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## National-cultural Determination of the Journalism Studies Evolution

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### Abstract

The authors aim to trace how the evolution of the journalism studies took place under the impact of social and cultural factors. The article examines the processes of institutionalization of this field of knowledge in the world, in particular in Germany and the USA. The research community from Russia takes an active part in international academic cooperation, but its experience is characterized by a clear national and cultural identity. To reveal this specificity, the authors focus on the oldest Russian school of journalism that has developed at St. Petersburg University. Since its foundation, it has gravitated towards the classical university model typical of Russian higher education, which nevertheless organically combines with applied training. In this respect, the Petersburg school differs from a number of precedents in other countries, where pragmatic education is cultivated on the basis of communication methodology in science. The article presents the stages of formation and the current state of the school, shows the determining influence on it of national traditions in science and the dynamic social environment, describes the effective practice of project organization of research work. The results of projects are embodied in the ongoing series of monographs "Petersburg School of Journalism and Mass Communications".

**Keywords:** journalism studies, academic discipline, international experience, cultural context, St. Petersburg University.

### 1. Introduction

In 2022, one hundred years have passed since the opening in Germany, at the University of Leipzig, of the world's first council for awarding the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the field of the history of journalism and newspaper business. However, until now, the academic status of the journalism studies remains an "eternal question" that no national research school can ignore. Scholars from different countries are forced to prove that their field of knowledge has the right to exist (Barrer, 2022; Korkonosenko, 2021; López et al., 2020; Meyen, 2012; Nixon, 1982; Schemmert, Siemens, 2013). One of the main reasons for this never-ending polemic lies in the difference in the ways in which journalism studying and teaching have developed in various regions of the world and, accordingly, in the results of development.

Consequently, the researchers' attention to the national and cultural contexts in which journalism schools were formed and operate is highly motivated and useful. Thus, an important theoretical thesis about the fruitfulness of diversity in this field of academic activity will get an additional support. For the authors, this study occurred a continuation of the interuniversity project "Theoretical and Pedagogical Schools of Journalism" (2017-2021), initiated by the Department of Theory of Journalism and Mass Communications of St. Petersburg State University. In particular, the project was intended to reveal the deep dependence of the studies and education

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on national traditions in science, pedagogy and media practice, each of which intertwines with others and their peculiarities enrich the debate (López et al., 2020: 3). The results of the project were presented in a series of publications (Berezhnaya, Korkonosenko, 2021; Blokhin, 2020; Tulupov, 2020; Fateyeva, 2019; Khubetova, 2021), including a collective monograph (Korkonosenko, 2021).

## 2. Materials and methods

The authors aim to trace the trajectories of the study of journalism on an international and national scale. In methodological terms, the development of cognition is understood as a continuous process of an evolutionary nature, and it acquires distinct features of national and cultural identity. To study such evolutionary trajectories, the authors of the article look at the experience of some countries, ultimately focusing on Russia, using the example of the formation and current activities of the St. Petersburg school of journalism and mass communications.

At the first stage, on the basis of scholarly literature, data on trends in the development of national models of journalism studies in Europe and America were summarized and systematized. Comparing the experience of different countries helps to identify the logic of changes in the studied industry on a global scale and determine the causes and consequences of changes of intellectual paradigms that took place in European, American and Russian scholarships.

At the second stage, empirical data from review articles, archival materials and dissertations on the life cycle of the Petersburg school of journalism and mass communications are analyzed. While studying the latest publications, some gaps in knowledge about the evolutionary dynamics of the school were eliminated. The results obtained are interpreted in the light of the logic of the international journalism studies development.

At the third stage, the results of journalism research projects at St. Petersburg State University are described as well as characteristic features of the school of journalism and mass communications created here.

## 3. Discussion

To be a recognized research field journalism should have some institutional attributes: specialized university departments; relevant dissertation councils and academic degrees in the field of journalism; associations of scholars specializing in journalism; periodic and non-periodic research publications in this subject area. Germany was the first country to pass all the stages of institutionalization of journalism knowledge; in this country, in 1916, the world's first research structure in the field was opened – the Institute for Newspaper Studies at Leipzig University (Göschel, 2012), in 1926 Erich Everth became the first full professor of newspaper studies and established the chair of this profile, a research magazine on journalism "Zeitungswissenschaft" started, and a series of works on journalism "Zeitung und Leben" was founded (95 volumes from 1928 to 1941). On the German scientists' initiative, in 1928 the first in history International Scientific Congress of Researchers in the Field of Press was convened (Fateyeva, 2019: 18). In general, in the pre-war period it was only Germany where "the university showed a real interest in journalism, albeit as a subject of study rather than a place where the trade should be learned" (Barrera, 2022: 3).

