

**“Correcting Images” –
Development Communication in German Journalism Education.
A “Best Practice” example**

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Dear ladies and gentlemen,

it is both a pleasure and a great honour for me to be here in South Africa at the second World Journalism Education Congress. In the course of my paper, I would like to provide you with some insight into the concept of journalism and journalism education as it is currently being taught in Germany. I have divided my presentation into three major parts. First of all, I will advance some points of criticism concerning international news coverage; furthermore, I shall give a very brief overview of the various training programmes for journalists that are available in Germany and outline the key concepts that underlie them; finally, I will briefly discuss the significance of international issues in media education at German universities. Today, the main focus of my paper will be dedicated to a case example, that is, a series of workshops by means of which we seek to educate young journalists and make them aware of the various problems and constraints – but also of the great opportunities – of working and reporting in the field of Development Communication.

Shortcomings in International News Coverage

Unfortunately, I have to begin my paper by shedding some light on two regrettable deficits. First of all, it must be recognized that within most training programmes that have been designed for journalists in Germany, issues of development communication and north-south cooperation still play a very minor role. Moreover, while investigating discourses of public media in Germany and other highly developed countries, we can identify a significant tradition of diverse and often warrantable criticism on the reporting of topics from the southern hemisphere – the so called “Third World”. Let me just try to summarize this criticism by reading out two quotations concerning the role and significance of Africa in international media. For a start, the well-known Swedish novelist Henning Mankell, who personally spends most part of the year in Mozambique, once said:

“We know all about how Africans die – but we know little about how they live. Each time when I am in Europe I get sad and frustrated that the media exclusively concentrate on the negative aspects. [...] I do not pledge for a romantic Africa image. [...] But we should report on the Continent in a way we ourselves wish reports on us to be done” (Mankell 2003: 101).

The second quotation is from Chinua Achebe, a Nigerian writer who in 2002 was awarded the Peace Prize of the German book trade in Frankfurt. In his eloquent acceptance speech, Achebe critically observed that, even in world literature, a “caricature of Africa” as established in the past often continues to be drawn in the present. For example, even in the famous and popular works of Joseph Conrad and Ernest Hemingway, African people mostly appear as mere savages, that is to say, as shade-like beings, marginal figures barely capable of reading and writing. „These impossible figures – ugly, barely recognizable as human beings – were they the representatives of the people in my village, the people that I knew[?]“, Achebe asked in Frankfurt. „The answer must be a clear No! [...] Therefore I decided to try to write myself, to create figures which were like the people I knew. And I did not present them any better nor worse than they really are” (Achebe 2001).

What reverberates from Achebe’s speech is a sharp notion of what should be the essential concern of any dedicated media coverage: it must represent the people and the conditions under which they live neither better nor worse than they actually are. And still, not only in literature but also in journalism we continue to encounter caricatures of those which the now 80-year-old writer always wanted and still wants to counteract. However, the quintessential task of public media to provide information quickly, comprehensively and, at the same time, concisely, also inevitably includes the necessity to choose, condense, and broach the issue of special topics under a notorious pressure of time. The more distant these incidents or events are, the easier they fall through the attention grate of the media, and the more likely they abscond from a possible check-up by the recipients. Especially with regard to coverage aimed at the so-called „Third World“, we are still running the risk of producing or even perpetuating

common stereotypes developed by the media of the “North” – and also by the public media in my own home country, Germany.

For decades, communication scientists and representatives of the “South” speaking at international conferences have equally observed that much coverage from the southern hemisphere is quantitatively deficient and, at the same time, ruled by clichés and negativism.

And yet, both quantitative studies and the international news pages of our most popular newspapers or the frequent newscasts on our local TV are witnesses to the fact that this negativism still dominates the coverage of the „Third World“ . Therefore, it is mostly the big and rather tragic „C-words“ that appear throughout these different media, such as crises, conflicts, catastrophes, corruption, crime, etc. – not to mention, of course, war and diseases.

And if it so happens that every once in while at least some positive things are being reported, they are still riddled with clichés – for instance under the ambivalent label of exoticism.

While both the larger backgrounds of and the complex connections between the individual events are rarely if ever discussed, so-called „spot news” continue to prevail – and anyway, the overall extent of such coverage is too small. The worldwide news flow that stretches between „North“ and „South“ today is nor more balanced than it was back in the seventies and eighties, when a number of quite intensive discussions emerged around this topic.

