

Opportunities and Challenges: The Changing Face of Journalism Education in the People's Republic of China

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Abstract

Journalism Education in the People's Republic of China began in the 1910's. With the deepening of reform and opening up, China's journalism education has seen a huge leap of progress and development, and has now entered the times of high-speed, large-scale, diversified development.

With the development of globalization and Internet technology, media development in China has entered a new period. Network which spread quickly, timely and interactive gave birth to "citizen journalism", which led to the public involvement to improve journalism increase quickly and made professional boundaries of career of journalists blur. Meanwhile, China is now facing a social transition and all aspects of social life has undergone tremendous changes. New media environment, social environment on news media raised new challenges. Mass media not only carry on the role of communication, but also take unprecedented responsibility in playing the role of the social supervisor to promote the development of China.

In the new media and social environment, the information transfer mode of the past has changed and journalism education is also facing changes. Currently, the teacher structure, curriculum, teaching methods, laboratory facilities, research mechanism of China's journalism education need to carry out comprehensive reforms in order to meet the need of media integration.

Too specialized personnel training model has led to some shortcomings in journalism education in China. In the past, the focus of its value orientation is not to educate knowledge, ability and quality all-round development, but how to make an educator only meet an occupation. Therefore, in China's structure of university education courses, professional education courses predominate. Today, the value of journalism education has undergone a fundamental change in orientation, which begun to focus on practice and ability and encourage academic research. Combination with the industry is producing a variety of new modes of teaching and research. Journalism education need to break the traditional mode of thinking, emphasis on individual education, promote general education, highlight outstanding vocational education, focus on

training social responsibility and professionalism of the students, which are present and for a long period the value of education goals of China's journalism education.

To adhere to the university in student-centered process of innovation in educational reform, general education and professional education must go hand in hand together for quality, innovation and personnel training services applied. News Discipline Course System Reform should be guaranteed to provide a solid basic knowledge of humanities education, journalism professional knowledge education, scientific thinking training, ability to use scientific tools, and media professional ability. In order to meet the need above, the design of the curriculum ought to consider both general education and journalism education in the field curriculum system construction.

Given the background and environment of nowadays China, the paper focuses on issues of opportunities and challenges of Journalism Education in China, including:

- The shift role of journalism in the new media environment and the special social context in China and the importance of education reform.

- The function, values and objectives of journalism education, and factors restricting the development of journalism education issues,

- The problems of China's journalism education and the reasons for the plight of the existence Currently.

- In the context of globalization, how to change journalism education philosophy, values orientation, educational model, curriculum and other aspects to promote the development of China's journalism education.

Particular attention will be paid to the change of news values, changes in the media concept and social responsibility in newly emerging social environment in China. By analyzing the issues above, the paper tries to get an access to reveal the relationship between social development and journalism education in China and illustrate a new way to make them in harmonious proportion.

Key words: media convergence, journalism education, curriculum

◆ Media changes under the trend of media convergence in China

With the extensive application of digital technology and the rapid development of network communication, how to introduce new forms of media integration and restructure the media industry is today a global topic. In this changing situation, the potential news media are also to be moving, from the rules of procedure to the channels and methods, changes are taking place. Journalism Education in China shoulders the sacred mission to cultivate journalists with strong sense of social responsibility, broad international perspectives, deep culture literacy, scientific thinking and excellent professional skills.

1、Changes on subject of information communication

In the past, the traditional mass media basically monopolized the news media. The media information source is mainly from government agencies, community groups and business organizations, and professional journalists mainly undertake the responsibility on information gathering and publishing news. The emergence of the network gives ordinary citizens a new role: news reporter, which is a great challenger to the mass media.

With the popularity of the network and the development of information technology, the subject of information dissemination is no longer limited to a number of professional organizations and groups, and everyone has the chance to provide a source of news and become a communicator. People could use mobile phones, cameras and other equipment, records news site at anytime, anywhere, and then transfer it to the world through the network at the first time.

The new media age gave birth to "Citizen journalism", who made the audience able to use new media technology to actively involve in the production and dissemination of news information, changing passive position in the past. They can choose their own topics and form their own judgments, so as to make their own voice. "Citizen journalism" has broken monopolies and privileges of traditional media in news communication and had effect on traditional news media's "agenda setting" function. In the News site, any citizen may be "temporary journalist" and become the main source of information and communication. The timeliness of the news coverage of newspapers, radio, television and other traditional media is far less than BBS, personal blog, citizen journalism sites and such other news carriers.

