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KAZAKH JOURNALISM EDUCATION IN THE CONTEXT OF MODERN REALITIES

The purpose of this study is to explore the current thoughts of academics and media industry professionals about journalism education, which is considered to be the most important in training professionals. A mixed method was used, which included phenomenology and descriptive research, and quantitative data were collected from both groups. The study found that both groups, academic and professional, agreed that students need both education and experience. Students, in addition to the ability to use digital technologies, should also be able to write creatively that engages and engage their audiences in all media. The most relevant skills were the ability to recognize errors, false arguments, manipulation, separate facts from opinions, analyze concepts, ask the right questions, approach content critically, and read widely. As a result, one of the recommendations was that journalism education programs should be equipped with practical skills such as video reporting, editing, writing, and social media trends.

According to the Unified Higher Education Platform, there are 43 bachelor's degree programs in journalism, which vary greatly. Some emphasize more logical approaches, others emphasize the theoretical approach, emphasize history, ethics, laws, rights of journalists, and others are completely inclined to teach skills or a practical approach. But among the many opinions voiced, it is worth noting that the training of students should not emphasize a career in news services, since journalism is too important a profession to delegate it exclusively to one media outlet.

Keywords: journalism education, journalist profession, educational programs.

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Бұл зерттеудің мақсаты – кәсіби мамандарды дайындаудағы ең маңызды саналатын журналистік білім туралы білім мен медиа саласы мамандарының қазіргі ойларын зерттеу. Феноменологиялық және сипаттамалық зерттеулерді қамтитын аралас әдіс қолданылды және екі топтан да сандық деректер жиналды. Зерттеу көрсеткендей, екі топ, академиялық және кәсіби, студенттерге білім де, тәжірибе де қажет екендігімен келіскен. Студенттер цифрлық технологияларды пайдалана білумен қатар, барлық медиа арқылы аудиториясын қызықтыратын және өзіне тарта алатындай шығармашылықпен жаза білуі керек. Ең өзекті дағдылар қателерді тану, жалған дәлелдер, айла-шарғы жасау, фактілерді пікірлерден ажырату, тұжырымдамаларды талдау, сұрақтарды дұрыс қою, мазмұнға сыни көзқараспен қарау және көп оқу. Нәтижесінде журналистика саласындағы білім беру бағдарламалары бейнерепортаж, монтаждау, жазу және әлеуметтік медиа трендтері сияқты практикалық дағдылармен жабдықталуы керек деген ұсыныстардың бірі болды.

Жоғары білім берудің бірыңғай платформасына сәйкес айтарлықтай ерекшеленетін журналистика саласында 43 бакалавриат бағдарламасы бар. Кейбірі логикалық тәсілге назар аударса, бірі теориялық көзқарасқа, тарихқа, этикаға, заңдарға, журналистің құқықтарына назар аударады, ал басқалары оқыту дағдыларына немесе практикалық тәсілге толығымен бейім. Бірақ айтылған көптеген пікірлердің ішінде студенттерді оқытуда ақпараттық қызметтегі мансапқа мән бермеу керек екенін айта кеткеніміз жөн, өйткені, журналистика – бір ғана БАҚ-қа тапсыру үшін тым маңызды мамандық.

Түйін сөздер: журналистік білім, журналист мамандығы, білім беру бағдарламалары.

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Казахстанское журналистское образование в контексте современных реалий

Цель данного исследования – изучить текущие мысли участников академической среды и мысли профессионалов в медиаиндустрии о журналистском образовании, что считается наиболее важным при подготовке кадров. Использовался смешанный метод, который включает феноменологию и описательное исследование, также были собраны количественные данные от обеих групп. Исследование показало, что обе группы, академическая и профессиональная, согласились с тем, что студентам необходимо как образование, так и опыт. Студенты, наряду с применением цифровых технологий, должны также творчески писать тексты, которые увлекают и вовлекают их аудиторию во всех медиа. Наиболее актуально стало умение распознавать ошибки, ложные аргументы, манипуляции, отделять факты от мнений, анализировать концепции, правильно задавать вопросы, критично подходить к контенту, много читать. В результате одной из рекомендаций стало то, что образовательные программы по журналистике должны быть оснащены практическими навыками, такими как умение вести видеорепортажи, редактировать, писать материалы и отслеживать тенденции в социальных сетях.