Of course, we could try to explain why the coverage is the way it is, for example by means of news values research and with particular reference to the concept of framing (see e.g. O’Neill/Harcup 2009; Cottle 2009; Scheufele 1999, Scheufele 2003 and many others).

However, this shall not be my task for today.

Instead, my crucial question for this paper will be how we can help to improve this situation.

As a starting point, we should make young journalists aware of the deficits and special requests of international news coverage at quite an early stage of their education. I will expand on this idea in the following part of my paper by discussing a number of important requests for education in contemporary journalism.

Requests for Education in Journalism

One important concern of future journalism education should be to make scholars aware of the imbalances and shortcomings in international news coverage in order to sharpen their critical consciousness and provide them with information that allows for a deeper reflection.

Some guidelines that could serve as general orientation have been outlined in the “Principles of Journalism Education“, developed three years ago and based on the first meeting of the World Journalism Education Congress in Singapore. The fourth Paragraph states that:

“Journalism curriculum includes a variety of skills courses and the study of journalism ethics, history, media structures/institutions at national and international level, critical analysis of media content and journalism as a profession. It includes coursework on the social, political and cultural role of media in society [...]“.

Furthermore, paragraph six informs us that:

“Journalism program graduates should be prepared to work as highly informed, strongly committed practitioners who have high ethical principles and are able to fulfill the public interest obligations that are central to their work” (WJEC 2007).

The first sentences of the Tartu-Declaration, formulated by the European Journalism Training Association in 2006, also propose that:

“Members of the European Journalism Training Association educate or train their students/participants from the principle that journalists should the public by providing an insight into political, economic, socio-cultural conditions [and] stimulating and strengthening democracy at all levels” (EJTA 2006).

There is no need to tell you that such a request inevitably includes the crucial task of fair and sustainable news coverage from all over the world – including the living conditions, developments, and problems in remote areas.

Moreover, the “foundations of journalism” are presented very concisely in the UNESCO’s “Model Curricula for Journalism Education” dating from 2007. First of all, the UNESCO model offers a framework for developing new educational programmes for both developing countries and countries engaged in transition. Yet, it can also be employed to provide general orientation for already existing programmes in highly developed countries such as ours. Therefore, in the model’s introductory passage we can read:

„A curriculum in journalism education should include units in what we have called the foundations of journalism, which are designed to promote prerequisite intellectual and craft skills. These foundations include:

- An ability to think critically, incorporating skill in comprehension, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation of unfamiliar material, and a basic understanding of evidence and research methods.
- An ability to write clearly and coherently using narrative, descriptive, and analytical methods.
- A knowledge of national and international political, economic, cultural, religious, and social institutions.
- A knowledge of current affairs and issues, and a general knowledge of history and geography” (UNESCO 2007: 8).

On an abstract level, journalism education should impart knowledge and skills in five different areas or spheres (for more information see e.g. Weischenberg 1990):

- Level of general knowledge concerning the objects and topics to be covered by the journalist (e.g. basic cognition about politics, economics, culture ...)
- Media expertise – this is the level that includes (more specific) knowledge about the structure of media, audience, media effects etc.
- Level of reflection and responsibility. A journalist must be aware of his rights and duties while respecting the societal requirements which the media system has to fulfil.

In other words, journalists should be able to cope with the high responsibility which they themselves and their media possess within a particular society.

- Level of production, meaning the ability to obtain information. Journalists have to be familiar with the techniques of investigation and the different journalistic genres.
- Technical competences (computer skills, familiarity with newsroom techniques etc.)

Figure 1 visualizes these five levels.

We seek to implement all these levels and competences into a special education programme: Our series of international journalism workshops with the general title “Correcting Images”. However, before I will tell you exactly who we are and what we do by explaining our concept in detail, I would like to provide you with some brief information about the German system of journalism education.

