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## PROSPECTS OF CHANGE IN UKRAINIAN JOURNALISM EDUCATION ACCORDING TO STUDENT-CENTERED APPROACH

**Research methodology.** The research of the quality of journalism education is based on the case of Journalism Department of Zaporizhzhia National University. Used methods are PESTLE and SWOT analyses as well as students surveys.

**Results.** This paper discusses the prospects for Ukrainian journalism education undergoing complex changes within the framework of the EU project Erasmus+ KA2 DESTIN. According to European tradition, a student-centered approach is a key component of the quality of higher education. Proposed that this approach will be taken into consideration while modernizing Bachelor's and Master's Programs in Journalism by higher educational establishments of Ukraine. Case of Journalism Department of Zaporizhzhia National University shows that student-journalists are mainly satisfied with the quality of their studying, however mentioned some aspects for improvements: enhancing quantity of practice-oriented courses, getting more independence and creativity in preparation for classes, updating equipment of classrooms and laboratories, getting rid of duplicating content and aligning it between various disciplines. The article analyses the key factors, which influence the process of reforming higher education in Journalism: political, economic, social, technological, legal, and environmental issues of Ukraine (demographic crisis, economy fall-down and poverty, overall crisis of the media market). Noted that the opportunities and advantages of Ukrainian higher educational establishments relate to their potential ability to adapt the European experience to develop their capacity.

**Novelty.** Within the article, there were characterized factors of environment, inner strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threads, which influence the quality of studying journalism in Zaporizhzhia National University, systematized opinions of students on improvements of Journalism programs in ZNU.

**The practical significance.** The research results can be used while modernizing Bachelor's and Master's Programs in Journalism by higher educational establishments of Ukraine

**Key words:** Ukraine, journalism education, Erasmus+ DESTIN, student-centred approach, Zaporizhzhia National University, reform.

### I. Introduction

Recently, Journalism education in Ukraine has been experiencing drastic changes as Journalism itself. The booming development of communicational technologies and gadgetization transformed the consumption of news in the modern society. Along with television, social media are becoming the primary source of everyday information for people from many countries on the global scale. That is the reason why whole journalism segments, like print press, are losing their positions on media markets.

Such realities force journalism schools to react accordingly. The challenges for journalism education are more visible now, when media landscape and journalism jobs are changing speedily. Media analysts and scholars, who conduct research in this direction, are trying to figure out which reforms should be introduced in order to keep journalism higher education (HE) up to date. Some of the major topics discussed are balance between theoretical and practical components of studying, role of alumni and employers in forming modern curricula of journalism schools, assessing students and recent graduates [2; 15; 18].

**The aim of the article** is to overview the prospects for change in journalism education in the higher educational establishments of Ukraine. To achieve this goal, the **following tasks** should be performed:

- to consider the existing situation around journalism education in Ukraine;
- to analyse the current state of Bachelor's and Master's programs in Journalism based on case of Journalism Department of Zaporizhzhia National University;
- to discuss a student-centred approach to journalism education that Ukraine should perceive and adopt.

The urgent need for reform brought under the umbrella of Erasmus+ Programme twenty partners that represent best Ukrainian and European journalism schools and professional associations. To-

gether they launched a three-year-long project DESTIN (project title: «Journalism Education for Democracy in Ukraine: Developing Standards, Integrity and Professionalism») in 2018 [7]. As a result of the project ten Ukrainian journalism schools are expected to modernize their Bachelor's and Master's programs and develop 'National Guidelines Statement' for other Ukrainian Journalism faculties to use in their work.

## II. Problem Statement and Methods

Professionals and scholars in the field have been studying the quality of journalism education for years. In particular, NGO Detector Media, an organization for media education and media criticism, published reports of these studies [1; 3]. In 2018, the project surveyed representatives of mass media (86 media outlets of national, regional and local levels from all regions of Ukraine, except the Crimea) and students and graduates of the faculties of journalism of different Ukrainian universities. Two-hundred and fifty anonymous responses from students of 35 universities were received.

