal track. One of them said "Journalism has common global values, we call them the journalistic ethics" (Tunisian student 2014). Since the revolution, the international journalism standards have been important in the country. When the students answered in the survey, there regulations and ethical standards for news media had not been implemented¹ and international standards were a much discussed topic. The Bangladeshi students were divided; half of them answered mainly national and the other half universal. One that does not believe it to be universal, answered: "There is no universal ethics, but the journalists work for a greater course in different places, and they should work

in the similar way” (Bangladeshi student 2014). At Dhaka University, journalism students study journalism laws and ethics operating both at global and national levels. While there is journalism ethics found in the Western textbooks, there are also a set of code of conduct developed by local bodies. This may not be an explanation for the divided answers, because the Tunisian and Norwegian students have to relate to international and national standards as well. In addition, there are some codes of conduct developed by specific journalism institutions in all of the three countries. It seems the international orientation, regarding ethics, is a common value for the students, at all three departments.

6. Conclusion

Our main question is if there are any common core values of journalism. We find that checking and verifying facts is a common value. Furthermore, the majority of the students in all the three countries thought that press ethics would be a universal value. Moreover, as for ethical standards, the Tunisian students are consistent about the importance of them. The students from Dhaka and Oslo are divided; half of them join the Tunisians and the rest of them have a more pragmatic view and choose the story over ethical principles. Journalists around the world are regularly struggling with this dilemma - or avoiding it (Ekström and Nohrsted 1996).

Objectivity is clearly a concept all of the students relate to and keep on debating, but it is far from a common value. Here we have found that the Tunisian students and the Norwegian students are on opposite poles, and the Bangladeshi students are in between. The students of IPSI, Tunisia believe in objectivity and that “... one can and should separate facts from values” (Hanitzsch et al. 2010:276). The students in Oslo think that truth, “... and its pursuit cannot be separated from context and human subjectivity...” (Hanitzsch 2007:376).

Function of informing the citizens is a common core value. Then, the students from Bangladesh and Norway have the role of the watchdog as a common value, and so thought 42 percent of the Tunisian students. Hanitzsch links the watchdog to the liberal democracy (ibid.:373), which suits well with Norway. It is maybe not as suitable for Bangladesh, but Ramaprasad and Rahman found that Bangladeshi journalists consider libertarian functions more important than development functions (2006:148,162). Tunisian journalists, on the other hand, did for the first time after the revolution in 2011 get the opportunity to act as watchdogs. Being in transition towards

democracy, a result of 42 percent laying emphasis on the watchdog is in our view an optimistic finding. We may consider that some 37 percent of the Tunisian students found that the watchdog is the least important function could be seen as a heritage from the pre-revolution journalism. It could also be linked to the faith in brute facts and "... objectivity being 'out there' that ought to be 'mirrored'..." (Hanitzsch 2007:376).

Concluding on our main question, the students relate to core values in journalism, but some of them they interpret differently. There could be many reasons for the way we understand journalistic values; national context and the hegemonic values in different parts of the world are important explanations and so are local practices. Indeed, just as important is journalism as a profession bearing a set of values. Finding several journalism core values in these three different countries shows a common way of thinking professionally that link together journalism students from different parts of the world.

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Notes:

¹Tunisia is a north-African Arab country squaring 155.360 km land and has a population of 10.937.521 (CIA 2014). Norway is situated way up in the north of Europe, a country with 5.147.792 inhabitants (CIA 2014) on 304.282 square km. Bangladesh is one of the world's most densely populated countries with 166.280.712 inhabitants on 130.168 square km (CIA 2014).

¹The higher on the list, the better the organization recognizes the situation for press freedom in the country.

¹ 8 from DU, 12 from IPSI and 6 from HiOA answered.

¹Arabic for Tunisia, Norwegian for Norway, English for Bangladesh.

¹By the press we mean news media regardless of their platform.

¹In table 5 we only show the answers regarding 'watchdog', not the other possibilities

¹On May, 3rd 2013 the audio-visual media got ethical standards and HAICA to regulate them, but the written media, have not yet been regulated.