

## INNOVATIVE ASPECTS OF JOURNALISTIC EDUCATION

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### Abstract

This article refers to some aspects of innovation in the training of journalists. Journalism as a social domain, as well as journalistic education, by definition means changing and adapting to change, so the principles on which the educational process is based reflect social as well as technological changes.

**Keywords:** *journalistic education, innovations in education.*

The re-conceptualization of journalistic education is a current objective, taking into account the technological changes, the conjuncture and the significant influence of the mass communication means in society. Innovating the formative framework in journalism is, at the same time, a permanent and justified process, given that the academic instruction must correspond to and / or anticipate the actual journalistic practices. The journalism as a social domain, as well as the journalistic education, presume, by definition changing and adapting to change, thus, the principles on which the educational process is based equally reflect the social changes, the requirements of the labour market, as well as the communicative-technological ones.

The educational innovations are a dimension of social innovation, and the first researcher who used the concept of *social innovation* in literature is J.B. Taylor, defining it as "a new way of doing things" with the explicit purpose of responding to a social need (NEAGU, 2009). The innovation represents, in A.M. Huberman's opinion "a measurable, deliberate, sustainable and unlikely to occur frequently improvement" or "a unitary operation whose target is to determine the installation, acceptance, and use of a change" (CROSSMEDIA, 2015).

In an integrative approach to the concept "through social innovation, we understand all new approaches, practices or interventions,

alongside all newly created products, all the new services in order to improve a situation or solve a social problem that takes place at the level of institutions, organizations, communities" (HUBERMAN, 1978), and the innovative activity includes a number of concrete actions in the scientific, technological, organizational and commercial levels, which contribute to the emergence of some innovations in various fields.

The innovations in the field of education meet certain defining characteristics, which customize their trajectory from their occurrence to their implementation, namely: they have an *intentional, planned character* and involve a series of *fundamental changes* in all dimensions: *educational concepts and strategies, models and methods of training, attitudes, mentalities and paradigms* that outline this process. The innovations also have an expansive action (it refers to all components of the educational process), sustainability and resilience over time, but also a significant role in designing the educational policies, in general, and those specific to different fields, in particular.

The innovative activity is a component part of the scientific and research activity, which has a direct connection, when it comes to the academic environment, with the activity of the innovator/ the teacher who, through a knowledge transfer, develops a set of qualities and professional acquisitions necessary to future specialists in the field of media communication, thus "the innovation seeks to identify solutions, opportunities, strategies, through which the educational ideal is reached" (GUȚU et al., 2009).

In fact, the mission of an educational system is to integrate into an institutionalized environment, the personal interests and those of society, being oriented in this context, towards the formation and development of a harmonious personality from a personal and professional

point of view. Resulting from the perspective of the expected finalities, the innovation is a defining term of education, given that the subject of the educational action makes a certain progress in the field of intellectual, axiological and professional development.

The innovative re-conceptualization of the journalistic education is a consequence and a goal of the informational-global and technocratic age, in the conditions in which the technological realities have created opportunities for the development of the media system and the economic, social, cultural ones as well as the communication needs have influenced the content of the journalistic product. Both aspects - the technology and the liberalization of practices of working out the media content require the implementation of new educational standards on the basis of which the vocational training to pragmatically and progressively correlate the technological aspects with the ethical and moral ones.

The permanent innovation of the formative field is one of the equilibrium or image management factors of the professional community, marked by crisis and lack of credibility in contemporary society. This state of affairs is the result of severe guild malfunctions, and in this context, the contemporary journalism is a means of minimizing the intellectual level of society, a means of cliché thinking, or a means of keeping humanity at the same level or stopping its progress, or the mankind can be saved by journalism only through education, and one of the major goals of the educational system being the formation of a personality with high moral qualities.

A decisive role in solving the problems that concern both plans - theoretical and practical one, has the journalistic science, which through an integrationist approach can contribute to the re-establishing of the image crisis of the profession of journalist, the formation of favorable social representations on journalism as a profession and social practice, including restoring the credibility of society to journalists and the elaborate journalistic product.