По данным Единой платформы высшего образования, в бакалавриате реализуются 43 образовательные программы по журналистике, которые сильно различаются. Одни делают упор на более логические подходы, другие делают акцент на теоретическом подходе, на истории, этике, законах, правах журналистов, а третьи полностью склоняются к обучению навыкам или практическому подходу. Но среди множества озвученных мнений заслуживает внимание то, что подготовка студентов не должна делать акцент на карьере в новостных службах, поскольку журналистика – слишком важная профессия, чтобы делегировать ее исключительно одному СМИ.

Ключевые слова: журналистское образование, профессия журналиста, образовательные программы.

Introduction

Despite all the technological and social changes happening in the media industry, the quality of journalism still largely depends on the level of training of journalists. Without sustainable and modern education, journalists will not be able to effectively fulfill their role in society, making Finberg's statement (2012) relevant even today.

Apart from the critical assessments by Finberg (2012) and Lynch (2015), there has been little extensive research on what happens outside the classrooms and in the training of journalism students, especially in Kazakhstan. This study aims to bridge that gap.

The quality of journalism is largely determined by the level of professional training of journalists, which allows specialists to successfully adapt to the challenges of the rapidly changing media industry. The discrepancy between the professional requirements of journalism and the training of personnel at universities is a problem that is observed not only in this field, but also in most other fields of activity. Rapid changes in technology, audience needs and professional standards create a significant gap between what teachers can offer within traditional educational programs and what is necessary for successful work in modern realities. However, in journalism this gap becomes especially noticeable, since representatives of this profession work for a wide audience and are under constant public scrutiny.

Journalism is by its nature oriented towards the public interest and quickly reacts to changes in society. This makes shortcomings in the training of journalists more obvious, since the quality of their work directly affects the information, attitudes and behavior of citizens. While specialists in other professions can adapt to a relatively closed professional environment, journalists are forced to constantly be in the public eye, which increases criticism both from society and within the professional community. Thus, the lagging of the education system behind the rapidly changing conditions of professional activity is a general problem, but in journalism it is especially acute and requires a systematic approach to its solution.

Literature review

The literature devoted to the evolution of the profession of journalist and journalism education covers a wide range of issues: from the history of

journalism to modern challenges such as digitalization and algorithmization of media production. Of particular note are the works of famous Kazakhstani historians Kozybaev S.K. (1988), Noda L.P., Rozhkov A.V. (1997), Nurgozhina Sh.I. (2012), Ibraeva G.Zh. (2013), Barmankulov M.K. (1996).

Journalism is often viewed through the prism of various theoretical approaches in the works of Kiriya, I. V., & Novikova, A. (2017), Akhmadulina, E. V. (2006). A wide range of studies devoted to the changing role of a journalist Ibraeva, G. Zh. (2014, 2017, 2021), Barlybaeva, S. Kh. (2020), Hermida, A. (2012, 2015), Ekström, M., & Westlund, O. (2019), Perdomo, G., & Rodrigues-Rouleau, P. (2022), Broersma, M., Den Herder, B., & Schohaus, B. (2013), Pavlik, J. (2019), Middleton, M. (2009).

Curran & Seaton (2018) examine methods of training journalists taking into account technology and new market demands. A special place in the study of this topic is occupied by literature emphasizing the importance of teaching ethical standards in the context of information warfare and the dissemination of fake news – Dudinova, E. I. (2012), Stroud, S. R. (2019), Ward, S. J. (2018).

Methodology

Based on previous research, the following research questions and hypotheses are proposed:

RQ1: What does journalism education in Kazakhstan consist of? Do professional media structures help journalism schools provide relevant and practical educational programs?

H1: Journalism education in Kazakhstan can be roughly divided into two tracks: the information-analytical track and the technical-technological track. The first track includes competencies and skills necessary for innovation and employment, while the second track is related to content production using specific techniques that help create media products. During the educational program design phase, employers are surveyed to clarify and prioritize a preliminary list of competencies based on labor market analysis and professional standards. At this stage, the list of subjects through which learning outcomes can be achieved is discussed with key stakeholders.