As historical sources show, until the 1940s the German experience had a significant impact on the formation of national models in other states, where journalism also began to be perceived as a promising object of research cognition. In Germany, the first studies of journalism were included in the German philology, but after establishing of specialized research institutes, they became a part of social sciences. This transition to the social disciplines showed the possibilities of studying journalism not only as a phenomenon of literature, but also as an important socio-political institution. There was considerable academic interest in journalism research in Germany, which did not occur in other European countries. This was the birth of what was called "newspaper science" (Zeitungswissenschaft). "Some US authors admired the German contributions as conscientious studies of the press as opposed to the overriding practical nature of the written output of professors from most such schools in the USA" (Barrera, 2022: 3).

In the USA, journalism as an academic discipline also received an initial "registration" in the system of philological sciences; in 1900-1920, the first training programs were opened at the departments of English philology of leading American universities. In the mid-1920s journalism was withdrawn from the field of philology and was integrated with social and humanitarian

disciplines. For example, at Stanford University in 1910, journalism training started with the News Writing program typical of the United States, but in 1925 the training was transferred to the School of Social Sciences.

Up to the end of World War II, the practical skills forming was considered the main goal of university education not only in the United States, but also in other countries of North and South America. The academic literature was dominated by guidelines for writing and editing texts, for the design of periodicals and the organization of editorial activities. In the USA, this period ended with the emergence of special research structures in the field of journalism.

In 1947, the Institute for Communications Research was founded at the University of Illinois, on the base of which the realization of the Doctoral Program in Mass Communication began as well as the award of the related academic degree. In 1950, the National Society for the Study of Communication was founded (now known as International Communication Association, ICA); in the same year, the Society began publishing "Journal of Communication". The new specialty made it possible to formalize researches in such subject areas as "journalism", "speech communication" and "rhetoric" traditional for American universities, and one of the main tasks of the communicativists' community was to popularize the use of social science methods for journalism studies.

For world journalism studies, the emergence of the branch of communication research and the subsequent development of its theoretical basis have become important factors of a paradigm shift, the so called "linguistic turn in journalism studies". Since the mid-twentieth century, the communicative methodological approach and the theory of communication as the foundation of social communication research have become widely popular not only in the United States, but also abroad, changing the structure of knowledge. Raymond Nixon writes about Latin American journalism schools: in this region, before 1964 the researches mostly constituted historical and legal studies of the press. Between 1964 and 1980, they began to implement methods from social and behavioral sciences. At first, Latin American professors tended to use research models from the USA or Europe, "but now they have begun to develop others better adapted to their national realities" (Nixon, 1982: 17).

It is noteworthy that in the literature 1964 is marked as an important milestone in the history of communication studies. It was then that Marshall McLuhan's "Understanding media: the extension of man" was published, and the communication concepts contained in it have gained worldwide fame. Researchers estimate the 1960s as the era of leadership in the United States of representatives of "Chi-Squares" as journalism teachers and researchers were called, whose methodology was based on statistics and quantitative measurements and corresponded to the norms of research universities in North America.

Among other things, the increased influence of communication research was due to unscientific (socio-political) factors. The position of the United States as one of the victorious countries in the Second World War was significantly strengthened. The authority of the American system of journalism studies has also increased; on the one hand, the States got a large number of European scholars who fled from the Nazi threat in the 1930s and 1940s, on the other hand, American universities were in a better financial position than European science.

It is known that with the end of the Great Depression in America, social and humanitarian disciplines were among the priorities and began to receive increased funding (Aleksandrov, Kolchinsky, 2006). In the post-war years, the field of media and communication in Europe can be seen "as a matter of adoption in varying degrees of the dominant American paradigm" (McQuail, 2009: 282).

In Germany, divided into zones of Western and Soviet influence, the communicative approach began to enter journalism studies only by the end of the 1960s and only in the territory of FRG. Of the many former centers of journalism research and teaching in the Western zone, only three institutions managed to survive – Berlin, Munich and Munster. Until the 1970s, journalism studies in FRG were stagnating, there were less than 10 departments in the country on the profile of "journalism / Publizistik" and there was only one professor (Meyen, Wiedemann, 2017). The rest of the European journalism science also was in stagnation, besides a few exceptions. According to Spanish researchers, their country became a pioneer in the academic integration of journalism given that, in 1971, no other country in Western Europe had university degrees in journalism or other communication professions (Barrera, 2022: 11).

