

Challenges of Media Education Standards in Georgia

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Abstract

The main goal of this research is to determine whether the journalism education of the leading media schools in Georgia is adequate to modern media market's demands and challenges. The right answer to this main question was found after analyzing Georgian media market's demands, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, different aspects of journalism education in Georgia: the historical background, development trends, evaluation of educational programs and curricula designs, reflection of international standards in teaching methods, studying and working conditions.

Keywords: Media, education, Georgia

1. Post-soviet journalism education

1.1 The Soviet background: traditions and history

The journalism education in Georgia begins at Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University over 50 years ago. Its development has been intensive, rather difficult and yet an interesting process. After reform in higher education (2005) the independent faculty of journalism has become a part of the Faculty of Social and Political Sciences.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, media and journalist studies, as well as entire educational system had to face perhaps the most difficult challenge in its history. Study process at universities did not meet contemporary European standards and requirements, technology and facilities were rather outdated and poor, study materials were rare and mostly fashioned in the Russian scholarly manner. Curriculums were too full of general, theoretical disciplines and media students could complete their internship period only at several newspapers or at the state TV and radio broadcaster.

Education at schools significantly deteriorated and those who came to universities were not sufficiently well prepared for higher education. This caused the professors very often to change the content of their lectures and teach their students what they had to learn at schools. This interrupted and caused the educational process to

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regress. Social science in Soviet Union and especially journalism was too full of soviet ideology and suffered the biggest pressure from the state.

Each direction of higher education suffered common negative influences. Journalist studies in Georgia also had advantages as well as disadvantages since its creation to the collapse of the Soviet Union. In those days, it was possible to spend more time with your studies than it is today and you could work more diligently. It has already been mentioned above, that the knowledge a student received from the university entirely depended on the lecturer's personal love of his/her job, education, intellect, loyalty and ability to transfer knowledge. In many cases, lecturers delivered lectures out of enthusiasm, especially in the hard times of the 1990-s. In those days teaching was a personally managed process and mostly depended on the name of one particular professor. These people created schools, brought up their followers and in this way the school or its founder gained authority, which supported and did not allow the destruction of the particular field of study.

One more aspect, which negatively influenced the goals and objectives of the journalistic education in that time, was the breach of the necessary balance between theoretical knowledge and practical experience at each education level. Theoretical knowledge prevailed and, as a result, university education distanced itself from the market demands.

1.2 Evolution of the system since the 1990-s to 2005

Radical changes at the end of the 20th and the beginning of the 21st century had an important impact on the science of journalism, its methodological experience and practice. The importance of media in the contemporary world has increased significantly, and it is important for every educational programme in journalism to meet the upcoming demands.

Formally, journalism studies included all three stages of higher education. The conception of the system could be defined as follows:

At Level 1, the bachelor programmes provided the general basis for social studies. Students having completed their BA were generally educated in social and partially humanitarian studies as well, but had poor professional journalistic skills. Thus, the first level of journalism education prepared reporters. At Level 2, the master programmes prepared students for future scientific research, but failed to teach them the practical use of the theoretical knowledge. The main mission of level 3 was to prepare the researchers and "teachers" (professors) in journalism field. It was a vague version of the soviet postgraduate studies. The rule of awarding an academic degree proved to be rather ambiguous. If in Soviet times the academic degree was awarded by "VAK" (Supreme Academic Commission) in Moscow and the system was centralized, now no organization had such a function, neither universities, nor the ministry of education, which led to the creation of a gap in this field. However, in

2005, several universities created transitional doctoral studies and the function to award the degree went to the universities.

It is rather difficult to set or design the goals and objectives of any educational level without consideration of contemporary media market demands. Accordingly, education should be appropriate for the following chain: market – goal – tools (curriculum, academic programme etc.). Market could be global, specific or regional. Regarding this issue, there were several approaches and points of view among specialists.

One group had the approach, according to which communication is the main function of media. By this theory media is considered as one of the main tools of the mass communication process. The second group gave media the function of manipulator, meaning that in the first-place journalism creates the public opinion, which is close to propaganda. The third group believed that journalism is a real mediator between three government branches and society – so-called “fourth government”. Another group identifies journalism as a completely independent entity, involved in social and political processes (Vekua, 2011).

1.3 Conclusion remarks

All of the above-mentioned approaches reflected themselves in the specific academic programmes or curricula of the period of the late 1990-s until 2005.

Judging by all above-mentioned, the demands and problems at the very beginning of the XXI century triggered different universities to introduce several models of journalism education. The first model is the one which combines all three levels of journalism education (BA, MA, and PhD.) and has a curriculum geared towards journalism disciplines. The second model is the one where journalism is included as a part of a wide field of studying (humanitarian or social). This model enables a student to have a BA in humanitarian or social studies with a specific major in any field and a minor - in journalism. This model is often used in the curriculums of those universities that are moving towards the Bologna process. The third model involves widely spread journalism programmes offering only the second level of education (Level 2) – Master programmes in journalism. This approach takes into consideration the nature of journalism profession itself, which is open to people with various educational backgrounds willing to change their previous profession (doctors, lawyers, etc.) or use it differently, indirectly. The fourth model is the rarest one, but an important one as well: the so-called author’s schools. They do not have the intention to issue any kind of diplomas confirming the qualification of their graduates. The key point in this model is that the educational institution is identified with a specific name – a person that has an important expertise and recognition in journalism or with a successful and famous media organization (Vekua, 2007).