The contribution of teachers is essential in this process, through the mission of stimulating the creative, innovative potential of the educator by providing attitudinal, strategic, behavioral

models that can serve as a standard in later practical work. In this respect, an innovative educator possesses the following professional qualities:

- fundamental skills (knowledge that allows a well-grounded opinion in the field that he/she represents and skills to work effectively in the professional environment)
- the ability to dialogue (the dialogue is an important part of the teaching activity and the only possibility to transform the social experience into personal experience)
- the orientation towards innovations (the cultivation of a new knowledge system, obtained as a result of creative activity).

There are a number of factors that determine the application of innovative pedagogical technologies in the way of developing a qualified personality on the technology-ethical and moral qualities axis: the technology of all facets of life, the excessive rationalization of attitude towards oneself and the world in general, the emergence of the rationalized man who replaces morality with calculus, duty - with programs, and instead of professional satisfaction tends, exclusively, towards ephemeral success (JIRDEA & URSUL, n.d.).

The re-conceptualization of a new educational philosophy in the journalistic field, implicitly involves changes in the training methodology, so the informative method is advanced by the theoretical-analytical one, which determines the development of systemic analyzes of events and social facts, and solving and making decisions, building their own judgments and actions in relation to them, implicitly stimulates the creative and innovative potential of the educated.

In this sense, a number of methods can be applied that stimulate creative thinking, but also the ability to make decisions in accordance with the ethical norms existing in the field:

- exercises in which to simulate real situations. The teacher proposes to solve a specific problem by varying and periodically modeling the conditions so that the student becomes aware of the variety of situations and acts appropriately to provide operative, accurate and complex information to analyze the information, express the facts and become aware of the responsibility for the quality of the materials. This training method is

beneficial for simulating a potential crisis context, requiring rapid, original, and appropriate internal mobilization.

- decision making exercises (based on management principles). The student is placed in a hypothetical setting as a manager who has to make decisions that can affect the entire team. Even if in real situations the journalist does not make decisions in place of the manager, this exercise is useful in understanding the logical reasoning that the manager guides himself in the effective and original solving of problems in a changing context.

One way of evaluating / improving the state of fact in the educational sphere, in general (at macro level), and the dimension of the journalistic education (at micro-level), in particular, consists in passing consecutive stages of fine, profound and complex analysis of educational phenomena on the cause-effect axis, for the discovery of the existential framework and their internal competences, the aspects that govern their existence, their relationship with other phenomena, thus being able to anticipate the directions of evolution and development of the field, as well as the identification of optimizing, innovative solutions. The most efficient way of estimating the functionality of the formative framework in journalism consists in the elaboration of complex methodological researches covering all the aspects that correlate this process, or the data obtained through the research allow the formulation of some descriptive and explanatory-causal inferences on the educational process, which determines the occurrence new conceptual visions and reforms with progressive and innovative impact in the field (HUBERMAN, 1978).

The innovations in journalistic education are of no *value in themselves and for themselves* or of partial applicability on the perimeter of the field, they extend over all the constituent elements by being integrated into a general educational framework, as well as by synchronization with its logic.

Thus, the integration of innovations takes place in two forms: through extended action (macro-educational innovation), as a component part of the educational reform and microstructure

innovations (micro-educational innovation), expressed by adjusting educational practices to the requirements of the respective reform.

The innovations specific to the educational sphere presuppose the existence of a mechanism for implementation, thus, the changes, according to R. Havelock are produced through: *substitution, reshuffling, adding, restructuring, elimination and consolidation* (GUȚU et al., 2009). Currently, the pragmatic adjustment of the national formative framework to European exigencies, in line with the Principles of the Bologna Process, clearly implies a permanent innovation of the field of training in journalism, so that the educational process may meet these requirements, but also to the requirements of the media market.

The emergence of convergent journalism is one of the factors that determined the actuality of implementing an innovative training model, which contributes to the optimization of the study process in concrete conditions in a converged, technologicalized environment.

Media convergence or cross-mediation includes almost all aspects of changes in contemporary media. Merging platforms and channels in order to use rationally multimedia content in various ways is the determining factor in the conduct of press institutions and media concerns in terms of journalist competences. Digitization is a challenge at a professional level, so the transfer of journalistic education on a modern basis has become an imperative of time, taking into account the new digital realities in the curriculum. Cross-media journalism outpours traditional educational practices and determines the innovation of the learning process through the diversification of the knowledge, skills and competences of future professionals in the field of media communication. In this context, in the process of preparing the cadres, emphasis is put on: - knowledge, which allows the future professional to assess the challenges of media democracy through cross-media journalism, to establish the specificity of the management-citizen relationship through the new media technologies, to have advanced techniques of drafting the journalistic materials; - ability to apply methods of cross-media journalism in current professional activity; - competences in

the design of newspaper projects, TV or online formats, radio shows, taking into account the specifics of these types of media (NEAGU, 2009).