At the same time, in the GDR, the restoration of the journalism science started in the very first post-war years. The task of reviving the field of research was assigned to the very University of Leipzig, from which the world history of this academic branch began. "Like their colleagues in West Germany, the Leipzig professors had to rebuild the discipline from scratch after World War II. *Zeitungswissenschaft*, the early German version of communication studies, had lost its reputation because of its attempts to join the rulers during the Nazi regime" (Meyen, Wiedemann, 2017: 1840). Newly created Institute for Journalism and Newspaper Studies (1954-1968 – Faculty of Journalism, 1968-1990 – Journalism Section) in Leipzig became one of the centers for the development of theoretical journalistic thought throughout Central and Eastern Europe. Until its disbandment after the reunification of Germany (1990), it solved the fundamental task for all countries of the socialist bloc of turning journalism into a Marxist science.

Of course, the content and effectiveness of research in socialist Germany were greatly influenced by external factors, primarily orientation to Soviet practices in sciences. Western researchers note that communist countries had adopted academic model of journalism education before others, albeit with strong ideological control (Barrera, 2022: 11). Also, the image of the Leipzig University journalism school was significantly influenced by the political protectionism of the ruling Socialist Unity Party of Germany, which tried to use the researchers' activities for increasing the prestige of the GDR at the international level.

Since the late 1960s, researchers and teachers of journalism from East and West Germany have met each other at international conferences around the world. In 1972, the head of the Journalism Section, Emil Dusiska, was elected Secretary General of the International Association for Media and Communication Research (IAMCR), then the University of Leipzig became a platform for global scientific exchange in the field of journalism. In 1974, IAMCR held a conference in Leipzig with a record number of participants – about 250, the Western world was represented by many prominent scientists, including Herbert Schiller, George Gerbner, John Pollock, Gerhard Maletzke, and Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann. As the dean of the Journalism Faculty of Moscow State University Yassen Zassoursky recalled, the active participation of scholars from East Germany in global cooperation became possible, in particular, thanks to aspiration of IAMCR's founders to make the organization really international. "These people were not very usual even for that time. They wanted to reunite the East and the West... The organization was about professional journalism which is independent of non-journalistic influences" (Meyen, 2018b).

Meanwhile, by the end of the 1970s, the interest of the ruling party in participating in international public organizations declined, so researchers began to distance themselves from global exchange. In West Germany, science was increasingly immersed in the discourse of communication studies under US domination. At the time of the German reunification, researchers in GDR were poorly adapted to the paradigm of the sociological media studies, did not speak enough English, which became a pass to global academic cooperation, and were little familiar with the realities of capitalist media production. However, in the united Germany, the main reason for ignoring the theoretical ideas developed in Leipzig was politics: "this paradigm death was politically motivated... It takes paid positions at universities to get students, admirers, citations, and even histories. Leipzig's fall into complete oblivion consequently says nothing about the value of the academic work done there before the Berlin Wall came down" (Meyen, Wiedemann, 2017: 1840). This was the end of the distinctive research tradition of the socialism era.

The last decade of the twentieth century became a period of unification of journalism research practices, which was due to the new world order, free from the confrontation of socialist and capitalist ideological systems. "In the field of journalism studies (as in many others), the force of Anglo-Saxon perspectives has outshined other approaches and attempts" (López et al., 2020: 3), which was facilitated by personal contacts between researchers from different parts of the world. K. Nordenstreng, who was a President of International Organization of Journalists and one of the IAMCR leaders draws attention to such contacts: "In IAMCR since 1966, it was part of my mission to promote communication research in an ecumenical way. Building bridges between East and West was Finnish foreign policy. I was particularly happy to see that IAMCR did bring together Eastern and Western scholars as well as scholars from the developing countries" (Meyen, 2018a).

Thus, in the development of journalism research on a global scale, there were features of both nationally cultural identity, and convergence and even unification of conceptual approaches as a result of cross-country interaction. An organic part of the broad international discourse is the

activity of the St. Petersburg school of journalism in Russia. However, its development followed a very peculiar evolutionary trajectory.