It was mentioned above, that Department of Journalism at Tbilisi State University (TSU) should be identified as the first school of journalism in Georgia. Yet during the 1990-s up to 2005, many private institutions and

universities emerged, offering their students various models of journalism education. Here are some leading ones by that time:

- Ivane Javakhsishvili Tbilisi State University
- School of Journalism at Georgian University
- Tbilisi G. Robakidze University
- Technical University of Georgia
- Caucasus School of Journalism and Media Management

At first, most of these institutions offered BA and MA studies, but lately some Ph.D. programmes also started to develop.

2. Demand of the Bologna Process

2.1 Government policy

Our country is on its path towards democracy, despite many challenges it has to face. Therefore, developing and strengthening democratic institutions, improving their quality, respecting human rights and the rule of law is the stepping-stone for further relationship with the European Union.

It is important that the irreversible process of integration with the European Union requires the progressive, stable and democratic development of the country. Signing the Association Agreement (on 27 June 2014) means the involvement of Georgia in the free trade zone (DFA), which could open doors to the European Union market with 500 million consumers. (European Commission, 2014) European Union is offering citizens of Georgia in the near future a visa-free regime for travelling and studying, sharing of opinions and ideas, mobility of students among universities, which is of great importance. The Eastern Partnership programme assists Georgian education to meet European rules and standards. Furthermore, the EU Neighbourhood Policy sets ambitious objectives based on commitments to shared values and effective implementation of reforms in different fields of social life including educational as well (European Commission, 2013).

Since 1992 to 2005, the EU gave Georgia EUR 505 million in grants. Assistance involved a wide variety of projects and programmes. The most important among them used to be TACIS, EC Humanitarian Office (ECHO), European Initiative for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR), Rehabilitation and Macro-financial Assistance (MFA). EC assistance priorities for the 2007-2010 programmes were the following: considerations and requirements, which apply to the subsequent National Indicative Programmes established under this CSP. The successful activities of TEMPUS, ERASMUS and since 2016 - ERASMUS+ programmes are particularly notable (Glonti & Chitashvili, 2006).

An important step taken by the Georgian government was - the Development and Reforms Fund was established in 2004 by the initiative of ex-President Mikheil Saakashvili. The DRF aimed to support the reforms that Georgia had to implement to meet European standards and attract highly qualified professionals to public jobs. The Fund supported young professionals of Georgia to receive education in the leading universities all over the world. During the mentioned period, 384 students have received grants for studying at the best universities and got Master's Diplomas. This programme successfully has been continuing up to now.

One of the general and the most important challenges for Georgia is to increase the quality and international standards of Georgian higher education system, which could become a guarantee for successful and useful intercultural communications between Georgia and Europe. Georgian universities, thus, have a wide network of connections throughout Western educational system (Alasania, 2007).

This is, on the one hand, due to the priorities of Georgian foreign policy and on the other, the good and wise will of Western partners. Georgian educational policy adequately responded to the support and assistance offered by international partners. There is no doubt that only a widely-educated and knowledge-based society is ready to bring benefits to its country. European integration is a main concept for the development of the Georgian higher educational system. From this point of view, the Bologna Process gives an opportunity to share values in education policies of different national countries for international cooperation, to enable free mobility and mutual recognition. Georgia joined the Bologna Process on 19 May 2005 (Khetaguri, 2006).

An important initiative was offered by the Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia. Financing allocated for student studies has increased in 2013. This step made it possible for the students to take full BA courses (4 years) in 14 specialities at the state university, which are the following: agronomy, educational studies, power engineering, construction, mathematics, physics, chemistry, biology, economics, archaeology, history, Georgian philology, philosophy, and architecture. Financing will go to the students of those universities that are offering doctoral programmes for the above-mentioned directions. Negotiations are under way with other HE institutions.

The above-mentioned additional and mobilized resource, 96 700 million GEL in total, was used for the following activities in 2013. Here are some important points including just a few initiatives connected to higher education.

- a. State education grants for Bachelor students was increased (about 10 million GEL additionally). Provided increased funding and cooperation with institutions of higher education, a number of programmes were identified as free of tuition fee.
- b. Ph.D. programmes have been financed since 2014 (1 million GEL);
- c. Student financing increased in the framework of the Social Programme. This refers to BA as well as MA students (1.4 million GEL additionally);
- d. State scholarships for students have been doubled (1.75 million GEL additionally);

- e. In 2014, the number of specializations increased from 14 to 20 (Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia, 2016) (Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia, 2016).