Journalism Education in Germany

First of all, we can observe that access to a career in journalism in Germany is generally free – no defined training is necessary. A recent survey by Siegfried Weischenberg, Maya Malik and Armin Scholl asserted 48.000 fulltime professional journalists in Germany. 12.000 of them were working as freelancers. We might wonder what kind of training these almost 50.000 journalists have passed through. A rough answer is given by the following table:

Paths of Education of German journalists

69 %	did Internships (mostly in combination with specialized, non-journalistic courses of study)
62%	did a Traineeship (often after completion of a specialized, non-journalistic course of study)
17%	studied Media or Communication Sciences
14%	studied at a (non academic) School of Journalism
14%	studied Journalism in University (major or minor)
14%	Further Education (on the job)

Tab. 1: Background: representative quota, interviews by telephone with 1.536 German journalists, more than one answer possible (Weischenberg/Malik/Scholl 2006: 265)

As for the general picture, the educational situation for journalists in Germany is rather good. The level of training is comparatively high, especially if we consider that almost 70 percent of all journalists possess a university degree. On the one hand, it is a rare exception these days to get a fulltime job in journalism without having graduated. On the other hand, still most journalists did not study journalism at university level or have successfully graduated from a school of journalism – much unlike the situation in the USA, where having graduated in journalism is still considered a standard. In Germany, however, most journalists acquire their specific journalistic competences only by internships or through “on-the-job training”.

Still, even for young people who are willing to become journalists attend a university programme in journalism, mass media or communication science, the possibility to actually take part in classes that teach international reporting is rather small.

Together with a colleague of mine, I have recently analysed the online calendars of 40 of the most relevant German university institutes for summer term 2007 and winter term 2007/2008 (Behmer/Wimmer 2009). All in all, we ended up with 145 seminars, practical courses and lectures with an explicit international or intercultural focus. On a first glimpse, this might actually look rather impressive; on average, however, the numbers only sums up to 3.6 courses per institute over the year, that is, not even two courses per semester. Of course, there are important differences. Six of the largest institutes offer up to nine, ten or eleven seminars with an international or intercultural focus. (But all in all these institutes normally offer more than 200 seminars and lectures a year – so the international ones make less than five percent). Moreover, there are nine institutes included in our survey that offer not even a single course with a clear international or intercultural concern.

The most common subject of the courses included in our list of 145 individual programmes is either the international comparison of media systems or the presentation of the media systems of different countries (we found 22 of these courses), followed by seminars concerned with the development of the European public sphere or European media policy (13 courses in total)

and courses on the covering of international conflicts or crisis communication (10 courses). Most of the remaining seminars focus on fairly special topics like entertaining media products, advertisement or news production in just one other country (often the USA). Courses with a special focus on development communication or international news coverage including development countries and countries in transition are very rare – we found less than five such courses at the 40 university institutes over the period of one year. One of these few and rather exceptional programmes is our own annual workshop which I would like to present to you now. Our methodical approach is to integrate different innovative forms of education and to combine them into one single concept – including, for example, unrestricted learning and teaching methods, working groups, encounters and discussions with experts and journalists from different cultures and problem oriented learning.

The International Journalism Education Workshop Series “Correcting Images”

“Correcting Images” is the title of an international and intercultural journalism workshop which we have been organising in southern Germany once every year since 2002. Our “senior partner” in this project is the Bavarian Regional Centre of *InWEnt – Capacity Building International*, a training institution of the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development. So far, further partners include

- the Institutes of Communication Science at the universities of Munich (where I have been teaching for many years until August 2009) and Bamberg (where I am teaching since one year right now),
- the *German School of Journalists* (also called DJS and being one of the most well known non-academic schools of journalism in Germany),
- an association of young journalists working in the state of Bavaria (NJB),
- and, until 2008, the Bavarian broadcasting cooperation (*Bayerischer Rundfunk*).

Together, these partners help provide the “Correcting Images” workshop with a unique character and interdisciplinary outlook that is maintained in the courses offered to students. Due to the variety of participating organisations and academic institutes, students hailing from different educational backgrounds who have been taught according to different scholarly traditions are being granted the possibility to participate in a single workshop, the regular participants of which include students of journalism enrolled at leading universities (some of which are at the same time students of the German School of Journalism), trainee journalists of public service broadcasting and also a number of young journalists who have organized themselves into a club.

Therefore, we are happy to bring together 80 to 90 participants each year – including media professionals from various countries, media scientists, activist from NGOs, development cooperation experts and the young German journalists – for a joined two-and-half-day workshop that takes place in the vicinity of Munich. Traditionally, our primary focus has always been the mutual exchange of information and the communication of different views about the most pressing demands and problems experienced by journalists reporting on developing countries or countries at the crossroads. We thus analyze and discuss both general aspects of news coverage and particular constraints that affect the daily work of journalists – an area which is familiar to most of our participants through individual as well as collective experience. By sharing their experience, the participants develop new and alternative strategies to improve the quality of future projects dedicated to development topics.