Overall results have shown that journalism education in Ukraine is faces many challenges. Main issues are the following:

- students and graduates are dissatisfied with the way journalism education prepares them for work in the media (outdated courses and irrelevant knowledge / skills);
- there are not enough practical courses and internships, there are not enough teachers with experience in journalism;
- the requirements of the Ministry of Education and Science are often seen as obstacles (for example, the requirement for the employment of teachers with post-graduate degrees limits departments from employing practicing instructors; although at the same time the positive point is that teachers are getting more practicing experience, improve their qualifications, in particular abroad, and practitioners are invited as guest trainers);
- low national and international academic mobility of students;
- issue of an getting individual schedule for students, who want to work part-time in the media ;
- outdated equipment of classrooms and media laboratories ;
- employers are sceptical about the quality of professional education (the majority of surveyed editors are dissatisfied with the quality of student training – only 22% would rather hire a person with a journalist's degree);
- one third do not plan to work in the media (only 64% of the interviewed students see themselves as journalists [1].

Obviously, these results show that students' satisfaction with quality of education should be a target for journalism education reforming. Student-centred approach is a key concept of European educational system that will be adopted and perceived in ZNU. Zaporizhzhia National University, as a part of DESTIN team, audited its Journalism Bachelor's and Master's programs as well as surveyed students. The self-evaluation of the programs involved PESTLE and SWOT analyses.

Originally developed in the late 1960s for use in a business context, PESTLE analysis is a method used for analysing the current state of, and possible futures, for complex systems from six different perspectives [14]. As Zalengera et al. mention, unlike the SWOT analysis, which identifies issues in generalised categories of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats [5; 22], the PESTLE analysis classifies issues as political (P), economic (E), social (S), technological (T), legal (L), and environmental (E).

## III. Results

Although Ukrainian society and education are being permanently reformed, there are numerous problems and obstacles still to overcome. The framework that allows discussing these general factors best is the *PESTLE-analysis* as it provides the strategic planning and involves environment analysis [16].

*Political Factors.* (1) Anti-corruption movement and lustration of education administrators and faculty accused in corruption are still in action; however, there is weak political will to eliminate corruptive practices: scandals around elections to National Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education [9; 10], intruding into admission processes etc. [21]. (2) Political pressure to continue scientific misconduct and lobbying own interests: case of plagiarism and pseudoscience around doctoral dissertation by Kateryna Kyrylenko, Ukraine's Vice-Prime Minister Vyacheslav Kyrylenko's wife [17].

*Economic Factors.* (1) GDP fell by 12 percent, and the currency (hryvnia) dropped approximately 70 percent against the U.S. dollar over the past two years. (2) Nearly all Ukrainian citizens experienced reduced wages and lower consumption because of the current economic crisis [13].

*Social Factors.* (1) The ongoing war with terrorist supported by Russia at Eastern Ukraine (since 2014). Despite the prolonged political crisis and humanitarian disaster, the war revealed a wave of patriotism and volunteer movement to support citizens within the country. It also brought understanding of need for change, especially in higher education to strengthen youth. (2) High fear and disappointment in reforms and social strategy of the Government, especially regarding

people displaced from conflict zone of Donbass and Crimea. (3) Long history of corruptive practices in any social institution, including HE: bribes for admission, grades, promotion, dissertation defending etc. [11].

*Technological Factors.* (1) The spread of the internet and electronic technologies has a positive influence on HE. (2) The anti-plagiarism e-based academic database to combat plagiarism has been launched in Ukraine [4].

*Legal Factors.* Implementation of Law «On Higher Education» (2014) and Law «On Education» (2017), which were developed and lobbied by students and educators themselves, are supposed to bring decentralization to universities. Such reforms as new PhD training system [12; 20] or university autonomy were called «revolutionary» and «unique» [19, p. 66]. However, years of directed leadership from the Ministry of Education and Science forced the university administrators to develop a habit to expect that the Ministry of Education and Science must approve of every decision. Universities still need to develop the skills and learn how to make their own decisions and take responsibility.

*Environmental Factors.* Ukraine's large cities like Zaporizhzhia are highly polluted by metallurgical and chemical industries [6]. This issue has a very negative influence on citizens' health and well-being. As a result, many people try to move to other less polluted regions regardless of education opportunities or jobs available. Thus, Ukrainian universities struggle to enrol the best possible number of student and save academic staff and faculty.

