

Journalism education in the assessment of Russian journalists, 2012-2015: Criticism, nostalgia and lack of consensus

Svetlana Pasti
University of Tampere



Purpose

To elicit journalists' views on journalism education

What satisfies them and what distrubs them

And

To find out their ideas to improve journalism education

Study

Data come from analysis of semi-structured in-depth interviews on the question:

How would you rate the journalism education in your country?

The study was carried out in 2012-2015, a part of the big international project on the BRICS media systems <http://www.uta.fi/cmt/tutkimus/BRICS.html>

Method

The study used a convenience sample but within certain parameters:

Cities: two major/two provincial

City sample

- Moscow, St Petersburg, Yekaterinburg and Petrozavodsk



Method

News organizations:

traditional/online; national/ regional;
newspaper/magazine/radio/television/online;
private/state/mixed;
quality (influential in public life)/ popular (large
audience)

Journalists:

various ranks, genders, ages (actual and professional)

Method

Capital city: 24 news outlets (12 traditional and 12 online)

Provincial city: 12 outlets (6 traditional and 6 online)

Each outlet: 2 journalists

Moscow: 48 journalists

St Petersburg: 49 journalists

Yekaterinburg: 24 journalists

Petrozavodsk: 23 journalists

In Total: 144 journalists

Findings:

Attitudes to journalism education

Positive

Neutral

There is no need for journalism education

Negative/critical

Positive attitude

Moscow - 29% (online: 29%; traditional: 29%)

St Petersburg - 2% (online: 4%; traditional: 0%)

Yekaterinburg - 19% (online: 8%; traditional: 33%)

Petrozavodsk - 9% (online: 0%; traditional: 17%)

Positive attitude

This is normal basic education that provides the basics so that a person then understands where to acquire knowledge and how to structure it.

(Moscow)

Neutral attitude

Moscow - 21% (online: 21%; traditional: 21%)

St Petersburg - 36% (online: 47%; traditional: 53%)

Yekaterinburg - 14% (online: 25%; traditional: 0%)

Petrozavodsk - 13% (online: 0%; traditional: 25%)

Neutral attitude

Without journalistic education you can still be successful in the profession. (Moscow)

*Satisfactory education; normal education.
Not very good, not very bad. (St Petersburg)*

No need for journalism education

Moscow - 2% (online: 4%; traditional: 0%)

St Petersburg - 25% (online: 54%; traditional: 46%)

Yekaterinburg - 5% (online: 8%; traditional: 0%)

Petrozavodsk - 17% (online: 18%; traditional: 17%)

No need for journalism education

Two arguments here:

1) Journalists are born, not made

2) Journalism is technology, and needs no lengthy formal education

Most good journalists do not have journalism education. (St Petersburg)

Negative/critical attitude

Moscow - 40% (online: 42%; traditional: 38%)

St Petersburg - 46% (online: 20%; traditional: 64%)

Yekaterinburg - 62% (online: 25%; traditional: 33%)

Petrozavodsk - 35% (online: 64%; traditional: 13%)

Negative/critical attitude

The general negative assessment of education in Russia as a whole, and journalism in particular:

I think that in our country in general education is not very good. There is an impression that the faculty of journalism does not know what to teach and only pushes literature and some theoretical stuff ...

I think that 's not a problem of the Faculty of Journalism, but it is the problem of higher education in general

(St Petersburg)

Common reasons for a negative attitude to journalism education in four cities

1) Excessive theorizing education and insufficient practice:

Moscow (53%), St Petersburg (22%), Yekaterinburg (19%), Petrozavodsk (22%)

2) A creative profession, to teach it is impossible, either the talent is there or it is not:

Moscow (32%), St Petersburg (16%), Yekaterinburg (0%), Petrozavodsk (26%)

3) Lack of general cultural and humanitarian component:

Moscow (11%), St Petersburg (13%), Yekaterinburg (13%), Petrozavodsk (11%)

Other reasons for a negative attitude to journalism education by city

Moscow: Poor teaching system (33%)

St Petersburg: Poor student selection (6%); Poor teaching system (4%)

Yekaterinburg: Weak practical training (69%); Lags behind the requirements of time (13%); Journalism is a superficial specialty (13%)

Petrozavodsk: Poor student selection (4%)

Arguments on poor teaching system

1) *Faculties of journalism in their present form - Soviet archaism*

2) Their lack of practical journalistic experience:

Who teaches? What they have achieved and what they can show and teach students? What can theorists give for the practice?