In recent years, China has experienced the evolution of news concept from "the people's livelihood news" to "citizen journalism". Having experienced the "Earthquake in Wenchuan" in 2008 and the Olympic Games in Beijing and other national issues, Chinese news reports highlighted the value of "civil

society news". They not only ensure a fast, open and transparent in news reports, but highlight "humane care", "Equality of life,", "civic responsibility", "public services", "social assistance", "public opinion", "social risks relief capability" and a large number of participatory news and information dissemination, which shows that the mass media and civil society is growing together.

2、 Changes on forms and channels of news media

Compared with traditional mass media such as newspapers, radio and television, a new generation of media relies on the internet achieve a fundamental change in carrier performance and provide a broader transformation stage for the news media. For the general population could transmit information through text messages, blog, network chat in anytime, anywhere with any person, Therefore, from the view of the whole community, mode of transmission changes from the one-way traditional news media dominate to the sharing and interactive type in which professional media organizations and ordinary citizens participate, so that mass communication and interpersonal communication convergence more closely.

With technological development, Internet media continues to enhance the functions of integration and the means and methods to receive news are also become more diverse. Multi-media approach will be widely used in news and information dissemination and achieve combination of means of listening, reading, writing, recording on the new terminal media, which gives news communication more freedom and more convenience. Noteworthy that with the means and methods of communication changing, the integration process of content of the news media has become increasingly difficult. Compared to new media, the traditional media has advantages on professional talents, experience and social credibility. So traditional media and new media should cooperate and complement each other, on the precise positioning of dissemination contents , on appropriate choice of the dissemination expression, on effective control and management of dissemination processes to achieve better communication effects.

3、 Changes on organizational structure of news media

With the increased cooperation among the media, the organizational structure and work processes of media have changed. The mode of management of mass media turned to joint operation of a variety of media, opposite to independent management as past. The new mode caused manpower, capital and equipment investment reduced and so was information production cost.

The joint operation of different types of media has ability to protect the possession of the media market. For example, market of newspapers continued to be attacks by emergence of rivals such as TV and internet media, so that the circulation and advertising sales declined, which shows separate

operation of newspaper is difficult to cope with changes in the market. However, in media concentration and convergence groups, different media may integrate resources in information production and dissemination process to share resources, and complement each other to achieve joint cooperation.

In China, although subject to the system and administration and other factors, the reform to integrate resource of new media has taken place in some traditional news media. For example the Southern Newspaper Media Group, as China's most cutting-edge newspaper group, is committed to efficient integration of traditional print media and new media ,such as online media and mobile media to speed up the pace of development to achieve maximum effectiveness of the Group as a whole. At present, the Group has ten kinds of newspapers, six publications, three websites and one publishing house. It has successfully built three-dimensional combination of newspapers, periodicals and publishers, network platform to achieve a breakthrough on cross-media, cross-regional and inter-business operating.

4、 Change on audience of news media

China is in the period of audience breakdown from the times mass audience to audience segmentation. Segmentation of the audience becomes more and more diversified and so does the demand of audience. In order to meet the needs of different audiences, mass media must focus on the target audience and make accurate positioning. It requires news media and journalists not only have the common professional skills, but also have some specialized news literacy. Media should produce specialized programs targeted to different audience and transit information for different audiences needs.

In China, specialized newspapers and professional television channels have appeared in recent years. Mass media has stepped into the era of focus spread, which leads to the growing segments of media market, and emergence of professional media platforms.

In summary, under the situation of media integration, the boundary between traditional media increasingly blurred and a large convergence of information and communication industry formed. Media convergence has brought the a disruptive change to the entire media ecosystem. In order to adapt to this trend, various types of media organizations are carrying out strategic adjustments including human resources strategy, therefore Chinese Journalism Education is facing a lot of new challenge.

◆ Status quo and problems of Chinese Journalism Education

Today, the traditional mainstream media in China are facing serious development issues and journalism education also faces serious challenges. The new media environment proposed a higher demand on professional news

media workers, which provided a good opportunity to reform and innovate not only for Chinese journalism educators, but for global news education system.

In 1918, Peking University established "Journalism Studies of Peking University" and it is the origin of journalism education in China. Since then, journalism education in China has experienced a period over 90 years.

