

Some reflections on journalism education and journalism culture

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A consequence of globalization of media economy and technology for journalism lies in the unification of the production processes of media content. Differences between journalistic production routines and applied principles are diminishing towards more popularized, more commercialized production of content (Hallin & Mancini, 2004). Furthermore, journalists in many countries around the world work in basically similar professional environments; they use similar equipment and technology and share a common occupational ideology. Michael Schudson (2001:153) describes the occupational ideology of journalism as cultural knowledge that constitutes 'news judgment', rooted deeply in the communicators' consciousness. This 'cultural knowledge' comprises certain characteristics and values, which journalists generally agree upon as a basis of journalistic practice, and function 'to self-legitimize their position in society' (Deuze, 2005: 446).

To a large extent, in elective democracies, the occupational ideology carries the principles of the Anglo-American or 'liberal' model of journalism. Academic journalism education relies on this occupational

ideology in defining the ideals and aims of professional education and the logic of developing the curricula. In Europe, an agreement exists concerning the quality of standards that journalism education should meet. The European Journalism Training Association (EJTA) accepted a document called the 'Tartu Declaration' at the annual general meeting in Tartu, Estonia in 2006. This document articulates the public service goals of journalism education especially emphasizing responsibility and ethics. The Declaration also defines ten broad competences (with more detailed specifications) that the students should achieve within the process of their education and training. These are the competence of 1) reflecting on the societal role of and developments within journalism, 2) finding relevant and newsworthy issues and angles, given the audience and production aims of a certain medium or different media, 3) organizing and planning journalistic work, 4) gathering information swiftly, using customary newsgathering techniques and methods of research, 5) selecting essential information, 6) structuring information in a journalistic manner, 7) presenting information in appropriate language and an effective journalistic form, 8) evaluating and accounting for journalistic work, 9) cooperating in a team or editorial setting, and 10) working in a professional media organization as a freelancer (Tartu Declaration, 2006).

Generally, there is no disagreement among media professionals about the importance of these competences and their main characteristics. However, the degree of adapting the competences differs by country and is definitely dependent on the content and quality of education and training. On the other hand, the interpretation and application of the occupational ideology and particular values and standards are largely dependent on various contextual factors: cultural and national traditions, history, economic situation etc.

The importance of contextual factors becomes obvious when examining the failure of former Communist countries following democratization of society and transition to capitalism to adapt the 'liberal' model of journalism. Indeed, despite the huge expense outlaid on importing expertise and knowhow and organizing journalism training with the help of Western teachers and journalists, the 'liberal' model only had a very limited impact.

Values and norms are inherently culture-specific and, therefore, Western professional values were neither fully applicable nor adaptable to the existing cultural contexts of Central and East European countries. According to James W. Carey (2007: 3) “the fate of journalism, the nation-state, and the public sphere are intimately intertwined and cannot be easily separated”. Consequently, there cannot be universal culture of journalism but instead, a variety of journalism cultures exists, which can be compared and contrasted according to certain comparative criteria such as histories and traditions of journalism development, professional procedures of news gathering and distribution, and so forth (Hallin & Mancini 2004). In this perspective, academic professional education is among the important contextual factors that shape the nature of journalism culture in a particular country.

From the discussion above, it follows that the central point of the news media is not the transmission of information, but rather the confirmation of the cultural order in which journalistic activity is carried out (Hallin & Mancini, 2004; Carey, 2007). Precisely within this cultural and social order, journalism develops and is sustained. Production is affected by certain social determinants which influence journalism and produce considerable variations among the professional models. According to this view, news production is a complex process, which takes place in a particular cultural setting. Journalism is a craft of place, affected by factors such as technological and economic constraints, political factors or pressures from information sources. Journalism also takes place within an organizational framework, which is determined by certain editorial policies and professional journalistic routines (see Figure 1).



Figure 1. Main factors affecting and determining the flow of news (five critical dimensions – political, economic, technological, source tactics and organizational – are adapted from McNair, 2000)

This view of journalism embraces both professional journalism practices and the broader contextual dimensions. Viewing journalism as a work process of professional individuals, Thomas Hanitzsch (2007) suggests conceptualizing ‘journalism culture’ through constituents and dimensions that include the variety of journalists’ role perceptions, the basic philosophical concepts of journalistic coverage and the ways how journalists respond to ethical problems. This approach is centred on the concept of professionalism (analogically to the professional cultures of medicine, education or scientific research, etc.). Therefore, we suggest making a distinction between ‘*professional culture of journalism*’ (as referred to above) and a broader definition of ‘journalism culture’ that would also include journalism as a discourse in its various formats and practices (such as textual norms, genres, writing styles etc.) and institutional dimensions (such as organizational aspects etc.). Thus, ‘*journalism culture*’ as opposed to ‘professional culture of journalism’ implies to *the character and performance of journalism as an institution, profession and discourse in a concrete economic, political and cultural context* (see also: Carey, 1969; Croteau & Hoynes, 1997; Weaver, 1998).