Unfortunately, at this stage, media education is not included in the list of financed by the state studies despite the fact that free and unbiased media ensures the democracy of any country. But, generally, the fact that government has paid more attention to education, named it one of the state priorities and consequently raised finances in this field, changes the past attitude to higher education, which indirectly also affects the journalist studies. Furthermore, journalism is an open profession and can accept any student holding a bachelor degree from any faculty at the second and third stages of the studies, including the stately funded professions.

2.2 Accreditation standards

To start fundamental changes in academic fields requires a thorough and careful approach. Educational system, as well as any science, has been gaining experience for years involving different segments of the process. Educational reform, which was offered to the society by the government of Georgia, has not been accepted immediately and implicitly. At the beginning, the public was not widely informed. Education is a complicated and sensitive field, and accordingly, implementation of any reform cannot be done immediately and requires consideration. Anyway, a number of important institutional and administrative changes have been implemented:

- A new law was adopted which establishes and regulates the mission and structure of universities, confers financial and academic independence, determines partner and business cooperation among universities, including European educational institutions and declares real autonomy to universities. Before the adoption of the new law, autonomy had always been a formal status before and slowed down the natural and progressive development of educational institutions.
- Accreditation system and National Education Accreditation Centre were formed. They are developing even now and the development has two main directions: one for institutions and the other - for separate independent programmes. If before the reform about 220 institutions of higher education operated in such a little country as Georgia and the majority of them with obscure conditions and poor educational programmes were under a huge question, in 2010 the quantity decreased to 63. At the moment 72 institutions of higher education operate all over the country and competition is still very tough, which is directly reflected in the educational standards.
- Another important result is that universities were divided in three categories according to their submitted status: universities (all 3 levels of studies), teaching universities (BA and MA levels) and colleges (only Professional and BA Programmes). This system indicates exactly to the mission of a definite university. Accreditation enables an institution of higher education to approximate the level of

the study process to international and European educational standards (Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia, 2016).

- It is very important that the grant-based financing and student loan system was founded. That gives an opportunity to students to get involved with equal rights fully in the study process, and to take an active part in research or joint programs with international partner universities.
- Unified National Admission Exams were held. In the Soviet and early post-Soviet period the issue of enrolling in the institutions of higher education had been mostly a matter of corrupt deals. Only separate faculties of certain institutions of higher education proved adherence to their principles. However, these were exceptions. Adoption of Unified National Admission Exams has definitely finished all kinds of corruption in reality.
- The Georgian National Science Foundation offered research grants to academicians on the competitive basis, which was opposite to the Soviet period when scientific research was generally conducted at the research institutions, which were financed by the state budget and managed by the Academy of Sciences. It will not be correct to say that the Soviet Georgian academicians did not contribute to development of different scientific directions of the world. There are well-known Georgian famous scientific schools in mathematics, physiology, linguistics, oriental studies and others. However, the scale of financing and the scale of results have not been proportionally corresponding. Adoption of scientific grants system put scientists in the conditions of realistic competition, which gave new motivation to develop Georgian science not only independently, but also in cooperation with European scientific centers.
- A law on professional education was adopted. The higher vocational education link has also existed in the previous educational system, but it was not important or actual. The new system has completely changed its form and content. It gave people an opportunity to gain concrete knowledge and professional skills, which really could be useful in their everyday life.
- Georgia was elected as a member of BFUG (Bologna Follow-up Group) Board and involved in the work of London Communiqué Drafting Group. For any institution of higher education in Georgia to turn into an international educational organization means that its academic level satisfies international requirements and standards. On the other hand, it means that the general strategy development of Georgian educational system in direction to the Bologna Process is justified, purposeful and successful (Maisuradze, 2007).

2.3 Evaluation of the recent years (2005-2016)

In the process of educational system development, it is very important to study and share international analogies and experience. For example, the Scandinavian model of journalist studies is very interesting. According to the data of 2014 (Popova, 2016), different programmes at 70 universities in Scandinavian countries train future journalists. Major universities have bachelor and master programmes, for example: in “Media communications” at Helsinki University or “Mass communications” at Tampere University. The teaching process involves the use of the major/minor approach, the studies of audio and visual texts and the studies of media technologies. They also focus on studying foreign languages. This is perhaps one of the most important things for a small country like Georgia.

One of the aspects of studying journalism also causes a special interest. In Scandinavian countries, many media companies establish their own media schools. For example, in northern Europe, leading media concern is Sanoma WSOY, which has its own journalism school. Finnish public broadcaster Yleisradio has its own radio and television institute. We can describe many interesting examples, but our aim is to study the best one, adapt and implement it in our country. The approaches of many different European journalistic schools truly represent a good experience for Georgia to create media education programmes and it is possible to share several of them.

The overview of the accredited programmes of the last period gives a particular picture of the dynamics of the development process and enables to deliver specific conclusions.

In Georgia, journalism and mass communications educational programmes at three levels all together are in 16 universities (out of all accredited 74 universities). To illustrate the evolution, we can compare 2005 with 2016.