RQ2: What skills are necessary for a beginner journalist?

H2: The primary skill required is the ability to communicate with people, which includes not only gathering the necessary information but also understanding its essence, distinguishing between primary and secondary points, processing the information,

and conveying it to the reader. Beginner journalists need practical experience regardless of its extent within the university program.

RQ3: Do employers in Kazakhstani media focus on the journalism education of potential employees? Is it necessary to study journalism at a university?

H3: Journalism education is not a crucial factor for hiring. Despite its shortcomings, university education allows future journalists to acquire a range of professional skills. A significant advantage of specialized education remains networking, and the journalistic environment formed within the faculty provides opportunities to share experiences and ideas.

To address the research questions and test the hypothesis, this study employs a quantitative approach based on a survey. An eight-question survey was sent to faculty and a ten-question survey was sent to media industry professionals. After the study collected quantitative data, qualitative data helped interpret the different ways in which faculty and professional journalists reflected on journalism curricula.

To test the research questions, both groups were asked to express their judgments by marking strongly agree/agree, neutral, disagree/strongly disagree on two statements from a quantitative survey about journalism curricula. The statements were:

- 1. The more educated a person is, the more likely he or she is to become a successful journalist.
- 2. The more experienced a person is, the more likely he or she is to find a job.

It was found that there was no significant difference in the beliefs of journalism educators and professional journalists that the more educated a person is, the more likely he or she is to become a successful journalist. Only a few disagreed with the importance of the curriculum. Educators strongly agree that a person with experience can easily find a job.

Education provides basic knowledge, skills, and often shapes problem-solving approaches, critical thinking, and the ability to learn. This can be a decisive factor for getting a start. Educated people often have more opportunities for career advancement because they can apply for higher positions from the start.

Experience, on the other hand, gives a practical understanding of how a particular field works, what tools and approaches are effective in real life, and how to cope with difficulties. It helps develop professional skills that are difficult to obtain through training alone. But it is in journalism that experience is often valued more highly, as employers often look

for people who already know how to quickly and competently collect information, work with texts, understand digital platforms and quickly create content. It is important to be able to not only write, but also to be aware of current events, know how to interact with various sources of information and be able to work under deadlines.

Both educators and professionals agreed that a combination of these two factors – education and experience – is needed for successful employment and career.

Results and discussion

For a comprehensive assessment of the current state of journalism education in Kazakhstan, it is necessary to identify the number and profile of universities implementing educational programs in the field of journalism. This includes both public and private higher education institutions that train specialists in the field of mass communications, media management and other related disciplines. An im-

portant aspect is also the analysis of the relevance and completeness of curricula, which should take into account the rapid development of the media industry, digitalization, as well as changes in the socio-political and cultural spheres. In addition, it is necessary to assess the role of practice-oriented training, the interaction of universities with media companies and other employers, as well as the preparation of students for professional standards, requirements and ethical norms of modern journalism.

The concept of Kazakh journalism education was first established with the creation of the Kazakh Institute of Journalism in 1934, following the founding of Kazakh State University (now Al-Farabi Kazakh National University). According to the Unified Platform for Higher Education in Kazakhstan, there are currently 43 active educational programs. The bachelor's degree is offered by 28 higher and postgraduate educational organizations (HPEO), the master's degree by 10 HPEOs, and the doctoral degree by 3 HPEOs.