A dimension of the innovation of formative framework in journalism refers to the awareness of the social side of the journalist profession and the humanitarian role of the media in society. The journalist must be an empathic personality, free in humanistically oriented actions, independence, capable of competent and responsible actions in relation to the political, economic, professional, cultural, self-esteem and respect towards others, tolerance towards other ethnic groups and cultures, independence in expressing beliefs, but also openness to other opinions and new ideas.

Humanization is a tendency of modern education and a fundamental objective of journalistic education, which has the mission of cultivating in the process of academic formation of a set of personal and professional values inherent to a media communication specialist who is aware of its social role, social values, social responsibility delegated through the professional status and the mission of journalism in the social field. Humanization is a key dimension of the educational process, without which the innovation process of the whole education system and society is uncertain, or if education prepares young people for the future, then the education system must have a humanitarian orientation.

Academic training is the first stage of professionalisation in which the future media professionals become aware of the primordial role in society, the humanitarian attitude being expressed by "ideas on which moral-civic and psychological qualities of personality will be formed, viable under the conditions of the transition period and the building of the new society "or through" pluricultural education based on national and general human values" (CROSSMEDIA, 2015).

Journalistic education is rallied to the current educational paradigm, which places in the foreground the option for humanist ideas. Thus, the humanization of the educational process implies the fulfillment of a number of conditions such as:

- recognizing personality as supreme value, respecting the unique and unrepeatable character of each individual;
- equalizing the chances of all citizens to self-determination, self-organization, self-affirmation, self-achievement;
- realizing the right of citizens to the development of reasonable skills and interests;
- respect for the fundamental human rights;
- harmonizing interpersonal relationships between educators and the educated: university professors and students, of all social actors (GUȚU et al., 2009).

The humanitarian orientation of education in the technocratic era is an emergence of a system that can maintain a certain inter-human balance in the conditions in which technologies, besides the benefits brought to society, undermine interpersonal relationships or in the context of mass communication, the effects are massive and profound. Currently, in academic education, it is necessary to link the technological and humanitarian dimensions so that the educator has the opportunity to re-evaluate his / her own life principles in accordance with the prosocial mission of journalism, or the lack of a humanitarian attitude towards the world or the humanistic knowledge is equivalent to the reflection in a broken mirror.

During the academic training in journalism, a certain level of the innovative culture develops, the emphasis being put on the development of creative thinking and personality creation skills, acquisitions that, in the course of their subsequent professional activity, transcend into a permanent innovative behavior.

A tendency of contemporary education refers to the contribution of education to the socio-natural development, thus "in the socio-natural education education, as a social phenomenon, the spiritual-humanistic, bioethical and informational-intellectual components have a primordial role, and the positive tendencies in this context, include greening, humanitarisation, bioethisation, computerization, futurisation, etc." (NEAGU, 2009), objectives that have to be found in the curricular areas on which the training of mass-media specialists is based.

Based on this postulate, noospheric culture and socio-natural thought are the components of

professional culture, the contemporary journalist being a potential promoter of the transition from uncontrolled, non-lasting development to a harmless, socio-natural one. In the course of their professional activity, journalists are the social actors that exert a significant influence on social consciousness, thus contributing in an ideal way to humanizing society, promoting general human values, ensuring psychological security, etc., and the orientation towards development socio-natural education is a priority of education, in general, journalistic, guided by the same educational principles.

In conclusion, we can mention that the current level of post-industrial development imposes new entirely qualitative standards in education, thus maintaining a homeostatic balance on the technology-humanism dimension. In this context, the process of teaching subjects also presupposes a transfer of fundamental knowledge to model a new type of intellect, based on creative, innovative thinking, adequate and flexible attitude to technological, informational and social realities. The focus of higher education on content and methods that stimulate the development of

rational skills of information and information technology operation, as well as pragmatic, pro-social thinking are the pillars of professionalism and qualification of the specialists in media communication.

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