Moreover, abstract problems are often being discussed on the basis of concrete examples. Each year there is a certain focus on a particular region and content. In 2004, for example, the title of our meeting was “Not more than Hunger and Poverty? Reporting about daily life in the ‘Third World’” – with particular attention being paid to Brazil, Iran, and Nigeria. In 2005, the main focus was on problems of desertification as they can be observed first of all in many regions of the south – with the case examples being Brazil, India, Mali, and Yemen. In 2007,

our topic was “The Role of the Media in Areas of Conflict”, thus we talked about Kosovo, Congo and Afghanistan. In 2008, we were primarily concerned with “Sports, Media and Development”, a topic which allowed us to pay particular regard to the Beijing Olympics (retrospective) and the Soccer World Cup in South Africa in 2010 (prospective). In 2009, eventually, we spoke about “Migration, Media and Development”, thereby focussing on intra-regional migration in Asia, Africa and Europe with particular examples of movement from and to Pakistan, Kenya, Central and Eastern European countries. This year, we will gather again on the last weekend of November to talk about the global crises of economy and finance and their implications on developing countries. Particular regard will be paid to new forms of global cooperation and the possibility to finance concrete projects. In a nutshell, our special focus this year will be on the financing of smaller projects by micro credits (particularly with regard to South America) and include examples of fair trade projects (particularly with regard to Western Africa).

With this being said, I hope it has become clear that not only are the topics themselves of our crucial concern, but also and in particular the different ways in which they are covered by public media. Focusing on purposes, projects and problems, we will discuss different forms of media in the countries under consideration as well as in Germany.

Over the years, our conference has attracted a number of distinguished experts from North and South (such as Johan Galtung from Norway, Guy Berger from South Africa and many others), many of which gave keynote speeches or provided introductions to certain topics and important background information. The journalists – German foreign correspondents as well as colleagues from the regions under consideration – can exchange ideas about their daily work, their professional self-perception, their intentions and the problems they might have experienced in the past. Furthermore, the programme schedule includes large panel discussions, movie screenings and individual group sessions.

Please allow me to highlight the concept of our workshop in yet greater detail by giving you one case example, that is, our 2008 meeting concerned with sports, media and development. Back then, two of our crucial questions were: Which sustainable impacts might mega sports events like the Olympics and die FIFA World Cup have on the development of countries, regions and societies?, and: How do public media cover these events, their backgrounds and their political, economical and social impacts (including human rights aspects)? – not to mention, of course, the covering of the various sports themselves.

The regular procedure is to start the two and a half day conference off with a so-called “World Café”. Let me explain to you how this works: First of all, the participants come together and gather around small bistro tables – each table accommodating between eight and ten people. After a brief mutual introduction, they start talking about their individual expectations for the conference and their past experience concerning its primary subject. Key issues are written on small slips of paper, so they can be saved for subsequent discussions and be re-addressed whenever necessary. After about 20 minutes, new discussion groups are formed and distributed among the tables; this procedure is carried out two more times, and eventually after approximately one and a half hours most of the participants have met each other, exchanged their ideas and opinions and thereby have gained first and important insights into their different points of view.

On the evening of the first day, the workshop always includes introductory lectures. In 2008, our first keynote speaker was Wilfried Lemke, the “Special Adviser to the United Nations Secretary-General on Sport for Development and Peace”. He provided us with an overview of the vital role that sports can play in the UN agenda to realize the Millennium Development Goals, and he further described his own engagement in the world of sports and politics. Afterwards, Lydia Monyepao, former player of the “Banyana Banyana” (South Africa’s female national football team), then chairperson of Soweto Ladies FC and now member of the

2010 World Cup Organising Committee, spoke about the significance of football in the course of her own life and its general importance for the development of the South African society.

The second day of the workshop commenced with two parallel panels of experts, one of which focused on the Beijing Olympics while the other was dedicated to the FIFA World Cup. Both panels were joined by a representative of the Chinese and South African embassy in Germany, respectively, as well as by one leading expert in the field of development cooperation and one representative of a human rights organization. Together they provided crucial input and helped establish the basis for a critical plenary discussion on the possibilities and limitations of major sporting events with regard to cultural development.

In the afternoon sessions, the aspect of media and medial representation became pivotal. Again, we arranged for two parallel panel sessions where foreign correspondents and sportswriters from Germany reported on their individual experiences and expectations while comparing them with those made by journalists from China and South Africa. In each case, we were careful to reserve an ample amount of time for discussion. As part of the evening, sportsmen from Africa and Asia met with German coaches who had been working in China and Africa to share their experience. Conversations were very lively and vivid, for they included many personal examples from the participants' personal careers. They provided important incentives for subsequent conversation that took place in a relaxed atmosphere. Since everyone could stay overnight at the convention centre, the talks lasted well into the late evening hours.