Table 1 – Teaching journalism in universities in Kazakhstan

Universities	Number of students	Number of Masters	Number of doctoral students
al-Farabi Kazakh National University	630	93	34
«Turan» University	339	16	
Akhmet Baitursynuly Kostanay Regional University	104	16	4
Almaty Management University	201		
Astana IT University	73		
Innovative University of Eurasia	24		
International Education Corporation	62		
International Information Technologies University	127		
K.A. Yassawi International Kazakh-Turkish University	126		
Karagandy University of the name of academician E.A.Buketov	307	8	
Kazakh Ablai Khan University of International Relations and World Languages	205	6	
Kazakh-American Free University	60		
Kenzhegali Sagadiyev University of International Business	246		
Kh.Dosmukhamedov Atyrau university	176		
KIMEP university	92	5	
Kokshetau University named after Sh.Ualikhanov	9		
Korkyt Ata Kyzylorda university	141		
Kyzylorda «Bolashak» University	9		
L.N.Gumilyov Eurasian National University	518	75	27
M. Auezov South Kazakhstan University	282		

Continuation of the table

Universities	Number of students	Number of Masters	Number of doctoral students
M. Kozybayev North Kazakhstan University	115	1	
M. Narikbayev KAZGUU University	259		
Q University	37		
Sarsen Amanzholov East Kazakhstan university	64		
Suleyman Demirel University	222	10	
Taraz Regional University named after M.Kh.Dulati	240		
Toraighyrov University	279	5	
Zhetysu university named after Ilias Zhansugurov	144		
Total	5091	235	65

There is no official ranking of educational programs in the field of Kazakhstani journalism, but a unified accreditation system helps to maintain more competitive and high-quality programs, ensuring that they meet high standards for training specialists in this field. The Independent Agency for Accreditation and Rating (IAAR) has been conducting the "Independent University Demand Rating" of the Republic of Kazakhstan since 2014. Since 2018, the National Chamber of Entrepreneurs "Atameken" has been evaluating educational programs at Kazakh universities on behalf of the Ministry of Science and Higher Education.

The methodology for forming the ranking of educational programs is based on the following criteria:

- **1. Career Prospects of Graduates** 49% (employment rate, salary)
- **2. Quality Indicators of the Program** 16% (development/approval of the program with employers, costs for developing material and educational resources, quality of teaching staff)
- **3.** Achievements of the Program 14% (academic mobility, scientific and entrepreneurial initiatives of students, proportion of international students)
- **4. Content Evaluation of the Program** 9% (alignment of learning outcomes, relevance of courses)
- **5. Overall Indicators of the Higher and Post-graduate Education Organization** 12% (student-to-faculty ratio, proportion of qualified faculty, scientific activity of faculty, faculty salaries)

In the future of academic journalism education, a third of survey participants view it optimistically:

the educational reform allowing universities to independently design up to 85% of their educational programs is expected to yield positive results, enabling them to "respond promptly to market demands and enhance the competitiveness of university graduates." However, this is only feasible with the recruitment of new faculty, as the gap between professionals and professors continues to widen each year.

Technology is constantly evolving, and this challenges journalism education to adapt to the future. Educational institutions are reshaping their programs to meet the needs of the industry. In an attempt to shape educational programs that are useful to students, educators have found it extremely difficult to develop a precise formula for incorporating skills and theory into social science courses. The pressure to solve problems and make decisions in core and required courses that require the study of contextual topics and the development of critical thinking is a constant theme in journalism departments. (Blom & Davenport, 2012). It is vital that journalists acquire the business skills needed to run their own media enterprises, such as blogs, podcasts or independent news sites, in order to support themselves professionally (Bencoil, 2011). Teachers and their students in the classroom can publish their articles and work on social media, receiving recognition and criticism not only from their peers but also from journalism professionals. In turn, journalists can receive instant feedback from young students, which can be useful for their work and inspire new ideas. In general, social media provides a platform for mentoring, where professional journalists can share their experience and knowledge with newcomers.

Table 2 – Aspects of quality in journalism education

Reasons for Criticism of Journalism Education	The Role of the Professional Environment in Journalist Training	Interaction between Educational Institutions and the Professional Environment
1. Outdated Curricula: Academic programs often struggle to keep pace with the rapid changes in the media sphere, leading to inadequate training in relevant skills, such as working with new technologies and platforms. 2. Lack of Practical Skills: Many students graduate with theoretical knowledge but without sufficient experience working in real-world conditions. 3. Limited Resources: Some educational institutions lack the resources to provide students with modern equipment and access to the latest tools and technologies.	1. Internships and Practical Experience: Real-world practice in newsrooms and media organizations helps students acquire the necessary skills and experience. It also enhances their understanding of the real challenges and demands of the profession. 2. Journalism fellowship, whether in production or through guest lectures, can instill in student journalists accuracy, impartiality, balance and honesty. 3. Large media corporations can provide student journalists with a platform, media resources to launch their future careers.	1. Partnerships: Collaboration between universities and media organizations allows for the creation of more relevant and practice-oriented training programs. 2. Collaborate with the media industry to improve employability of its students. 3. Promote scientific developments of media industry scientists.

