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## Journalistic Education in Higher Educational Institutions of China

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### Abstract

Education in the specialty “journalism and mass communications” is a relatively special part of the higher education system in China, its ideological and political attributes determine the features that distinguish it from other disciplines of organizational management and practical activities in this field. For example, in China, party and state bodies are deeply interested in training personnel in the field of journalism and mass communications in higher educational institutions of the country. This approach is not only unique in the education system of the country of China, but also has no analogues in the system of world higher education. The study of politics, traditions and other cultural and historical components have allowed us to identify the features of education in the field of communicative specialties in the specified country (Zhang Kun: 2020). The purpose of the study is to identify trends in the training of specialists in the field of journalism and mass communications in China. Research methods – analysis of documents of educational programs in the disciplines “journalism and mass communications”.

For more than 100 years of development, China's higher education in the field of journalism and mass communication has gone from the initial period of creation, formation to mature development. Journalism and mass communication as an essential component of the higher education system have reached significant proportions in China.

**Keywords:** journalism and mass communications, education, higher education institution, China.

### 1. Introduction

In the article H. Neumann a serious analysis of the activities of European universities over twenty years is given, the disadvantages and advantages of education are identified, the future of universities is determined (Neumann, 2018).

The study by M.A. Berezhnaya and S.G. Korkonosenko examines the qualitative originality, the current state and problems of improving journalistic education in Russia. Singling out the school of journalism as an independent object of study, identifying and emphasizing features of originality in it, the project participants thereby refer it to models that deny global standardization and reflect diversity in the training of specialists. The authors of the article, recognizing the variability of approaches to education under the influence of fundamental shifts in practice and the momentary conjuncture, at the same time emphasize the importance of constant characteristics of the phenomenon of school (Berezhnaya, Korkonosenko, 2021).

The authors of the fundamental study “Mass media education in Commonwealth of Independent States” conducted a comparative analysis and systematization of the material,

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identified the main theoretical and methodological concepts of media education in the CIS countries (Fedorov et al., 2020). Their article discusses the goals, objectives and concepts of the media education project in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), as well as the goals and objectives, role, place, functions, organizational forms of media education in the general education system. The main theoretical and methodological concepts of media education in the CIS countries identified by them, which can become a promising basis for further successful development in Russian conditions.

Solkin's book analyzes the diversity of journalism education practices around the world (Solkin, 2020). Based on a selection of over 300 individual published contributions (books, book chapters, journal articles, and conference papers), this article examines the more traditional debates, theory versus practice, and profession versus craft, and their development in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The question is raised how to protect European universities from becoming simple technocratic, commercially oriented innovation centers, deprived of their original humanistic orientation.

A number of works are devoted to modern theories of Russian journalism and their transformation under the influence of robotics and new technologies of the media industry (Vartanova, 2018; Zorin, 2018).

In modern research, the authors address the problem of the use of artificial intelligence in the field of education, as an example, journalism faculties in Russian universities are given (Nerets, 2022).

This systematic review provides the scholarly community with a current synthesis of mobile learning research across 2010–2016 in higher education settings regarding the purposes, outcomes, methodologies, subject matter domains, educational level, educational context, device types and geographical distribution of studies. Higher education faculty are encouraged to consider the opportunity to expand their learning possibilities beyond the classroom with mobile learning (Crompton, Burke, 2018; Gálik, 2020; Gálik, Oprala, 2021; Rykov et al., 2017).

A critical review of the research literature devoted to the study of approaches to journalistic education of the 21<sup>st</sup> century is offered in L. Solkin's book (Solkin, 2020).

Recently, interest has grown in data journalism and its use in the process of training future media workers (Irmer, 2018; Lewis et al, 2018; 2020; Heravi, 2019).

In the article “Teaching data journalism and computational skills”, the author offers four recommendations that will help teachers adjust their curricula taking into account the rapid integration of data into journalism. Firstly, teaching numeracy and basic descriptive statistics should be required either in the form of modules in existing courses, or in the form of separate sentences. Secondly, students should be taught to avoid mistakes when interpreting and writing data in both reporting and visual classes. Third, ethics courses should discuss data as a transparency tool, which creates special dilemmas. Fourth, computational thinking, or how to analyze and solve problems as a computer does, can be incorporated into existing classes teaching logic (McAdams, 2020).

Let's turn to a brief history of higher education and mass communication in China.

In 1918, the Association for Journalism Studies at Peking University was established, which marked the beginning of journalism education in China. Over the past 100 years, with the continuous updating of communication technologies, the education of this country in this area continues to develop rapidly.

