

6(c). Quality Assurance in Journalism Education

*Meeting summary report by rapporteurs Eva Nowak, Jade University, Institute for Media Management and Journalism, Germany; Elisabeth Wasserbauer, Kuratorium für Journalistenausbildung, Austria; Maria Lukina, Moscow State University, Russian Federation. Syndicate expert/background report written by Joe Foote, Gaylord College of Journalism and Mass Communication, University of Oklahoma, USA; chairs Paul Parsons, School of Communications, Elon University, USA, and Susanne Shaw, William Allen White School of Journalism and Mass Communications, The University of Kansas, USA; and team members.**

This syndicate group addressed a wide variety of quality assurance issues, including different methods of quality assurance, the role of peer review, industry involvement in accreditation, assessment, the amount of influence that should be given to different stakeholders and global peer review.

Although similar methods are often used in quality assurance assessments, quality assurance systems tend to be very diverse in different countries and for different types of journalism training, such as in university education, vocational institutions or journalism schools. For example, in the United Kingdom industry accreditation plays an important role, and in the U.S. peer accreditation on a voluntary basis does so. In addition, many countries voluntarily follow modified versions of the EJTA and UNESCO model curricula and standards, although some group participants found them superficial, inconsistent and/or patronizing.

Some schools and/or countries work with state accreditation systems, usually compulsory and established for different subjects and professions – not just journalism. Rankings by private organizations, industry associations or media organizations are frequent in several countries, especially in university training. Internal student evaluation and individual quality management systems are often used to improve training and organization. However, for some schools, especially private ones, the most important system of quality assurance seems to be whether students fill courses. In other words, if courses are filled, their quality is assumed to be good. In several countries, voluntary and compulsory elements are combined to create quality assurance systems, elements such as peer review, industry accreditation, quality management systems, rankings, internal evaluations and market considerations.

The role of industry as a stakeholder in accreditation and quality assurance processes was extensively discussed. On the one hand, journalism education has to provide skills, competences, knowledge and experiences that enable students to work in the media industry. On the other hand, media industry demands can overpower and block innovation in journalism training. While industry tends to promote competencies that will be required in the near future, journalism educators focus on competencies that will enable students to adapt to developments that may occur in 10 or more years. Regardless, the syndicate agreed that industry needs should be

included in quality assurance processes as long as they are just one of several measurement factors.

The group also agreed that journalism trainers, researchers, students and alumni are important stakeholders that should be included in quality assurance processes. However, syndicate members disagreed on how to include such stakeholders in the process. For example, should they directly take part in decisions or only offer background information and present their concerns/advice? Parents and other funding sources, such as journalism-supporting organizations and programs, were also identified as potentially important stakeholders. As for whether to include civil society and state organizations in this process, the situation in different countries is so diverse that no conclusions were drawn.

The syndicate group also discussed the process of quality assurance. Although different cultural, economic and political backgrounds lead to different learning outcome definitions, assessments and learning outcomes were deemed important enough to be included in the quality assurance process. In addition, participants agreed that there needs to be a healthy distance between reviewers and reviewed organizations, diverse and relevant stakeholders need to be included in the process, and all criteria, processes and decision-making must be transparent. They also called the role of the state and industry “problematic” since both might abuse their power and influence. And they concluded that all involved in the process must be credible (competence, independent, neutral) and that quality assurance criteria, aims and processes must be updated on a regular basis to ensure their adequacy.

Recommendations

After a final meeting between parallel groups, this combined syndicate group agreed on the following recommendations for colleagues worldwide:

1. Emphasize the importance of peer review in the evaluation process.
2. Include journalism educators, journalists and students in the evaluation process.
3. Ensure that any standards or benchmarks encourage flexibility to allow for innovations in practice.
4. Encourage transparency in student recruitment, learning outcomes, evaluation, retention and employment processes.
5. Encourage journalism education organizations worldwide to identify and share their methods of evaluation in order to learn from one another.

**Additional Quality Assurance in Journalism Education participants: Ralph A. Akinfeleye, University of Lagos, Nigeria; Md Assiuzzaman, University of Liberal Arts, Bangladesh; Dane Claussen, American Civil Liberties Union of Nevada, USA; Olena Fomenko, Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv, Ukraine; Chris Frost, Association for Journalism Education, UK; Marcia Furtado Avanza, Fiam-Faam –*

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