However, the large amount of information and opinions on social media makes it difficult to distinguish between high-quality and reliable sources. Here, it is important to teach students to adhere to journalistic ethics and fact-checking (Plaisance, 2006). Thus, the impact of social media on the experience of students and professional journalists largely depends on how both sides use these platforms for learning, communication, and professional development.

The study showed a positive relationship between social media use and digital knowledge. At the same time, representatives of the Kazakhstani media sector have to acknowledge that, despite the "brilliant" specialists graduating from local universities, the market does not yet offer them suitable positions. According to practitioners, the real "engine" for reforming journalism education may be the media industry itself, provided it operates solely on market principles.

"One of the industry experts expressed, 'We are preparing journalists for projects, but we need the projects themselves to be successful, effective, and profitable. However, no one is working on that. And the big question then is: where will journalists go?" One possible solution to this problem is to train future journalists not only in content creation skills but also in ways to promote and monetize that content. Currently, editorial leaders are not focused on seeking investments and are unfamiliar with crowdfunding or fundraising mechanisms.

Today, Kazakhstani media are primarily financed from two sources: advertisers and government orders. The instability of these sources leads to underfunding in the media sector and, consequently, relatively low salaries. The low-income level in the media sector dictates a similarly low entry threshold for journalism in Kazakhstan.

Employers and media editors at professional forums and media conferences give a critical, even bleak, assessment of journalism programs in Kazakhstani educational institutions and advocate for their reduction. Experts argue that journalism education does not align with the professional field that students hope to enter.

The diversity of expert opinions helps to find the best solutions, on the one hand, but on the other hand, it is not always possible to come to a consensus on how training should be organized, since everyone makes a proposal based on their experience. Everyone believes that this or that direction is the most important. At the same time, it is necessary to take into account that students are also different and therefore it is somehow difficult to offer a specific training model that would suit everyone. It is always a search for a balance between needs and possibilities, ideas and reality.

The research has identified an expanding gap between journalism education and professional journalism. However, it is important to recognize that educational institutions are not solely responsible for the training of journalists. The professional journalism environment also plays a key role in shaping competent professionals.

Thus, criticism of journalism education should consider the importance of the interaction between educational institutions and the professional environment. Only through joint efforts can we ensure the training of qualified journalists who are ready to face modern challenges.

Conclusion

Academic problems exist: the world is changing faster than those who are supposed to teach students can learn themselves. Journalism education is undergoing changes in how journalism is taught and who teaches it. This phenomenon is not unique to Kazakhstan or journalism education; disruptions are occurring across all areas of education. This happens at all educational levels—from primary schools and high schools to colleges and universities—because education is being disrupted by the same technological innovations that have upended the media industry.

Those who do not innovate in education are left behind, just as those who choose not to innovate in newsrooms are. The future of journalism education is tied to the future of journalism itself. Each is caught in a vortex of the other, both swirling in today's tumultuous changes.

In this context, it is crucial to encourage more diverse teaching methods—lectures, videos, massive online courses. Students who grew up on the internet understand this. Students who experienced electronic learning during the pandemic understand it. Even students who have not taken formal online courses use informal electronic learning, such as the thousands of tutorials on YouTube.

Journalism education is the foundation for training professionals who can adapt to the rapidly changing media landscape. Modern journalists need not only writing and investigative skills but also knowledge of new technologies, social media, and digital platforms. Investing in quality education for journalists helps ensure that the public receives accurate and objective information, which is especially important in the context of information overload and the spread of fake news.

The gap between what a journalism education provides and what employers demand calls for more research to determine what skills are needed to land a job in today's newsroom.

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