In 2005 functioned: 2 professional, 15 BA, 13 MA and 2 Ph.D. programmes.

According to the data of 2016, there are: 1 professional, 16 BA, 11 MA and 2 Ph.D. programmes.

Besides, two television companies, “Maestro” and “Imedi” and one radio company “Tavisufleba” (“Liberty”) opened their own special media schools.

The quantity of educational programmes at universities has decreased, but the quality got higher, they became more interesting and attractive for students. Analysing the curriculum of the journalism programmes enables us to single out several positive characteristics:

- Partnership between universities and media organizations developed.
- Media – the potential employers, professional centres, associations, organizations, the journalists’ union, newspapers, magazines, radio and television companies, news agencies, etc., were involved in the process of creating educational programmes as well as during their launching periods.
- Common programmes started to function not only on a national, but also on an international level (including separate components or/and joint programmes).

- Journalism studies now include a number of additional related specialities: media manager, advertising and social communication specialist, media technologies manager, specialist of audio and visual arts;
- Practical study at a university became a more important part of curriculums - students' studios were equipped with appropriate technologies; students can make their programmes through the inner network, student programmes broadcast live on several frequencies. Students' newspapers and magazines are printed and online-journalist product is being created.
- The majority of curriculums no longer involve too much philology and general subjects. Each event, especially during its development, has its positive and negative aspects. The same is happening with the development and refinement of the journalism education. Several problems have to be dealt with, including:
 - Students after graduation from high schools do not have adequate education for continuing studies at universities;
 - The only "Mass communication" doctoral programme at the TSU should be more attractive and act as a role model for other universities, it is still insignificant or less notable;
 - Some universities provide insufficient and inadequate information about their programmes on their web sites (description / plan / academic staff / database) and there are cases of difficult or complicated navigation;
 - Research components have to be identified more precisely and clearly; modules / study blocks have to be separated;
 - BA and MA programmes should focus more on teaching of photojournalism and documentaries, very often the study of new media is still very poor.

2. 4 Innovative teaching methodologies

Sharing the Bologna Process standards influenced nearly all components of the study process, including teaching methodology. The previous tendency was changed by a new basic principle: innovative methodology focuses on student-oriented teaching.

Teaching at universities earlier only aimed to give knowledge to students and paid less attention to developing those competences, which helped students use theoretical knowledge in practice. Today most of educational programmes of journalism and mass communication use a variety of modern methods relevant to different study courses. These processes reflected themselves on the quality of education and study results. Every student expects from university professional knowledge, various and interesting teaching methods, individual approaches and attention, modern and adequate environment. Most of journalism faculties refused to go on with

older, non-dynamic and monotonous forms, characterized by giving unnecessary information, boring material, lack of illustrations and passive students.

In order to provide journalism education for their students, educational programmes use not only traditional methods (induction, deduction, analysis, synthesis), but also interactive teaching methods: problem-based learning (PBL), lecture-visualizations, lecture–press-conference, a guest in the auditorium, dialogue-discussion, brainstorming, case study, spider, topic narrowing and choosing, mind mapping, business, role and situation games. The practical component is of great importance in journalist and mass communication educational programmes. The balance of theoretical and practical courses is effective. Many universities produce student newspapers, magazines, prepare radio, TV and multimedia products and periodically broadcast on radio and TV frequencies. The practical work in the educational process and different kinds of internships (based on official memoranda with media organizations) help students use the theoretical knowledge in practice from the very beginning of their studies, which, in turn, helps to develop professional skills of a future journalist.

Student-oriented teaching principle insists on defining how well the student has acquired the subject. The adequacy of knowledge is measured with a complex assessment system. The assessment shows if the students' results are compatible with the study aims, provides feedback on how effective the method applied by the lecturer is. Journalism and mass communication assessment standards are defined by the National Framework of Qualifications (National Center for Educational Quality Enhancement, 2014).

These are the general definitions. Educational programme in journalism aims to prepare a competitive and competent professional, with modern education and able to meet aims in his/her field of work.

The aims and objectives of journalism and mass communication educational programmes have changed according to 2 parameters:

1. Depending on higher education level;
2. Particular aim of educational programme reflects itself on the curriculum. Accordingly, each particular programme establishes branch-specific competences, reaching which is possible in separate modules of the curriculum and reflects itself directly on the competence map.

Checking the professional skills of the future journalists, professors use various modern methods according to the criteria which are prepared in advance. They use not only classical - test, essay, presentations (individual or group-work), but also alternative/ authentic / performance forms specific to journalism - preparation of newspaper articles, recording interviews, preparing bulletins and programmes for airing, preparing study newspapers and magazines, etc. Assessment has to be reliable, valid, unbiased, clear and systematic (Guram Tavartkiladze Sastsavlo Universiteti, 2017).