#### 4. Results

At the turn of the XIX-XX centuries, St. Petersburg University was a center of academic thought of the Russian Empire and was immersed in the common European scientific and educational space, so it was not alien to the trends of institutionalization of foreign journalism science. The first experiences of university scholars in newspaper research were recorded in the 1910s-1920s. Presumably in the 1920s, L.K. Ilyinsky lectured on the disciplines "History of Russian criticism and journalism" and "Theory and practice of newspaper business" at the Russian Language and Literature Department, he was a well-known bibliographer and literary critic, head of the periodicals department at the Russian Book Chamber. There are mentions that in 1926 at Leningrad University (a new name in Soviet times) there was a department of newspaper business at the Faculty of Linguistics and Material Culture, and already in 1927, the question was raised on the establishing of the Journalism Faculty (Zhirkov, 2006: 13). Future journalists were taught "typesetting techniques and the history of Russian journalism... However, when the Faculty of Linguistics was reformed into the Faculty of Philology, the department was abolished" (70 let..., 2015). It can be assumed that if this first attempts were successful, the journalism studies in Leningrad would be much closer in its subject-thematic content to what German scholars developed within the framework of early newspaper studies. At that stage, only one of the two journalistic disciplines, that is, the history of journalism, proceeded continuous development of the research tradition.

In the period between the two World Wars, the history of journalism in the context of the literary process was actively studied by representatives of classical philology: V.E. Evgeniev-Maksimov, N.I. Mordovchenko, I.G. Yampolsky, A.V. Zapadov, and others. This merger appeared due to specific understanding journalism as an object of study, pre- and post-revolutionary: "Both writer and journalist dealt with the text; both were engaged in publicism, literary criticism, feuilleton, satire and humor, in general, the creation of books" (Zhirkov, 2006: 12).

The new research field began with the development of a methodology for the history of Russian journalism. Later, the approaches to choosing objects and interpretative contexts mastered at Leningrad University became generally accepted in the USSR: historians focused on publications, publishers and publicists whose activities could be described from the viewpoint of participation in the revolutionary democratic movement. The most attention was paid to Belinsky, Dobrolyubov, Nekrasov, and Chernyshevsky. Besides objective reasons, the choice of names was influenced by the research concept of the authors of the fundamental work "Essays on the history of Russian journalism and criticism. Volume 1. The XVIII century and the first half of the XIX century". The book was written before the Great Patriotic War by an author's team led by V.E. Evgeniev-Maksimov (published in 1950).

In the post-war period, the Soviet journalism studies gained institutional recognition in classical universities, and historians of Leningrad University joined the general discourse of interpretation of journalism in line with Marxist methodology. Important changes in the directions of research occurred, particularly, priorities were given to the Bolshevik and Soviet press. But even within such an ideological framework, scholars have been able to achieve impressive results. At the same time, the connection with foreign (especially Western) science began to weaken.

The institutional growth of journalistic studies at the University indicates the gradual transformation of this educational institution into one of the most influential research centers of the Soviet Union. It should be recalled the creation of the journalism department in the 1945/1946 academic year, the first in the country program on the discipline "Theory and practice of the Party-Soviet press" (1947), the first standard curriculum for journalism departments (1949), the establishing of postgraduate studies (1949), a special series of the university journal, collections of articles on the history of Soviet journalism and the periodicals theory and practice (1957), the organization of an annual conference on the research and teaching of journalism (continuously since 1961), the first doctoral dissertation in the field "Journalism" (1966), etc. The tradition of political understanding of processes in history and journalism was picked up by a new generation of scholars who already had a professional journalistic education (among whom was the first dean of the Journalism Faculty Alexander Berezhnoy). Additionally, new directions and accents appeared in the work: while global science was actively searching for a methodological basis for

mass media research, Leningrad scholars focused on the general theoretical and political aspects of knowledge on journalism. Later, general theory and political theory became the thematic priorities of the St. Petersburg school of journalism and mass communications. The University did not stay away from the involvement of social science methods in the press research, which gained popularity in the 1960s and 1980s. However, the Soviet "Chi-Squares" failed to radically change the structure of the journalism theory, although the methodology of statistical research influenced the development of the Russian sociology (more about this: [Khubetcova, 2021](#)).