From the beginning of 21st century, China's media industry has made great development. Correspondingly, various universities have set up to departments associating with journalism to cultivate media talents, such as journalism, mass communication, radio and television journalism, radio and television director, broadcasting and related directions. At present, there are more than 400 colleges and universities and nearly 600 directions in China, and journalism education is basically formed a school structure of various kinds, complete level and a relatively balanced distribution.

However, the extraordinary pace of development has led to many problems such as dramatic increasing number of students, shortage of teaching materials and equipment, poor school conditions, teacher shortages, unreasonable curriculum and the lack of practice platform. These problems inevitably led to decline of teaching quality and ability of students. In the new media environment, these issues become increasingly prominent.

At present, the main problems Chinese journalism education is facing to is as follows:

- 1、 The deviation between journalism education theory and practice.

Journalism is a practical subject, but in China, many news departments lack of professional features. They focus more on theory and neglect practice and journalism education has not been regarded as a vocational education, Journalism education pay more attention to learning theories instead of cultivating abilities and professional skills of students, which runs counter to the characteristics of journalism. Many educational institutions emphasize on the research and articles, ignored the news business training, career development, which does not meet the actual demand of current media.

For a long time, China's journalism education emphasized on specialized education to foster "professional counterparts" of community needs. The goal did not focus on the overall development of students, but rather how to make students adapt to the practical needs of a profession in society.

- 2、 The inconsistency between journalism education and demand of news media.

The rapid economic and social development gave birth to the rapid development of media and intense media competition. News media pay attention to both social and economic benefits. In order to meet various needs

of the audience, news media inclined to employ talents with ability on both journalism professional knowledge and comprehensive capacity, such as program planning management, sales promotion, TV producing management, marketing and so on.

Journalism education has seen a huge leap of progress and development in China. However, the number of graduates exceeded the number media want, but the quality failed to meet the needs of media.

Journalism academic institutions paid more attention on basic journalism capacity and ignored the ability of news media management; emphasized on theory of knowledge and neglect of practical experience. As a result, the knowledge structure, theoretical knowledge and practical application of graduates do not meet the requirements for "complex talent" of media. The way of journalism education and current demand of media industry did not match.

3、Lack of experienced faculty

Currently, the composition of staff in journalism colleges is irrational. Most teachers lack practical experience in news media, which causes dislocation of teaching and practice. Given the current constraints of recruitment mechanism in university, news colleges preferred highly educated people to experienced people without high degree.

Many teachers rarely keep touch with news media and do not aware of the latest trends and needs of media so that they can only focus on the theoretical aspects of journalism education, not practical courses related to professional experience therefore can not update the curriculum content and apply the latest issue of media to the development of teaching.

The adjustment of the curriculum structure, enhancement of the teaching content and development of students' practical skills all require teachers have the appropriate knowledge and professional competence. So journalism colleges need to introduce people with practical experience to play an exemplary role.

4、Unreasonable curriculum and training methods

Journalism education is closely related to the media development and need to update the course content timely. However, the curricula of some journalism colleges ignore the changes of media environment and continue to adopt traditional courses and textbooks. It results in curricula lack of awareness of innovation and can not keep up with the changes in media. In news colleges, basic theories of media is the focus of courses, which makes a very narrow range of courses and a gap between theory and practice. Teaching method is also more conservative, lagging behind the times. For example, the media caused a large number of media in transition, the demand for management personnel, and so far, almost no institutions to set up a news media business management expertise.

At the same time, the curriculum lack of diversity and accurate positioning. At present, journalism education is mainly composed of information theory of journalism, journalism history and information practice. The lack of personality leads to graduates of similar abilities can not meet the diversified needs of media.

In China, professional education courses account for a significant proportion of faculty in journalism education. In some news colleges, news professional courses are excessive and courses on humanities and social sciences are relatively little, which results in shortage of humanistic quality of the students. The leading mode of education of too much emphasis on professional theories and professional skills in teaching make students have narrow range of knowledge and not suitable for media.

5、 Shortage of platform for practice

For journalism education, how to make full use of practical platforms for students to practice skills and innovate and then form professional advantage is the focus of educational practice. Due to factors such as restrictions on capital investment, practical platforms of news colleges lack of both quality and quantity and lag behind media development.

Meanwhile, there is little long-term and effective interaction between news media and journalism education institutions and the media plays an insignificant role in journalism education. Thus Schools of journalism and the media did not jointly build a platform to communicate, which leads to the situation that journalism education does not match the current practice of media.