2. 5 Study conditions

Mobility and recognition of credit transfer system give a great opportunity to students to make an adequate right choice and change a field of study, faculty, university, or even become an exchange student abroad. Grant-based financing and student loan system brought a strong motivation for students to study. It is not only various foundations that attract students to Europe or USA. Inside the country, government educational policy, on the one hand, and universities that have to be competitive, on the other, enable the student to acquire the profession of a journalist. The programmes use the Bologna Magna Charta and Lisbon Convention (Bologna Process, 2001; Lisbon Recognition Convention, 1997; Magna Charta, 1998) as their guidelines, which help to develop a journalist who has contemporary, ever-updating knowledge. Thus, while creating contemporary programmes, their internationalization takes into consideration the following aspects: gathering information, studying and sharing curricula of modern universities, using study materials and inclusion of students in international activities.

All active journalism programmes at Georgian universities at present at BA or MA levels offer students many innovations in academic terms. Two BA programmes involve a creative authorship studios at Grigol Robakidze University & Guram Tavartkiladze Teaching University; practically, every university has radio and TV studios, some of them broadcast live (GIPA, DAUG), students issue study print products, computer classes entirely meet student requirements at the professional level. Besides, all programmes have negotiated memoranda with media organizations, which ensure to provide professional internships for students.

As usual, (otherwise, no programme is accredited), the educational process is provided with syllabuses, compulsory and additional materials, additional information resources and internet links, teaching-method recommendations, multimedia teaching technologies. Library resource (printed and electronic) is compatible with educational programmes, and in most universities, they are connected into the interior and constant network (Wi-Fi). The majority of students are also involved in various professional activities: student conferences, competitions (e.g. international student TV festival "Centaur", student national competition in advertising, international students' festival of visual media "ZOOM"), etc. Student study and professional organization (e.g. club "Reporter") hold research press conferences, host master-classes and public lectures. Teaching, professional training and various activities help students become professional journalists.

2. 6 Digital technology in the teaching process

One of the most important factors of developing contemporary education is to implement information technologies in each component of learning and teaching of educational process.

It is important that information technologies are being taught not as a subject, but integrated in various teaching courses according to relevance and necessity. Using IT in educational process helps to develop new

teaching and learning cultures, development of the skill of using new technologies, communication between students and professors, group work, creation of an electronic library and its usage, simplification of teaching process management, economizing on time and coming over distance in time.

Electronic platforms, like MOODLE, LAMS, SCORM, DAQ, Lab VIEW, ELVIS II, etc. are actively used in modern education of Georgian universities. Using modern technologies helps to improve the quality of education, electronic laboratories and assists in carrying out experiments. Teaching and methodical material is more accessible and placing student media product in virtual space increases motivation of professional growth in every student (Mshvidobadze, 2014).

2. 7 Working conditions, perspective and academic freedom

Different national and international foundations or other organizations support journalism educators to organize or participate in professional trainings inside and outside the universities to share experience, set up professional relationships, create new joint teaching or research projects and implement new teaching methods.

Activation of the educational programmes is due to the successful careers of the academic staff of the journalism programme at TSU, which is reflected on courses, syllabuses, materials necessary to conduct the educational process, teaching and methodical guidelines. It is notable, that recently more Georgian guidelines or course books have been written by Georgian authors, but "Journalism" (Darsavelidze, Vekua & Rouet, 2013), published in 2013, is particularly worth mentioning, written by 13 professors of 9 universities, including one French professor from Reims University. Professors participate more and more actively in international and local grant projects, regional and international conferences, publish articles in national and international journals. Knowledge, modern thinking, inclusion in international scientific processes, professional and intellectual contacts - all ensure academic freedom of each professor and enables him/her to conduct the course as he/she thinks appropriate: choose topics, study materials, teaching and assessment methods. Only those who have liberty of thinking can train unbiased and highly qualified professionals.

2. 8 Chain: student-university-employees

University is a unique place, which has to take into consideration the requirements of two markets. On the one hand, it needs to satisfy the needs of the future students and, on the other – to satisfy the demands of media market. The combination and harmonization of these demands with goals of an educational programme creates the basis of success of a current curriculum. The statistics of the last several years illustrates that journalism programmes maintain a high rating among school graduates. Constant inclusion of potential employers in the process of preparing and launching a particular programme ensures that the demands of the media market are taken into consideration sufficiently well in the study programmes. A lot of universities contact different media

organizations applying to them with various questionnaires, organizing round tables and thematic meetings; involving them into activities of career and graduate centers, etc.

At the end of spring semester of academic year 2015/2016 the researcher prepared a questionnaire to research and find out very important issue: if the content of educational programmes and teaching methodology are adequate to modern challenges of preparing high quality and professional standard journalists. 14 leading media companies of Georgia including up to 100 respondents participated in the research.

Media organizations and the number of respondents answering the questionnaire.