Leningrad University scientists have made a significant contribution to the formation of a number of research directions and subject areas. "In the Soviet period, the theory of journalism was formed as a discipline, within the framework of which its social functions and roles were studied... Sociological methods in the work of a journalist were thematically presented in practice-oriented academic disciplines, problems of feedback with the audience and scientific organization of labour were considered in the research of editorial activity..." ([Blokhin, 2020: 104](#)). Let's also add changes in approaches to the language of a journalistic work: thanks to Leningrad linguists, it turned from an applied tool of professional activity into a valuable object of cognition, that demonstrated an inclusion of Soviet science in the "linguistic turn" mentioned above. On this theoretical and methodological foundation, at the turn of the XX-XXI centuries, a current stage of the St. Petersburg school of journalism evolution started.

At that time, the main trends in the world academic discourse on journalism were the growth of the number of highly specialized theories and empirical projects corresponding to them. There was also an expansion of the object-subject field by including mass-communicative phenomena that do not always correspond to the classical understanding of journalism as an institution and professional activity. For Russia, the stage of the formation of specialized journalism theories partially coincided with the period of renewal of the entire scientific paradigm, with the de-ideologization and depoliticization of research both in the choice of objects of analysis and in the development of a methodological basis. By the beginning of the 2000s, the continuity of research practices made it possible to develop as autonomous theories and academic disciplines such specialized fields of study as sociology of journalism, political science of journalism, psychology of journalism, and legal foundations of journalism. The maturity of journalism social theories became a factor of creating the first dissertation council on specialty "Journalism" in political sciences (2001), in addition to traditional philological degrees.

Last decades, some Russian experts call for a radical change in the methodological foundations of science and the replacement of the journalism studies with Western-type communicative research. The community of St. Petersburg University reacted ambiguously to this intention. At some point in the educational process, there was competition between the theory of communication and the theory of journalism, which has existed since the Soviet era. Discussions between "Westerners" and "traditionalists" ended with a reasonable compromise: in 2011, the Faculty of Journalism was transformed into the Institute "School of Journalism and Mass Communications", the organizational structure of which allows to combine both methodological trends.

The St. Petersburg School aims at renewal models of activities not by denying previous experience, but through introduction of innovative ways in organizing academic life. The University became the first in Russia to restore the academic freedom in arranging dissertation procedures that existed from the 1830s until 1918; in the following decades, the awarding of academic degrees was under the centralized control of the federal administration. In 2013, the Ph.D. St. Petersburg University degree was experimentally introduced. On results of this unique experience, St. Petersburg and Moscow Universities obtained the right to award their own academic degrees by special rules (2016). On October 18, 2018, the first candidate thesis of Ph.D. St. Petersburg University the "Journalism" specialty was defended.

Perspective research projecting has become an effective way to involve the Petersburg school in the national and international academic discourse. In particular, over the past ten years, a number of projects have been implemented that correspond to scholarly priorities of the University: "Political journalism in modern Russia: an integrated approach" (2013-2014) – the results are presented in the textbook for universities "Political Journalism" (2015); "Theory of journalism in Russia: genesis, current state, directions of development" (2013-2018) – see the monographs "Journalism theories in Russia: origin and development" (2014) and "Journalism theory in Russia" (2018). The latter initiated the tradition of publishing the results of project activities in the series

"St. Petersburg School of Journalism and Mass Communications" (Aletheia Publisher). The series is regularly updated with new monographs: "Aesthetics of journalism" (2018), "Communicative aggressions of the XXI century" (2019), "Personality in the coordinates of media" (2020), "State communications in the digital public sphere of Russia" (2020), "Essays of the Petersburg school of journalism" (2020), "Russian journalism: the evolution of ideas and forms" (2021), "Art journalism: speech techniques for evaluating works of art" (2021), "Theoretical and pedagogical schools of journalism in Russia" (2021).

By in-depth intellectual work, the Petersburg school of journalism continues to develop the academic traditions of the classical university and makes a significant contribution to the formation of a unique image of the national journalism studies.

## 5. Conclusion

The undertaken analysis shows that the national trajectories of the journalism studies differ and are not unified in nature. Characteristic examples of the determining impact of social conditions are provided by Germany, where research paradigms radically changed first following the Second World War, and then as a result of the unification of the two parts of the country. In Russia, journalism studying and teaching also depend on the national-cultural context and the changing social environment. This is how the school of journalism at St. Petersburg University was formed and operates. Initially, it gravitated towards the academic pedagogical model typical of Russian higher education, and follows this orientation at the present time. The methodology of communicative research, which has received priority development in a number of other countries, gets practical use, however, without excessive bias in pragmatism and empiricism. Numerous research and publishing projects give an adequate representation on the directions and results of the Petersburg school of journalism and mass communications activities.

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