Obviously all these factors affect journalism education dramatically. To assess the challenges and opportunities, strengths and weaknesses Journalism Department of Zaporizhzhia National University faces in the situation we used the method of the *SWOT analysis* and presented its results in the table 1.

Using techniques of matching the strengths to opportunities and converting weaknesses and threats into strengths or opportunities within this SWOT matrix several strategies may be applied to change Ukraine's journalism education. Firstly, the available resources and funding should be used: to broaden the cooperation with European counties by participating in different projects like Erasmus+ DESTIN aimed at modernizing universities' research capacity and training faculty for new methodological approaches. Secondly, we need to work on promoting interdisciplinary cooperation and building institutional integral ethical culture.

Table 1

**SWOT Analysis matrix of Journalism Bachelor's (BA) and Master's (MA) Programs of Zaporizhzhia National University**

<i>Strengths</i>	<i>Weaknesses</i>
1) students have internships throughout the study period at the both programs (7 internships for BA, and 2 for MA); 2) students can choose a specialization during studying: print, radio, TV or internet journalism; 3) there are own university media for student internships: newspaper, online radio station, TV studio and website; 4) students develop their professional portfolio during their Bachelor's studies; 5) majority of courses are practice-oriented.	1) bureaucracy of educational sphere; 2) lack of practical experience by a number of teachers (up to 40%); 3) inconsistency and/or overlapping of content of disciplines, weak interdisciplinary ties; 4) lack of regular constructive student assessment and feedback from them; 5) lack of disciplines of logic-mathematical cycle (research methods and statistics, logic etc.); 6) outdated equipment used in the educational process
<i>Opportunities</i>	<i>Threats</i>
1) open access to international grant programs and contests; 2) possibility of international cooperation; 3) academic mobility for students and teachers within Ukraine and abroad; 4) consulting with Alumni association; 5) use of the latest technologies for gaining educational resources, training and exchange of experience (webinars, open online courses, databases, etc.)	1) demographic crisis (depopulation, fertility reduction); 2) the war in Eastern Ukraine; 3) lack of diversity and strong political / economic bias in regional media; 4) growth of poverty in the region; 5) aggressive educational policy of neighbouring countries (Poland, Hungary, Bulgaria etc.), aimed at the outflow of school graduates from Ukraine; 6) weak motivation of students to study

To assess the *students' opinions* on the current state of journalism education in ZNU and find possible ways to improve it, we conducted a pilot survey using the DESTIN toolkit. Twenty-nine students participated in the survey (among them were 18 undergraduates and 11 Master's students; 4 males and 25 females; all citizens of Ukraine).

The survey results are summarized in table 2. The students were asked to assess the balance between theoretical and practical studying, the ways the education develops their creative, innovative, entrepreneurial and leadership skills, and the evaluation systems used. They were also asked to assess how they understand criteria teachers use for evaluating them, and provide overall feedback about their studying. The results show that the students are mainly satisfied with the quality of program. However, they mentioned some aspects for improvements.

Results of surveyed students of Journalism Department of ZNU, N = 29	
Master students (N = 11)	Bachelor students (N = 18)
<b>Part 1. Curriculum</b>	
<i>Opinion on current proportion of the programme: theoretical vs. practical:</i>	
91% – theory; 9% – practice	50% – theory; 27% – 50/50; 22% – practice
<i>Opinion on ideal proportion of the programme: theoretical vs. practical:</i>	
55% – want more practice; 45% – 50/50	44% – more practice; 66% – 50/50;
<i>Programme provides with opportunities to develop individual interests and talents:</i>	
81% – yes; 19% – no/ don't know	77% – yes; 23% – no/ don't know
<i>Programme provides with opportunities to be creative and innovative:</i>	
72% – yes; 28% – no/ don't know	72% – yes; 28% – no/ don't know
<i>Programme provides knowledge needed to be self-employed or entrepreneurial:</i>	
18% – yes; 82% – no/ don't know	44% – yes; 66% – no/ don't know
<i>Programme gives plenty of opportunity to develop leadership and teamwork skills:</i>	
91% – yes; 9% – no/ don't know	83% – yes; 17% – no/ don't know
<i>Resources (books, equipment, facilities etc.) are generally: from 1 to 5 scale:</i>	
For both Master's and Bachelor's students average mark was «Okay» (mark «3»)	
<b>Part 2. Assessment</b>	
<i>Were the student opinions counted while forming the assessment systems?</i>	
24% – yes, counted; 65% – yes, some opinions counted; 11% – never / don't know	
<i>Marking and assessment system is generally: Fair / Unfair / A Mixture of both:</i>	
55% – fair; 45% – a mixture of fair and unfair	
<i>The criteria used in marking/grading work have been clear or unclear:</i>	
58% – clear; 31% – not clear; 19% – don't know	
<i>As well as marks or grades, do students receive tutor's feedback on assessments?</i>	
45% – always; 52% – sometimes / rarely clear; 3% – never	
<b>Part 3. Summary of views</b>	
<i>Overall satisfaction with experience of studying on the programme:</i>	
Quite Satisfied (3.8 out of 4)	Quite Satisfied (3.38 out of 4)