In addition, China's journalism education also face to shortage of resources, insufficient capital investment, the need to improve teaching facilities, lack of practical platform and other problems, which are restricting development of domestic journalism education.

◆ Strategy of journalism education under the new media background in China

From a global perspective, the current media environment shows characteristics of global, high-tech, large-scale and so on. In order to adapt to new changes in the news industry, journalism education has taken countermeasures. In China, media faces not only to the same problems by the technological development overall the world, but to additional problems brought about a series of social transformation, which adds a strong challenge to journalism education.

Facing the changes of news industry, the globalization and the trend of media convergence, China's journalism education should not only change the educational concept, but also concentrate on the four basic elements of

journalism education, which are subject structure, teaching team, courses system and teaching practice platform. Under the new goals of education, journalism colleges should re-build the journalism education system of China, building a scientific and perfect discipline architecture, constructing a teaching staff with multi-disciplinary knowledge and media skills, building a wide range of curriculum system, constructing a cross-media practice teaching platform to achieve the transformation of journalism education in China.

1、 Changes in educational philosophy and mode

The most important problem of journalism education is how to adapt to the changing media environment and train high-level news media journalists. Under the impact of globalization, the development of economic and society becomes increasingly complex, and perspectives and methods of news media will be changed dramatically. With international news coverage and depth coverage, journalists should have extensive knowledge, international perspective and ability to respond to a variety of news events.

China's economy and society is now entering a transition period, in which news reports should assume more social responsibilities. News media stepped into an era of "Citizen journalism", the civil society news is the mainstream. We should give journalism students more training on broad social science and humanities knowledge to enable them to plunge into social reality and convey information to the public.

Journalism education should implement open mode of education. Open mode means openness both in teaching resources and teaching approaches. That is, Journalism colleges should introduce senior media reporters to enrich teaching staff and encourage a wide range of teaching courses.

The cultivation mode of news should be training with the "all media" talent and skills and information professionals with complex knowledge structure. We should encourage students to learn multi-cultural knowledge, but also have some unique specialized knowledge.

2、 Changes on framework for professional settings and disciplines

With the growing trend of convergence in news media, the traditional boundaries of professional knowledge and professional skills will be broken. The organizational structure of disciplines need adapt to the trend of media convergence, in order to ensure that all professionals have more openness and mutual compatibility of their own.

First of all, we should improve the autonomy of professional disciplines, to set specific education goals and functions of operating mechanism following the continuous development of the overall environment, Secondly, we should update content of curriculum, improve the flexibility of curriculum to ensure that the professional discipline system can target the industry demand for talent changes, and adjust the teaching content and methods timely and effectively.

Thirdly, we should promote the blending of various professional disciplines to ensure resource sharing and cultivate diverse talents to meet the media industry's growing demand.

3、Changes on the curriculum system and training patterns

At present, news media incline to employ practitioners with complex knowledge and skills and demand modern journalists with a variety of professional backgrounds and cross-media working experience .According to the requirements of media, journalism education should make necessary adjustments on the existing curriculum to enable students equipped multi-disciplinary knowledge and skills.

The curriculum system reform need to focuses on construction of both general education and professional education curriculum.

General education curriculum should be designed to ensure students to understand the structure of different knowledge systems and methods, to have ability to value judgements, to master basic skills and to form good self-cultivation. General education courses offered, such as Western philosophy, Chinese literature, World literature, Chinese history, world history, economics, legal basis, sociology, psychology,, management foundation, religion, geography and natural science knowledge, aim at ensuring students to absorb a wide range of knowledge on natural sciences, humanities and social sciences.

Professional education curriculum should develop scientific and rational personnel training plans and programs to focus on theoretical basis of news, professional knowledge of information, scientific thinking, ability to use scientific tools and practical abilities in news media to meet the demands of news communication technology and mass media.

We would also change the teaching method to adopt a "theory + Case + Instance" teaching mode to combine scientific research and practice. Teaching cases should be introduced to journalism education to deepen students' understanding of information theory, and improve practical skills and capacity-building in effective operation of the real case.

4、Changes on journalism faculty

The development of journalism education relies on enhancement of journalism teachers' capability and quality. Journalism faculty need to not only master the professional knowledge of news media, but also have an interdisciplinary background; not only understand the professional theoretical system of journalism, but also possess practical experience. Under the trend of media convergence, teachers of journalism colleges should break their subject limitations, establish a concept of cross-media, interdisciplinary and cross-cultural. At the same time, they also should be aware of the status quo of news media, make deep understanding of operating rules of media and the special nature of journalism education.