#	Type of organization	Name of organization	Number of respondents
1	News Agency	"Reporter.ge"	3
2	News Agency	"Inter Press News"	3
3	Magazine	"Arsenali"	10
4	Magazine	"Chveni mwerloba"	5
5	Magazine	"Liberali"	9
6	T/V Company	"Ertulovneba"	10
7	T/V Company	"Rustavi-2"	10
8	T/V Company	"Rtialei"	4
9	Public Broadcaster – TV Channel 1	GPB-TV channel 1	10
0	Public Broadcaster – TV Channel 2	GPB-TV channel 2	5
1	Public Broadcaster – Radio Channel 1	GPB-Radio channel 1	2
2	Radio	Radio FM 107.9	10
3	Newspaper	"Qartuli sitkva"	5
1	Independent TV Studio	"Monitori"	3

4			
1	University	GTTU, PR Department	2
5			
	Total: 15		91

The first target group – top-managers, producers, editors and journalists - answered the following questions:

1. Should a graduate be able to analyse a text and draw appropriate conclusions?
2. Should a graduate be able to analyse verbal and visual information and draw appropriate conclusions?
3. Should a graduate know the standard and grammatical norms of their native language (Georgian)?
4. Should a graduate know any foreign language?
5. Should a graduate be able to speak fluently when they speak live on TV or radio?
6. Should a graduate be able to communicate easily with respondents, colleagues, employers, etc.?
7. Should a graduate know media-regulating laws?
8. Should a graduate guard the principles of professional ethics?
9. Should a graduate guard the employer's ethic code?
10. Should a graduate control him/herself in critical situations?
11. Should a graduate be able to:
 - Focus on the most acute problem;
 - Find a way to get information;
 - Develop the main idea concerning the topic;
 - Choose well the target audience;
 - Define correctly the aims and goals of practical work;
 - Draw an action plan, identify priorities and define their sequence;
 - Find and work on necessary sources of information;
 - Find appropriate illustrations;
 - Correctly identify the respondent;

- Prepare and conduct an interview;
- Montage and prepare the material for airing (in case of electronic media);
- Fulfil their task in time.

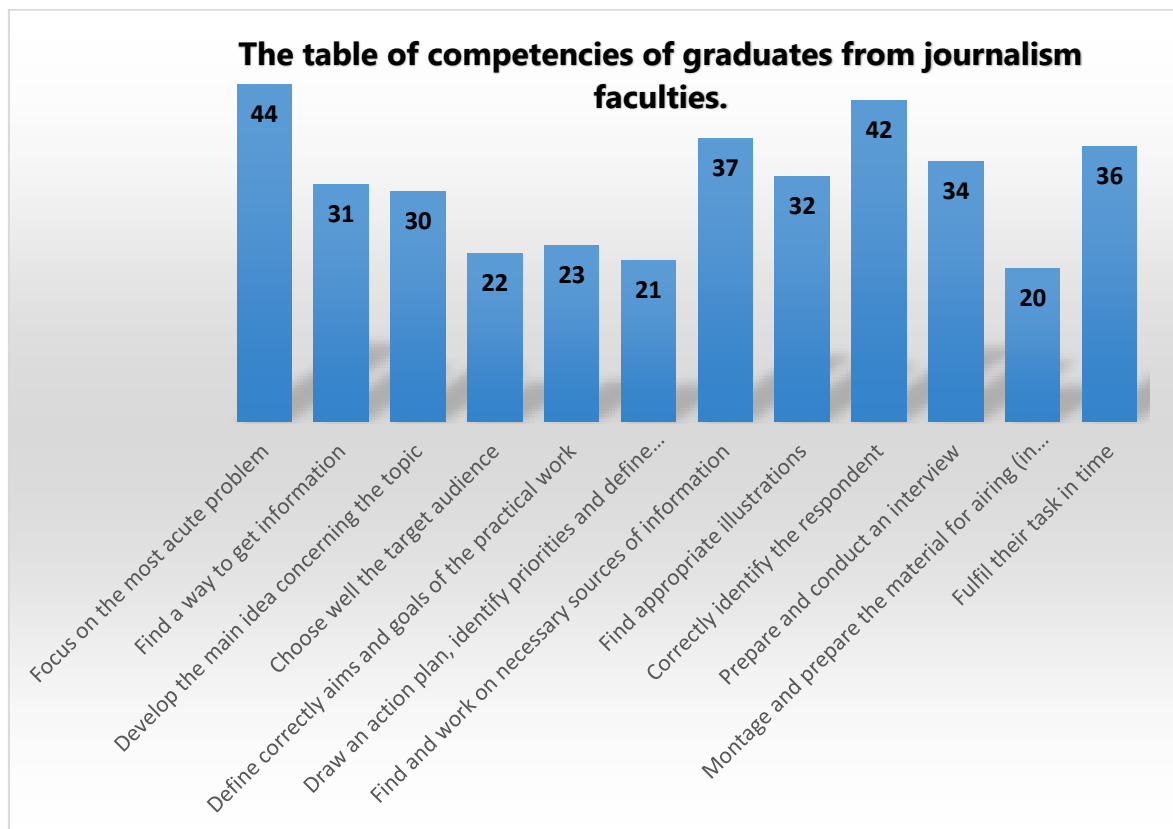
12. Please express your view - what other skills or competences are vital for the graduate?

