

Modern Paradigms and New Strategies of Education in Journalism

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Abstract: Globalization and rapidly changing world presents new challenges also for journalists. In this regard a system of journalist education must undergo serious changes too. Three leading journalists' schools worldwide are distinguished and analyzed. A role of journalist in the modern world is discussed. Based on the performed research, an attempt to formulate the corresponding unified global requirements to the society, educational process and journalists are given.

Key words: Professional identity • Social mission • Educational paradigm • Mass media

INTRODUCTION

The situation of modern journalism can be described as new media technologies coming to the level of the global information space, augmented by intense professional competition. There are numerous challenges which wordsmiths of today cannot really cope with. In this connection, the issue "how to teach" and "what to teach" journalists – people who have a strong impact on the public world perception – is actively discussed in academia and society.

The problem of correcting the journalists' education programs is beyond the scope of just one country: today the conditions of journalists' creative work are experiencing a global change. International mass media develop so fast that the educational programs are not able to adjust to latest demands and requirements. There is no uniform standard for job training, no universal clear understanding of the mission, aims and values of a journalist.

An attempt to find out the common features of the modern journalist education systems worldwide is presented in this work. Based on the performed analysis, a basis of a new educational paradigm for journalists is proposed.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Russian journalism is currently experiencing a system-wide crisis, which is confirmed by the social science studies. The Russian national centre of public opinion studies (WCIOM) has recently presented the updated statistics for 2013 on whether Russians trust mass media. According to the poll, citizens of Russia have less confidence in journalists than in scholars, teachers, clergymen or military men. The respondents also estimate the current demand for journalists' work at a low rate (3.47 points on a ten-point scale).¹

However, a presentable level of the journalists' professional culture is a characteristic sign of the development of social relations in a country, as well as a key factor for ensuring national security, both domestic and foreign. The Russian mass media credibility gap has already become a reason for certain political tension in the Russian society. What is the reason for this crisis? Most analysts point at the lack of journalists' professional competence. A poll taken in the community of senior executives of the government of the Republic of Tatarstan (one of the most economically stable regions of Russian Federation) showed existing displeasure with the professional level of Russian journalists. According to

¹See www.wciom.ru

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members of the public service, a journalist is supposed to have a good professional education (9.2 points); however, the professional integrity was only evaluated at 5.9 points [1]. Because of the low professional culture the authorities lose their trust in mass media and, as a result, communication platforms for influencing population become ineffective.

As it was already pointed out, the problem of correcting the journalists' education programs is beyond the scope of just one country: today the conditions of journalists' creative work are experiencing a global change. In this connection, the professional identity of journalism is becoming rather vague, especially nowadays, when every body has an opportunity of expressing his opinion publicly. According to German researcher D. Ratzke, "The changing process in mass media must bring change to the journalist himself, his professional ethics and his education" [2].

What should be the essence of journalism education? To summarize an almost century-long experience of journalists' maturing, it can be argued that three leading paradigms, three journalists' schools could be distinguished worldwide.

The Knowledge-Oriented Paradigm and the Russian School of Journalism: At the heart of the professional training of journalists in Russia is the idea of learning the basics of social sciences. This school is popular in the countries of the former USSR as well as in some countries of Eastern Europe. The basis of this theory is the representation of journalism as a creative profession and since it is impossible to teach creativity, the training is reduced to learning various theories: professional historic experience, genre theory, as well as knowledge from the related fields of study – law, philosophy, literature, languages, economy and political sciences.

Russian journalists turned out to be uncompetitive in the modern time for objective reasons: the journalists in this country used to be treated as talented broadcasters of the information provided by the Communist Party, as the communicators of the ideology of the Soviet state. In the USSR (where the system of Party schools was established and operated since 1930s) the journalists did not study "how to write" but "what to write about". The first proven record of the professional education of journalists in USSR dates back to the middle of the 20th century. By that time media professionals were

already being trained in 42 countries: in Europe there were 645 university departments for journalists and in the US the number of such departments amounted up to 500 [1].

Today every major university of Russia is engaged in educating journalists. The students take courses under a chosen major specialty (printed press, television media, Internet media). Often there is a specialty of "public relations" alongside journalism, which is indicative of the knowledge-oriented approach. PR and journalism students take identical courses on history, philosophy, linguistics, economy and rhetoric. However, the development of practical journalism skills (abilities, competences) is usually evaluated as critically low.