Journalism colleges should create opportunities for journalism courses teachers to take part in practice of news media. During the practice, teachers are to be familiar with the specific process of news dissemination, form a deeper understanding of information dissemination status from a practical level, be aware of rules in news communication and get a clear idea of operating mechanism in modern media.

Journalism colleges may introduce a number of media professionals with practical experience to give lectures or teach in universities. They can also engage in research cooperation, and exchange views on journalism education issues. This is beneficial not only to optimize the course structure, but also conducive to students' internships.

5、Changes on practice platform.

School of Journalism should establish long-term association with news media to provide students with chances to practice. Colleges and news media should cooperate to make rigorous practice teaching design and planning, to establish a scientific management system and a permanent communication mechanism. On this way, academic institutions and media groups have a platform to exchange ideas on journalism education issues and jointly promote the strategy on resolving problems.

Journalism education should pay more attention to building practical teaching platform to highlight professional advantages. Based on its positioning in the era of audience fragmentation, schools of journalism should determine the partnership with appropriate media. For example, school of journalism in University of Finance and Economics should be integrated with the financial media or economics program (or column) of media, while school of Journalism in Sport University should build a base of teaching practice with sports media or sports programs (or column) of media,

◆ **Attempt on journalism education reform in Jinan School of Journalism and Communication**

In China, a group of schools of Journalism and Communications have started reforms on journalism education and made some achievements. Jinan University is a typical example on journalism education reform.

School of Journalism and Communication in Jinan University is one of the earliest news departments in China. The school listed respectively teaching programs for students majoring in Journalism, Radio and Television and Advertising, Compulsory Courses are the same for different specialties, such as Basic Writing, Literature of Ancient Chinese, Foreign Journalism History, Logic, Journalism Management, Media Business, Sociology, Art, Psychology, and so on. Only when the credits of required courses occupy over 70% of the total credits can students graduate successfully.

Currently, Jinan school of Journalism and Communication has set up several main research directions, such as History of news media, News Dissemination Business, Media Management, Overseas Chinese Media, Advertising, Public Relations and Marketing communication. It also founds several research centers: the Media Industry Research Center, Brand Strategy & Communication Research Center, Public Opinion Analysis and Research Center, Radio and Television Research Center and Media Criticism Research Center.

Jinan School of Journalism and Communication encourages teachers to practice in news media and make academic exchanges with other universities at home and abroad. The college also often invites senior practitioners in media to teach, and establish co-operative relationship with some famous media, such as China News Service, Phoenix, the Southern Newspaper Media Group, Guangdong TV, and so on.

Jinan School of Journalism and Communication built the "South China Creative Media graduate training base" jointly with the Southern Newspaper Group, Yangcheng Evening News Group, Guangdong TV, Guangzhou Daily Press Group and other well-known media to provide students with a good platform for media practice.

The school encourages students to participate in practical activities. It set up a media experimental teaching demonstration centers, including the CATI, which is the sector of survey and implementation institute of Public Opinion Research Center. CATI could perform all kinds of opinion polls, public opinion surveys of social, as well as brand monitoring, advertising effectiveness evaluation research activities and has undertaken a number of practical projects and research project.

Jinan School of Journalism and Communication not only pays attention to exchanges with other academic institutions and media, but also takes social responsibility to build a bridge connecting government and citizens. It also offers advice to the Government on some popular social issues, such as the dissemination of disaster information, the government crisis management, the communication strategies of 2010 Guangzhou Asian Games and other issues.

Jinan University is known as "Top University of Overseas Chinese" and it pays close attention to overseas Chinese-language communication. The school established Overseas Chinese Literature and Media Studies Centre. It also organizes advanced training course for overseas Chinese media periodically, bringing together Chinese media leader from around the world and providing a communication platform.

The school also attaches great importance to cooperation with overseas Chinese media. It co-established the "Overseas Chinese media research and exchange center" with the Canadian newspaper's "Modern Daily News" as a platform to promote the academic study of overseas Chinese media. The school maintains close relationship with Malaysia, Macao and other countries and regions in cooperative education.

As mentioned, under the trend of media technology development and media convergence, journalism education in China faces many problems and challenges. However, it also is an opportunity for innovation. We have reason to believe that journalism education in China and the world will make great progress in future.

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