The last day started off with the presentation of some concrete sports projects connected to the field of international development cooperation – such as football camps for African children funded by German initiatives, educational programmes against Aids in which sports are serving as a kind of transmission belt, or the recent engagement of the FC Bayern Munich, one of the most prominent German football clubs, in co-financing a football academy in India. This was followed by yet another round panel where journalists, journalism educators and

media experts would discuss different ways of reporting, future possibilities to improve the standard of international media coverage and some more general issues of journalism training. Finally, the conference organisers themselves gave a brief summary of the meeting's results, which in turn lead to a lively discussion that went on for another hour.

In order to allow for everyone to follow the presentations in their entirety and to take part in the discussions without being constrained by linguistic barriers, the international workshop is kept bilingual throughout, that is, with individual papers and keynotes being translated simultaneously into both English and German, and sometimes even into French.

Students from universities and the German School of Journalism – their numbers ranging between 30 and 40 every year – continue to play an important role in the conception of the workshop. Before they attend the conference itself, they take part in a university course that provides an introduction into the general topic organised by the course instructor. Furthermore, participants are being taught how to acquire adequate background information, a crucial skill which is being assessed by means of a short survey about the general subject matter (either in the form of a small content analysis or through interviews) and that also helps develop vital questions for the conference.

In our 2008 example about sports and development, the students were asked to carry out individual guided phone interviews with 50 journalists, all of whom were reporting from the Beijing Olympic Games for the German media right after the Games had taken place. These sportswriters were questioned eight focal points:

- How did they prepare themselves for their job in Beijing?
- What were their specific expectations concerning the Beijing Games, and what was their self-perception as journalists when they travelled to China?
- Were there any particular guidelines provided by their editorial office at home, and if yes, how did the mutual coordination work out on a day-to-day basis?
- What were the actual working conditions in Beijing?

- Did they experience any significant differences to other major sporting events?
- Did they experience any kind of censorship in relation to their own work?
- Was there any possibility to establish close contact with Chinese people?
- What were their general impressions? To what extent did they find their expectations fulfilled, and did their personal perception of China change in the course of their stay?

Preparing for the workshop, we evaluated the interviews and made their results available to discussions following the different panels.

In the run-up of our 2009 workshop, the focus of which comprised “Media, Migration and Development”, the students were assigned another task. Under my guidance, they searched through a number of German newspapers for the most relevant articles about migration topics. Together we researched important background information and compiled content analyses.

As a result, the students became somewhat familiar with the essential research techniques and methods even before they attended the actual workshop. Furthermore, being at the workshop they were able to contribute some results from their earlier work.

During the two and a half days of their attendance, students at the congress are taking part in discussions, contribute their own ideas and statements and get in touch with distinguished experts in the field, some of which they will interview. At the end of the congress, the participating students produce a written documentation, a task which is carried out under the assistance of the university lecturer (that’s me) and the project manager from InWEnt, Kayode Salau. These comprehensive brochures which normally comprise 60 pages will be printed and published (Behmer/Salau/Wimmer 2003; InWEnt 2005, InWEnt 2006, InWEnt 2008, InWEnt 2009, InWEnt 2010). Consequently, the vast majority of the articles which are included in these volumes were written and researched by students.

Resumé

During my paper, I have mentioned five different levels of competence, all of which were considered when designing the projects that I have just introduced you to. Also, they were all implemented into the annual workshop meeting in a number of different ways (see Fig. 2).

Consequently, the young German journalists, that is, mostly the students of our journalism programmes at the universities of Munich and Bamberg, are given the opportunity to acquire general knowledge about the conference topic while also gaining more media competence, especially with regard to the constraints and possibilities in the field of international and intercultural communication. The chance to meet with professional and established journalists and to talk to them about their work promises a deeper and more profound knowledge of the specific requirements of news coverage. Moreover, it improves the students' techniques of investigation and their general expectations towards the media. While communicating with people from different cultural backgrounds, the students also extend their own competence of reflection. It sharpens their individual self-perception and strengthens their consciousness of various ethical implications and their awareness of the possibilities and limitations of critical reporting. Furthermore, they acquire more information about the fundamental functions of different media in the process of sustainable development and their significance in the North-South Dialogue, including the aforementioned problems and shortcomings within this field. Last but not least, the technical competence of the students will be advanced through various assigned tasks, including the work on their final congress documentation.