13. What in your opinion is the weakness of the graduate?

14. When employing a graduate, which position you usually offer them:

- a journalist/a reporter
- an editor (not editor-in-chief)
- a low-status media manager
- press-speaker
- public relations specialist

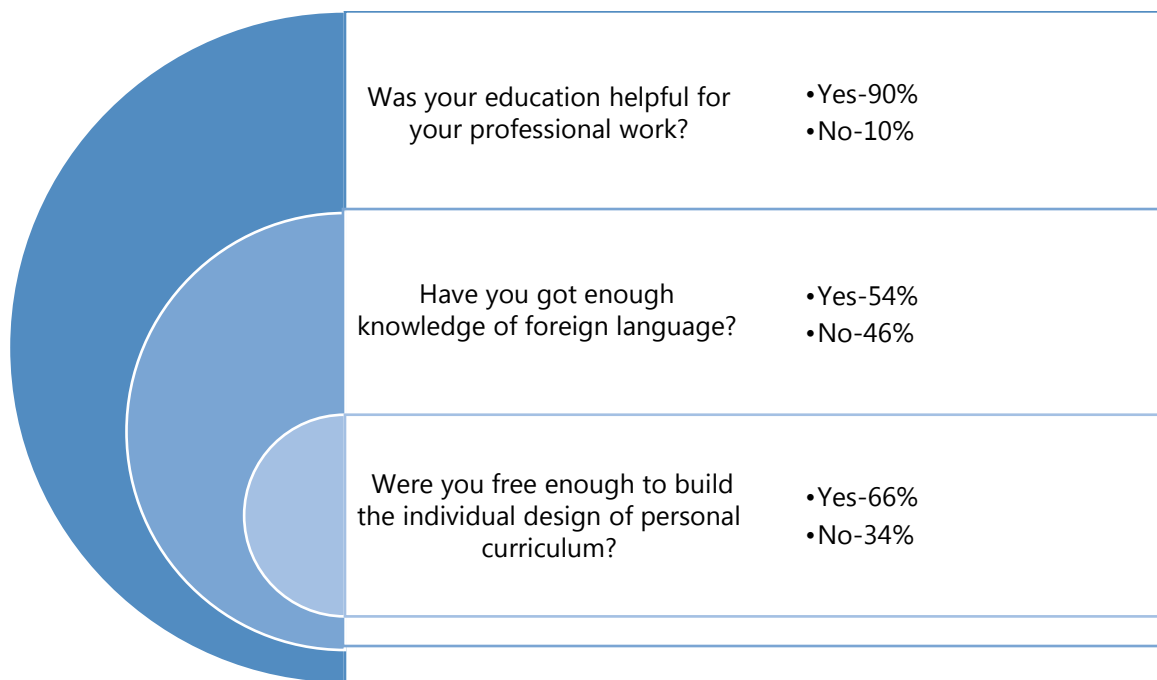
The table of competencies of graduates from journalism faculties.



All categories of respondents' answers to the overall trend is clear:

- they note the low level of basic education of graduates, which, in their view, is a serious problem not only for higher education, but it should be solved starting from school;
- therefore, as a result, graduates' skills of critical and analytical thinking is quite low;
- the majority has difficulties in the using literary Georgian language;
- graduates often do not know deeply the principles of media regulation and self-regulation or cannot effectively and correctly use them in practice;
- not all of them can use multimedia capabilities and proper technologies.

The second target group (up to 60 alumni) gave answers about their university journalism education in the following questions:



The second question needs some comments. It is well known that the Georgian language (the member of a family of Kartvelian languages) is one of 14 having its own writing system, the Georgian script. The first Georgian literary monument is dated by the fifth century. Georgian writing system and alphabet are absolutely unique. But unfortunately, the using area of Georgian is very small and local. The number of people speaking Georgian is approximately not more than five millions all over the world. To communicate with the rest of the world a

Georgian citizen should know at least one foreign language. For this and many other reasons students (especially studying in communications field) in Georgia as well as, for example, in Finland, have the strong will to study European languages, mainly English. That is why the question of studying foreign languages in any kind of educational programs is very actual.

Interviews and other above-mentioned activities with potential employers enable constant updating and modernization of journalism and mass communications educational programmes. As the country develops and progresses, media is obliged to adequately and timely respond to all changes in public life by qualifying professionals at universities.

Critical assessment is a necessary condition to assess correctly and realistically each detail of the educational process - what the student studies, who teaches them and how. A feedback system is one of the most important methods to assess if the declared purposes of the program are compatible with the real results. At the same time, a feedback system means that lecturers and students can control one another. Mass communication and journalism programmes at universities use various previously experienced methods to define the weaknesses and strengths not only of the entire programme, but also its separate components.

To analyse ideas and positions of students, as a head of Journalism Department, the researcher drew up a questionnaire of anonymous feedback interviews at a journalist BA programme at GTTU. The interim results were presented at the international conference "Path to the European Integration" which took place in Tbilisi, in 2014 (Vekua, 2014).

