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Producing Journalists at University: A Professor's Opinion

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The educational reforms at Moscow State University, which have been much talked about over the last few years, are well under way. The special status of Russia's leading university enshrined in law has given it the right to determine its own academic policies. Everything is being updated and changed, from our educational standards to the academic programs themselves to the timetable. Students will receive more opportunities to choose subjects that interest them. The journalism faculty will start working to the new system from September 2011, along with the whole university. One of the urgent questions that has arisen in connection with these reforms is, of course: How and what must future journalists be taught today?

Historically, our faculty is the main journalism faculty in Russia. It is the think tank that decides the strategies and directions in which journalism education will develop in Russia. In addition, the faculty has a special role in science &mdash the Moscow Scientific School of Journalism Studies is recognized on the international stage. University academicism is the foundation on which the whole higher education system stands. But we are well aware that the journalism faculty has to prepare experts that will be in demand on the fast-changing mass media market. We therefore see our development as a vector combining a classical humanities education with practical journalism.

The new system has retained its focus on Russian and foreign languages, Russian and foreign literature, history, philosophy, political science, law, economics and sociology. At the same time we are actively developing a course in media technology and techniques, which not only teaches students to use various devices, but at the same time gives them the skills to work with sources of information in the digital environment. This is the basic set of skills that every

journalist needs. The system of teaching professional disciplines is also changing. Students can now choose to profile their education by industry and by topic. The industry categories include, for example, newspaper reporting, television journalism, radio journalism, online journalism, photojournalism and media management, where students master the basic techniques and technologies for working in various sectors of the media industry.

Television journalists today do not just need reportage skills: They have to specialize in various social and state issues. We therefore offer students specialized profiles for political, social, business, sports or international journalism study programs. In this way, all our graduates will have a good idea not only of where they will work, but also what they will write and talk about, what they will film. Some people will want to go into radio, and then specialize in sports, or photography or advertising; some people will want to go into television or print media. The advantage of this system is that students can combine profiles freely. Editors do not only need people who are able, but also people who know things. The journalists and media managers who teach with us confirm this.

In addition, we are significantly strengthening our practical training. Our students have traditionally published a college newspaper, prepared educational television and radio programs, and made web sites: that is, the faculty models the entire process of content production. This gives rise to very intensive, interactive communication, which is the main form of dialogue between teacher and student &mdash creative teamwork. Next we are going to move toward converged journalism. To do this we are creating a training multimedia newsroom, where students can create digital materials for all existing media platforms. The journalist with a jotter is no more, replaced by a confident iPad user. It is obvious that the digital revolution is the reality in which journalists work, and our students should be able to enjoy all the latest information technology at the professional level. We might even be able to run a university television station so that students can practice the concept of public service broadcasting.

Another important direction for the faculty's development is international cooperation and academic mobility. The faculty is very proud of its centers and institutes for the study of language, culture and media systems in different countries: Britain, Germany, France, Italy, Spain, Scandinavian countries, Finland, China, India and Japan. Our students go on internships at foreign universities, while students from Europe come to us. Considering globalization, this experience is useful for everyone. Among the students of our faculty are young people from Asian countries, CIS countries and Western European countries.

Moving on to the topic of new directions for research, here we should pay more attention to the development of active audiences and the behavior of the journalists themselves. Another hot topic is Russia's growing media business. Studying practice is not easy, but it is very interesting.

Finally, one of the most important areas we are now interested in is the journalistic culture of the editorial board, within a country, within a particular national media industry. Understanding what is happening across the whole media and journalism spectrum is absolutely necessary for an effective educational process.

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