3) Dissatisfaction with the teaching work of practising journalists:

Sometimes they just tell anecdotes and jokes about journalism.

4) A lack of continuity of traditions

5) The quality of teaching depends on the teacher's personality:

Much depends on who is teaching. The important thing is the experience of people and their charisma, as they can capture your attention.

Nostalgic rating from the old generation

Concerns about weak professional motivation of students, trainees, young journalists:

Our generation came to journalism in the 1990s ... Our work was more interesting than it is for the young generation work, we were keen to do our work .

We were motivated for the profession.... Today children come in order to get higher education. They go into journalism to get a university diploma .

For the last 10-15 years, I have met very few young people who graduate with journalism diplomas and at least got something useful from the university .

Nostalgic rating from the old generation

Concerns about a lack of continuity of traditions:

Nothing remains of the old school ... I look around, and my teachers have all gone, there is no one left ... It's all so carefull and gentle ... This is the same cultural layer (journalism teachers) that has surfaced for decades, centuries ...

(St Petersburg)

Recipes from journalists

- 1) Balance theory and practice as equal components
- 2) Change specialization from type of media (press, radio, TV, online) to inter-disciplinary knowledge
- 2) Gain the practical component: *Ideally - more practice ...*
- 3) Retain the general cultural and humanistic component
A journalist should first have a broad horizon...
- 4) Meet globalization challenges:
Now it is very important to know languages - Russian, German, English ...

Conclusion

Most critical journalists from:

Yekaterinburg (62%) and St Petersburg (46%), majority of them from traditional media and those not having a special journalism education

Old generation expresses dissatisfaction with students, trainees and young journalists: *“they learnt nothing. Poor”* (St Petersburg).

Nostalgia for the old days of its youth in the profession.

Young generation is dissatisfied with their poor education: “a very superficial knowledge”, “lack of education” that hinders their employment in the labor market: *We have little practice (at the faculty). I have some residual knowledge from lectures, from practice. We leave, and we have only a crust (diploma) in our hands, which is needed nowhere by anybody.* (Yekaterinburg)

Demographic background in number of respondents and % (in brackets)

City	Moscow		St Petersburg		Yekaterinburg		Petrozavodsk		All	
	Trad.	Online	Trad.	Online	Trad.	Online	Trad.	Online	Trad.	Online
Media Number of respondents	24	24	26	23	12	12	12	11	74	70
Age: 18-29	12 (50)	12 (50)	10 (38)	18 (76)	6 (50)	9 (75)	5 (42)	3 (27)	33 (44)	41 (58)
Gender: Female	15 (63)	17 (71)	11 (42)	10 (43)	6 (50)	5 (42)	9 (75)	6 (55)	42 (57)	37 (53)
Influence of gender: None	13 (54)	16 (67)	14 (54)	10 (43)	9 (75)	11 (92)	8 (67)	10 (91)	44 (59)	48 (68)
Degree: College	23 (96)	22 (92)	25 (96)	21 (91)	12 (100)	12 (100)	12 (100)	11 (100)	72 (97)	66 (94)
Major: Journalism	14 (58)	13 (54)	9 (35)	15 (65)	9 (75)	8 (67)	1 (8)	2 (18)	33 (44)	27 (53)
Social class: Professional	15 (64)	13 (54)	22 (85)	22 (96)	8 (67)	5 (42)	8 (67)	8 (73)	53 (72)	48 (68)
Year of entering in journalism: Since 2001	14 (58)	17 (71)	6 (23)	19 (82)	5 (42)	7 (58)	7 (58)	5 (45)	33 (44)	48 (68)

Conclusion

Lack of consensus on how to improve journalistic education stems from the heterogeneous structure of the journalistic community:

Different generations: Soviet and post-2010s

Approximate balance of journalists with special education and those with a different education - experts in their subject (economists, historians, linguists, art historians, technical specialists).

It is not surprising that these different subgroups of journalists have different requirements for trainees and beginning journalists and different expectations for journalism school

Forthcoming book from the BRICS project

<https://www.routledge.com/Contemporary-BRICS-Journalism-Non-Western-Media-in-Transition/Pasti-Ramaprasad/p/book/9781138217331>