1. Are the aims of a lecture course clear and vivid?
2. Is the lecturer prepared for the studies and does he/she deliver interesting and lively lectures?
3. Does the lecturer use examples and illustrations while discussing any subject?
4. Does the lecturer answer the questions from the audience exhaustively and clearly?
5. How would you assess the material offered by the lecturer?
6. Is the lecturer sufficiently fair while assessing the students?
7. Does the lecturer exactly follow the syllabus plan?
8. Do the obligatory and additional materials comply with the contents of the delivered lectures?
9. Does the lecturer define how to use the theoretical knowledge from the lectures in practice?
10. Is the lecturer ready to consult the student outside the lecture room?
11. Does the lecturer use any additional teaching resource (projector, internet, etc.)?
12. Does the lecturer speak clearly and audibly? Does he/she speak too fast or too slow?

13. Are you happy with library service?
14. Are you happy with the study conditions?
15. What would you suggest that the lecturer could improve studying quality?

The list of questions might continue or change according to needs, but the analysis of the results are significant and must be considered. These help to improve the quality of education. The acquisition of knowledge is hardly enough for the personal development of a student and it is essential to assess every stage they reach. For example, GTTU offers a student to use an interesting and informative method for self-assessment - PDP (Personal Development Plan) (Guram Tavartkiladze Sastsavlo Universiteti, 2017). This method helps a student to develop skills of adequate self-assessment, self-criticism and ability to control the educational process. All the ideas, positions, corrections, needs, changes and etc. reflect in each university's annually questionnaires for analysing the quality of the educational process. Later conclusions, recommendations and send a self-assessment document is send to the Georgian Ministry of Education, and the National Centre for Education Quality Enhancement in particular, which helps the perfection of educational process.

2. 9 Research methodology

All the following research methods were used to support the main goal of the paper:

Method of historical analysis gave an opportunity: to overview journalism education in Georgia starting from its very beginning, to highlight the main characteristics, basics and principles of soviet and early post-soviet system of studying at universities at journalism faculties.

Method of critical discourse analyse was necessary: for identifying Government general policy towards higher education; to analyse the positive and negative aspects of accreditation standards; for building a conceptual frame of characteristics of main European and American journalism educational models.

Method of comparative analysis was used to define and compare the main aims, objectives, values, efforts, contents and teaching methodology of different academic programs in journalism at all three levels of higher education in Georgia and some of European and US journalism schools. This research method was also used to compare Georgian media market demands with the willingness of media schools to respond adequately to its main challenges.

Method of documentary analysis was necessary to define the main directions and state priorities of Georgian educational policy to integrate in all kinds of European educational structures such as Bologna process and others.

Quantitative and questioning research methods were used: to figure out concrete expectations of media organizations from university graduates; specify suppositions and desires of students to get full-fledged journalism education.

2. 10 Conclusion statements and recommendations

The research findings could be formulated in several definite statements and specific recommendations.

Journalism education in Georgia has its own roots and is affiliated with the first University in the Caucasus region – Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University which was founded 100 years ago. Journalism as an academic independent specialization in Georgia is relatively young - about 50 years old. During the soviet period journalism education was strongly clamped in ideological frame. But after the collapse of the Soviet Union and declaration of independence of Georgia journalism education system on the whole had been approaching international standards of higher education. Journalism studies in Georgia started to develop dynamically and quickly, mainly after the integration in the Bologna process in 2005.

The research of system of journalism education in Georgia obviously revealed the desire of media schools to make closer curriculum designs and general main goals to modern media market demands.

It should be underlined that Georgian media education nowadays is student-oriented. Based on this, the process of modernization, developing of academic, other human, material and technical resources is still going on.

The universities' and media organizations' potential employees, partnership relations should be strengthened. This process will be useful to make necessary adjustments in journalism education to make it more oriented on the requirements of media market.

As result of the research of journalism curriculums of the majority of media schools two recommendations could be proposed: first – to strengthen and increase the segment of new and digital media studying; the second – to reach a right balance between theoretical and practical disciplines, which will allow to spend more time for the acquisition of professional skills.

Another recommendation is the following – to give students more opportunities and academic freedom to build independently individual curriculum design.

One more recommendation could be as follows: interdisciplinary education should be encouraged in order to concentrate the additional knowledge of students on choice to study a definite field which will help a future journalist to cover social, political or cultural life competently.

Afterword

No doubt that the process of developing HE is entirely positive and definitely had several main goals: to prepare academic programmes and research projects, to create necessary conditions for learning, teaching and research, to guard the rights and academic freedom of professors and students, to help the further employment of students, to help lifelong learning (LLL), to effectively use and develop material resources. Georgian education aims to constantly analyse and develop the quality, contents and methodology of the educational process and to adequately respond to contemporary challenges. Universities, different kinds of media schools and all relevant educational programmes serve one purpose – to prepare qualified journalists with high level professional standards ready to take the changing demands of the young democracy state, whole society and media market as well.

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