Based on the analysis of documents and relevant scientific papers on the topic (Jin Ying et al., 2020; Li Bin, Liu Hailong, 2016; Liu Haigui, 2006; Song Hongmei et al., 2019; Tong Bin, 2009; Yao Yunxiao, 2019; Zhang Kun, 2020) the history of education in journalism and mass communication in higher educational institutions in China from the beginning to the present day can be divided into four stages:

The first stage was the establishment of the Association for Journalism Studies at Peking University in the period from 1918 to the founding of New China (The Republic of China) in 1949. This stage is considered the initial period of the formation of communicative education in the country.

The second stage lasts from the foundation of New China in 1949 until the beginning of the Reform and Opening policy in 1978. This stage is considered a difficult period for the promotion of communicative education. Under the influence of the political movement of mainland China,

the development of communication education was slow. During the Cultural Revolution (1966–1976), higher education, including journalism, was suspended in the country.

The third stage is from the beginning of the Reform and Opening policy in 1978 to the beginning of the new millennium.

This stage is characterized as a period of restoration of communicative education. After the reform and opening, a gradual ideological emancipation began in all spheres of the country. The system of journalistic education and the corresponding academic science has been restored, journalistic and communication education in the country has quickly entered the right channel and shown significant development.

The fourth stage is from the beginning of the millennium to the present day. This is a period of rapid development of the media industry and communication education in the country.

## 2. Materials and methods

The section is based on the study of documents of the Ministry of Education of China and academic disciplines in higher education institutions in different periods, mainly from 2017 to 2021.

## 3. Discussion

An important place in the process of journalistic education is occupied by the design of the curriculum. Based on the analysis of the curricula of reputable educational institutions in China, researchers (Liao Sheng, Luo Yicheng, 2016) managed to identify the distinctive characteristics of journalistic disciplines' teaching in different historical periods.

In the initial period of journalism training (1918-1930), most teachers in this field returned to their homeland, receiving professional education in journalism abroad, so at this stage in higher educational institutions of the country mainly accepted a foreign, especially American, system of journalistic education; courses in the specialty itself occupied only a small share in the curriculum, in particular mainly focused on the formation of practical skills of students; paid special attention to improving knowledge of foreign languages in the preparation of graduates.

In the 1940s, it was observed: the inclusion of political party doctrine and political overtones in the curriculum; the introduction of military journalism; the division of equal importance to the teaching of national (Chinese) and foreign languages in connection with the difficult situation in the country and the need for external communication.

After the founding of new China, the basic courses in journalism changed over time. The new characteristics of the curriculum during this period are: the introduction of courses in Marxist theory and courses in the history of the Chinese Revolution, which already make up a significant proportion, as well as an increase in literary and artistic content.

As mentioned above, from 1966 to 1976, during the Cultural Revolution, higher education in the country, including journalism, was suspended.

In the 80s of the twentieth century, the opening of relevant courses in the specialty “radio and television” took place; the inclusion of courses on “mass communication” in the curriculum. It should be noted that during this period, journalism and mass communication of Western countries again gained China's close attention, which is the embodiment of resolute reform and openness in the field of education at the state level.

After entering the XXI century, students were intensively trained, aimed at developing their comprehensive abilities; in addition to general and professional courses, related disciplines were introduced; digital communication technologies were actively used in order to adapt to the development of a new media reality.

Let's turn to the question of the operating system obtaining bachelor's degrees in China. According to the latest classification established by the Ministry of Education of China, recorded in the “Handbook of Bachelor's Degrees in Higher Education Institutions (Announcement..., 2019) undergraduate majors in higher education institutions are divided into the following categories: philosophical science, legal science, literature, pedagogical science, economic science, historical science, natural science, technical science, agricultural science, medical science, management science, art history. And the specialties “journalism and mass communications” are included in the category Literature”.

In accordance with the order of the Ministry of Education of China, there are nine specialties in journalism and mass communications in higher educational institutions of the country at the

undergraduate level: journalism, radio and television, advertising, communication, editing and publishing, network and new media, digital publishing, fashion communication, international journalism and communication. Details are provided in [Table 1](#).

**Table 1.** The number of universities/institutes that have opened majors in journalism and mass communications and the number of graduates

Name of the specialty	Year of opening	The number of universities/institutes that have opened this specialty at the undergraduate level	Number of graduates in each year
Journalism	1924	327	18000-20000
Radio and television	1984	218	10000-12000
Advertisement	1983	346	18000-20000
Editing and publishing	1999	69	3000-3500
Communication	2001	73	3500-4000
Digital edition	2008	16	150-200
Network and new media	2012	216	1500-2000
Fashion Communication	2017	2	-
International journalism and communication	2018	1	-
Exhibition	2020	1	-

Note: The data are taken from the official websites of “Chinese Education Online” ([https://gkcx.eol.cn/special/8373?special\\_type=3&sort=1](https://gkcx.eol.cn/special/8373?special_type=3&sort=1)), “Website of the unified state exam for admission to the university” (<https://gaokao.chsi.com.cn/>) and other publicly available relevant official sites.