At the same time, in spite of the long experience of organizing professional education of journalists, it is still a common opinion in Russia that journalism is a personal mission or calling rather than a profession. A well-known journalist Vladimir Pozner once made the following statement: "It is impossible to teach a person to be a journalist, just like it is impossible to teach him to be a writer or an artist. The main qualities of a journalist are curiosity, the willingness to ask and answer "Why?" ... and to get to the very core of every problem".² The professionals sometimes doubt the necessity of any special education for journalists. However, in my opinion, the society without professional journalists becomes far removed from democratic freedoms and norms of social interaction.

The Competence-Oriented Paradigm and the American Education System: The standard of learning for the journalist profession in the USA is structured around gaining basic skills, abilities and practical techniques for professional task solution. At the heart of this approach is the idea of the diversity of a journalist's work and, consequently, inconstancy of professional goals and motives, as well as differences between axiological models in various forms of journalism. A professional must be able to do something, however the exact implementation of the result of using his skills is within the authority of the media editor or the individual journalist. The work within the limits of the existing laws also relates to legal competence. This educational paradigm is gradually becoming the new model for modernizing education in Russia.

²See <http://vladimirpozner.ru>

USA was the first country in the world to professionally train journalists (University of Pennsylvania, 1893). However, there is still a continuous debate in the USA over the effective system of education: how and where to teach journalism – at the university or at the newspaper editing office? Most of the professionals support the idea of learning by way of immersing oneself into the professional environment. A prominent supporter of such approach was J. Pulitzer, a major publisher who supported teaching journalists by efforts of editorial staff. In America there are hundreds of journalist schools belonging to editing offices and they tend not to accept university graduates in journalism. In practical schools they teach “from scratch” and they only teach professional skills.

The Humanist Paradigm and European Quality Standards: In the European countries teaching journalists has its own specifics, but, as a rule, it is focused on “the development of an individual (personality)...” [3] within the limits of the social responsibility of this profession.

In France, Germany and Sweden there is a common understanding that journalist profession is an important social institution necessary for the existence and development of a democratic society. The conditions of professional self-presentation can change, but the professional and civil code of ethics is always the same. Mass media technologies are external factors, but the core of the professional integrity – the values and outlook of a professional – are inviolable. A journalist is supposed to be a citizen, a patriot, he must advocate the values of society and its citizens, be a bearer of social values and a protector of freedoms.

The French school of journalism is one of the most globally famous. It was at the Paris Higher School of social sciences that the first university department of journalism in Europe was opened in 1902. “The primary aim of education is teaching to see contemporary events in the prospect of their development. One of the most important competences is the ability of a future journalist to collect, analyze, verify and complement information which allows him to examine a given event comprehensively”³. A student is admitted to practical work only in the last 5 months of his education period (which is different from the Russian and American models). Motivation, understanding social processes, individual style and good health are considered to be the

most important conditions of the journalist’s professional development.

The experience of journalism education in Germany appears to be interesting as well. This country has arguably the best system of further education for professionals in the world (at the Academy of Bavarian Press and the Academy of Journalism). Continuous self-development of a journalist is regarded as a norm, with editing offices financing special training courses. In Germany the key qualities of a journalist are professional competence, ability to combine and complement the acquired knowledge and to make responsible decisions, expertise in the sphere of social relations and ability to quickly learn new technology [4, 5].

CONCLUSION

Summarizing the systems of journalism education presented above, it can be concluded:

- In the context of the globalization, close interaction and mutual interference of civilizations, journalists (to retain their professional identity) need to formulate the social mission of their profession, its unique goals and valuables, codes of conduct and ethical norms.
- It is necessary to formulate and set up a unified international educational standard to summarize the rich experience of the professional training of journalists.
- The education of journalists can be based on time-tested paradigms: the knowledge-oriented, the competence-oriented and the humanist approaches under conditions of their complementarity and using some elements of the cultural approach.
- Political institutions should purposefully support the independence of mass media and the social character of the profession. Commercialization of the media should not destroy the humanist ideals of journalism in a democratic society.

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³<http://www.cfj.com/cfj/scolarit2/php>

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