Of course, such a complex form of teaching is not always easy to integrate into the routine of everyday university life. In the case of "Correcting Images", such integration only becomes possible through the close cooperation with our different partners, a joined venture which distributes the workload on many individual shoulders. Also, it must be emphasized that on the financial level this workshop can only be realised because "Correcting Images" is one of the important development education (One-World) programs of InWEnt in Bavaria and is

generously funded by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development. Such financial support makes it possible for us to invite distinguished guests from all over the world, many of which fly in from other continents. It helps us take over their travel expenses and even allows us to offer small bursaries for the lecturers. As for the congress venue, the annual meetings take place in the conference centre of InWEnt in Feldafing near Munich. Accommodation and catering are provided for all participants. Last but not least, a particularly fortunate condition is that the M.A. degree programme in journalism at the University of Munich cooperates closely with the German School of Journalism. Since admission to this programme is limited to only 30 students a year, they can all participate in this special event.

“Journalism is a global endeavour”, as the “Principles of Journalism Education” issued by the WCJE confirm: “Journalism students should learn that despite political and cultural differences, they share important values and professional goals with peers in other nations. Where practical, journalism education provides students with first-hand experience of the way that journalism is practiced in other nations” (WJEC 2007). The project “Correcting Images” seeks to fulfil these postulations.

Of course, we are well aware that our endeavour is merely a small enterprise, a motivation and possible starting point for future projects. Therefore, we would certainly welcome more projects which have an agenda similar to our own one, thus allowing for more and better research opportunities and broader discussions of relevant teaching concepts in the field of international and intercultural communication. It is a great pleasure that the World Congress provides an opportunity to meet with colleagues from many different countries and to talk about such concepts with regard to the future. We are very happy to be part of this meeting and we appreciate the chance to present our project to the participants, that is to say, to you. Yet, it is always a question of resources and funding whether or not more courses like ours

can take place. We depend not only on financial resources, but also on the individual and public interest in our work.

Time and again, we find that students are very interested in topics of intercultural cooperation and international news covering and many of them reveal exceptional motivation in the course meetings. Yet, in the long run it will be crucial to consider to what extent these seminars and the skills which are imparted will be judged and rewarded by the labour market. A few years ago, Hans-Henrik Holm took further limitations of the internationally-oriented teaching to the point (2002: 70):

„The drawback of such programs is that they risk becoming isolated islands of internationalism that may work well for the teachers and students that participate, but have little overall effect on either the greater student body or perhaps even the institutions that participate in producing them.“

I hope that my paper succeeded in its purpose, that is, giving you some insight in our project called „Correcting Images“. I would be very happy to discuss our approach with you and to listen to your suggestions, as I am sure that we can still improve it in many ways. Furthermore, I would like to take the opportunity to personally invite those of you who are interested in further cooperation to one of our next workshops in Germany.

Thank you very much for listening.

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Appendices

Fig. 1 (M. Behmer)

**Competences a journalist should have –
and a curriculum of journalism education should imply**

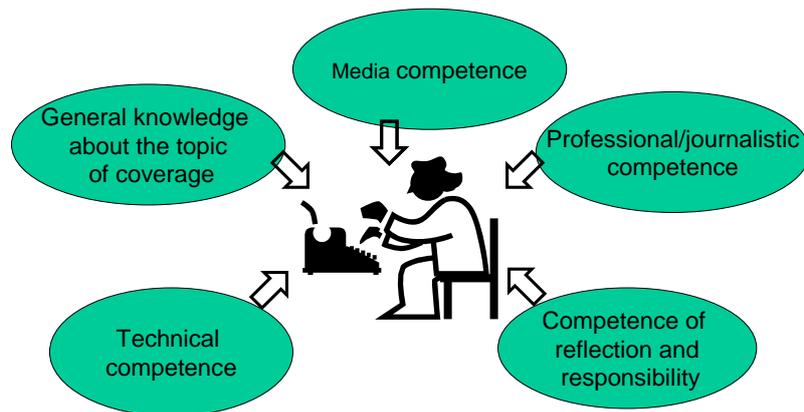


Fig. 2 (M. Behmer)

**Competences a journalist should have –
and their implementation in the course „Correcting Images“**