When asked the question «What changes to the programme you are currently studying or have studied would you most like to see introduced?», the majority of students expressed the following ideas. Master students want to have practical courses, modern up-to-date literature and develop skills in working with modern computer software. Bachelor students would like to have:

- more practical seminars and courses, less theoretical ones,
- more time for research and individual work and less for class work,
- more focus on such skills as emotional intelligence and critical thinking as well as leadership qualities;
- no duplicating courses and those they studied at schools;
- more creative projects to reveal student talents in the future profession.

### Conclusion

The essential goal for any modern university is to create the environment where students, faculty and researchers could experience academic freedom. Stimulated by the reform, Ukrainian universities have made urgent transformation, introduce changes and improve their journalism academic programs in order to be understandable and recognized internationally. The reform is to solve the issues that the researchers identified as «clumsy or ambiguous ministerial internationalization policy directions» [8, p. 25], which are characterised by reduced motivation, growing pressure on resources by universities administrations, and weak academic programs management. On the contrary, the academic staff should work closely on cooperation with students and involve them into the quality assurance processes in order to make sure they meet students' needs and interests. Student-centred approach will be one of the main changes introduced to revised Journalism programs as a result of Erasmus+ DESTIN project in Ukraine.

*Perspectives of further research.* Thus, the ultimate goal of Ukraine's HE is to make students, faculty and scholars able to study, teach, and conduct their research freely, responsibly, and on competitive basis with all possible support from the universities by getting proper funding, learning, reviewing, and developing opportunities from local, national and international initiatives.

Further research should be concentrated on the challenges of journalism education in Ukraine today, which include the quality of the academic staff of the departments, lack of understanding between employers and educators and the gap between universities and the labour market. Overcoming these challenges is an urgent problem that requires systemic solutions, which the Ukrainian system of education is yet to develop and implement.

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**Сірінюк-Долгарьова К. Г., Любченко Ю. В. Перспективи змін в українській журналістській освіті відповідно до студентоцентричного підходу**

У статті розглянуто перспективи української журналістської освіти, яка перебуває в процесі складних перетворень у межах Європейського проекту Erasmus+ DESTIN, за яким студентоцентричне навчання є основним аспектом змін. Проаналізовано приклад факультету журналістики Запорізького національного університету за допомогою методів PESTLE-аналізу, SWOT-аналізу та опитування студентів. Зауважено, що серед можливостей і переваг українських закладів вищої освіти є змога переймати європейський досвід задля нарощування свого потенціалу.

**Ключові слова:** Україна, журналістська освіта, Erasmus+ DESTIN, Запорізький національний університет, студентоцентричний підхід, реформа.

**Сиринёк-Долгарёва Е. Г., Любченко Ю. В. Перспективы изменений в украинском журналистском образовании согласно студентоцентрическому подходу**

*В статье обсуждаются перспективы украинского журналистского образования, которое находится в процессе сложных преобразований в рамках Европейского проекта Erasmus+ DESTIN. Студентоцентрическое обучение является основным аспектом изменений. Проанализирован пример факультета журналистики Запорожского национального университета с помощью методов PESTLE-анализа, SWOT-анализа и опроса студентов. Отмечено, что среди ресурсов и преимуществ украинских высших учебных заведений есть возможность перенимать европейский опыт для наращивания своего потенциала.*

**Ключевые слова:** Украина, журналистское образование, Erasmus+ DESTIN, Запорожский национальный университет, студентоцентрический подход, реформа.