This approach corresponds to Paolo Mancini's idea of two parallel fields of journalistic emancipation. One is the fruit of professional training while the second is affected by all social actors with whom journalists work (their fellow journalists, politicians, other sources, etc.) as well as their socialization and communication activities in everyday life situations. If an explicit knowledge exists about the roles and functions of journalism on the first level of learning (through textbooks and syllabi used in journalism programs in academic institutions), the norms and traditions develop unconsciously and are strongly influenced by contextual features on the second level (Mancini, 2008).

From here it follows that an important element in journalism education is comprehension of the particularities of the national setting, i.e. the broader culture of society where journalistic production takes place. However, frequently in educational settings, international training models from the USA or UK are adopted without clearer consideration of the idea of local culture. This provokes clashes with the culture of a specific country. As research in many post-communist countries reveals, journalists often profess to having ideas they do not follow in reality (Hadamik, 2005; Balčytienė & Naprytė, 2009). Their cultural habits and daily practices are in conflict with professional rules learned at school: for example, journalists from different countries claim that in their everyday practices information and opinions are separated, while in reality they do not profess practices of neutral reporting.

At the same time with increasing trends of globalization, regional integration and media convergence on both cultural and technological realms, the changes that journalists encounter daily and the professional challenges they have to address are common to journalists around the world. Media institutions are increasingly keen on the maximization of audience, thus their organizational ideology is shaped by attempts to reduce costs of production through provision of softer news and entertaining content. Gradually, journalism becomes a hostage of large content directing campaigns and cost-reducing newsgathering routines, which prevent media content from playing its vital role as a key factor in the public sphere. In addition to economic calculations, another factor dramatically affecting media production is technological advancement represented by the emerging popularity of online platforms with user generated input and participatory, connective storytelling and dialogical communi-

cation. Mediatization of the vital spheres of society (politics, economy, culture, education etc.) also increases journalists' possibilities, if not the power to influence the behaviour of governing institutions, various decision makers, and the public's mentality and attitudes. On the other hand, journalists are left unprepared to meet these multiple challenges and do not have adequate competencies to deal with anything which comes with the globalization and informatization of modern society and media.

Journalism education has actually made a limited contribution to shaping a new understanding of the professional role and definition of journalism, and to raising the professional skills of journalists (Jakubowicz, 2009). Contemporary society and media require 'multi-literate' journalists. They must be media literate (understanding and being able to interpret for their audiences sophisticated relationships between the media and society, and the effects of the media). They must be technologically literate (able to use the possibilities of new technologies that require special skills). They must also be economically literate (familiar with media management and entrepreneurship as well as the economic functioning of the media industry). Journalism education should bring, in addition to the knowledge and skills already provided by many university curricula, training of student journalists as close to practice as possible (through social partnerships). Simultaneously, journalism education should allow the analysis and critical reflection that is necessary for journalism professionals to fully understand both the methods involved in news reporting and writing, as well as the social repercussions of the proliferating journalism market. While crucial in terms of practical, hands-on training, these connections between universities and social partners may also "inhibit efforts to teach students norms and standards different from those prevailing in the industry and serving the owners and publishers, rather than the public interest" (Jakubowicz 2009: 351).

To sum up, rapidly changing situations in which journalists work require them to identify more with the profession and less with the news organization for which journalists work. In this situation, the concept of public service in journalism education should become a vital one in the development of journalism's professional ideology.

Generally, two visions can be perceived as to how journalism training is affected by all the changes and challenges that contemporary societies are experiencing. One vision sees an emphatic reliance on contextual fac-

tors and relates strongly to the particularities of the national setting, such as political, economic and cultural contexts in which journalists perform their craft. The other vision sees journalism development and professionalization as a process of active learning and re-learning, which involves adequate reaction to such factors as globalization of media markets, media industries and media content, emergence of intercultural character of messages, technological diffusion and so forth. These two visions disclose a pair of conflicting paradigms of localism and globalization. Each of these we experience in our daily lives. How thoroughly and whether these two paradigms are assessed in educational settings in small Baltic and Nordic nations is at the core of the themes discussed in the selected papers in this special issue of “Journalism Research”.

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