The number of higher educational institutions that have opened majors in journalism and mass communication at the undergraduate level is already about 1/3 of the total number of higher educational institutions throughout the country. Among them, the share of universities from projects 985 and 211 occupies 55.9 % ([Research... 2016](#)).

According to the analysis of the admission of students in the field of journalism and mass communications across the country in 2016–2019 ([Analysis..., 2020](#)), the number of admissions of students majoring in journalism and mass communications is growing year by year in higher education institutions in China. During 2016–2019, the number of students enrolled in specialties in this field increased by 3,637 people, the growth rate is 5.82 %. See [Table 2](#) for details.

**Table 2.** The number of higher educational institutions accepting bachelors in the field of journalism and mass communications and the total number of undergraduate admissions students across the country from 2016–2019.

Year	Number of higher education institutions	Total number of student admissions
2019	631	66098
2018	624	65584
2017	609	63951
2016	603	62461

Many educational institutions have reduced the number of admissions to the specialty “Journalism”, “Radio and Television”, but at the same time opened a new specialty “Network and new media”. The analysis also shows that among the 9 majors in journalism and mass communications at the bachelor's level, “journalism”, “advertising”, “network and new media” are the most popular majors in recent years. At the same time, the specialty “Network and new media”

continues to gain particular popularity. The number of students enrolled in this specialty increased from 6,448 in 2016 to 12,676 in 2019.

From 2017 to 2020, the total number of bachelor's degree admissions in journalism and mass communications in advanced educational institutions in China is stable. Let's take one of the most reputable educational institutions for teaching journalism and mass communications – Fudan University as examples. The data provided on the official website of Fudan University, the number of students admitted to the Institute of Journalism and Mass Communications of this university throughout the country from 2017-2020 (in four specialties – journalism, radio and television, mass communication, advertising) in order is 70, 75, 78, 70.

Let's turn to the characteristics of teaching specialties in the field of journalism and mass communications in China at the present stage. The model of current education in journalism and mass communications in Chinese educational institutions can be divided into three types: the traditional model of vocational education; an increasingly common model of general education; a developing model of training specialists together with other related specialties. According to the traditional model, during the training period, mainly pays attention to courses in the specialty. This model was formed after the founding of the new China under the influence of the Soviet Union, which once occupied a dominant position in Chinese journalism education. Many universities have gradually abandoned this model. The general education model assumes that students should master not only the knowledge and skills of journalism, but also understand others – knowledge of the humanities, social sciences and natural sciences, therefore, in addition to the section of courses in journalism, a special section of general education courses has been created in the curriculum system (in accordance with the model of training specialists together with other related specialties). The general education regime and the related training regime are more in line with the training requirements and are being used by an increasing number of universities (Zhang Li: 2014).

Several leading universities are studying this new model of education, for example, Renmin University of China has been training specialists together with the Faculty of Law and the Faculty of International Relations since 2011. The Institute of Journalism and Mass Communications of Fudan University has been implementing the “2 + 2” training model since 2012. In the first and second academic year, students can choose any direction in economics, sociology, Chinese language and literature, electronic computer science and technology, and take courses in the chosen direction; in the third and fourth years of study, students receive an education in journalism and mass communications. Thus, in four years, thanks to an intensive curriculum, students manage to get a systematic education in two directions at once, entering this institute.

Our next research task was to identify the characteristics of the content of educational programs in the specialty “journalism and mass communication” at the current stage. The study programs of two of the most advanced educational institutions in China in this field – the People's University and Fudan University – were analyzed.

According to the content of the curricula published on the official website of the People's University of China, we can conclude that courses in journalism and mass communications consist of four large modules: courses on “general education”, professional courses in the specialty, courses on “innovative research and practice” and courses on “leadership in improving the personal quality of students”.

#### **4. Results**

Based on the analysis of the content of the curricula of each historical period over the past almost 100 years, we can conclude that education in the field of journalism and mass communication has always been open to reforms, which was mainly reflected in two aspects: firstly, in the acquisition of positive experience of foreign communicative education; secondly, in constant updating curriculum in accordance with changing times and socio-political environment.

#### **5. Conclusion**

Based on the analysis, the following characteristics of teaching journalism and mass communications in higher educational institutions of China have been identified:

First, general educational courses outside the specialty occupy a significant share.

Secondly, universities are making efforts to train specialists with broad knowledge, opening compulsory courses in other specialties.

Thirdly, theory and practice are combined in the educational process.

Fourth, in the course of training, attention is paid to the education and formation of political consciousness of students

The tables show that the content of the courses in the specialty includes a Marxist view of journalism; special attention is paid to the general political situation in the country and abroad, along with the training of basic knowledge and skills in the specialty.

Fifth, great attention is paid to training in the field of information and communication technologies.

And it is no less important that in the process of teaching journalism and mass communications, English language courses occupy a significant place.

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