



## Journalism education for the 21<sup>st</sup> century

### Roundtable Report

#### Topic

**“Journalism Education in Kyrgyzstan: Tackling the Issues and Exploring Solutions”**

#### Host institution

**Association of Communicators in Kyrgyzstan**

#### Date

1 October, 2021

#### Guests

Journalism department heads, journalism educators, journalists, media experts, media organizations, media associations and representatives of civil society organizations (40 people)

#### Summary of discussion

They discussed the problems and issues of journalism education in Kyrgyzstan and searched for solutions to the current issues and challenges in journalism education in Kyrgyzstan.

**Roundtable participants highlighted the following problems and challenges of journalism education:**

-Predominance of theoretical courses. There are 60 hours of theoretical courses and only 20 hours of practical courses.

-Practical courses start from sophomore year not from first year

-Low level of teachers' qualification at journalism departments. There is a need for teacher trainings and faculty development programs.

-There is a need to change state standard of journalism curriculum



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-Separate entrance examination needs to be conducted for candidates who apply to journalism departments to test their writing skills.

-Low level of digital literacy skills of journalism teachers

-The reputation of journalism as a profession is decreasing

-Entertainment content is prevailing in local media

-Bloggers and influencers on social media are gaining popularity instead of journalists

-Employment of journalism graduates are decreasing. It is getting difficult to find a job in local media.

-Universities still have not understood the power of social media and do not use them to recruit students.

-There is no collaboration between universities, no academic mobility programs and exchange programs.

-Low level of motivation of students

-Outdated courses in curriculum

-Teachers are predominantly theoreticians without practical background in journalism

-Journalists do not teach at universities as visiting faculty

-Journalists lack pedagogical and teaching experience to teach at journalism departments

-Internship of students is only 2 weeks and it is not sufficient

-Local media do not accept students to internships

-Technical infrastructure of journalism departments are not sufficient

-There are less and less candidates to apply to journalism departments every year

-There is a need for a college (3-year education) in journalism

-The lack of media research in Kyrgyzstan

-There is no academic mobility between universities in Kyrgyzstan

## **Discussion outcomes/recommendations**

Participants of roundtable decided to launch academic mobility programs between 12 universities teaching journalism in Kyrgyzstan, to sign MoUs with local media outlets and media organizations, to develop online courses for capacity building of journalism educators, to develop teaching materials and manuals, course-readers and course books in Kyrgyz language, to launch mentorship program for students and journalists, to update state standards on journalism curriculum and to update competencies of journalism students in journalism curriculum.

A working group was created in the end of roundtable to continue working on the issues and to implement the ideas and recommendations.

### **Proposed solutions and recommendations:**

-To launch school media so that students start writing news and creating content at schools before coming to universities.

- To cancel limitations in the number of students who enter journalism departments. Some universities have limitations such as ‘at least 15 students’ should chose the major so that the department will start academic year.

- Department heads and faculty should learn how to write project proposals and research proposals

-Presentation of students’ senior projects and theses to employers and journalists.

-To create students’ portfolios before they graduate. The portfolios should include their works such as published news articles, TV news reports, radio news etc.

-To balance theoretical and practical courses in journalism curriculum

-To increase the number of elective courses

-To collaborate with journalism departments in other Central Asian countries and in other countries of the world. To invite guest lecturers, to organize joint trainings and



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workshops, summer schools and joint research. To sign MoUs with them for academic mobility.

- To sign MoUs with media outlets and media organizations.
- To develop course readers and teaching materials for each course
- To write course books in Kyrgyz language
- To develop new courses and course materials such as teaching manuals together with practitioners (journalists) and media organizations
- Data journalism courses should be introduced
- To develop MOOCs, online courses, video-lessons
- To develop teaching materials and manuals in Kyrgyz language
- To launch mentorship program for students. Journalists will mentor students.
- To develop online courses to increase the capacity of journalism teachers
- To increase digital skills, online teaching skills and using new technologies and teaching methods of journalism teachers
- To update the set of competencies of journalism students in curriculum based on market demands
- To decrease teaching load of faculty. Currently it is 900 hours per faculty per year. It is too much and needs to be decreased twice. Each full-time faculty is teaching two courses per day.
- To create an expert working group on journalism education. This group will be working to address the above-mentioned challenges in journalism education.
- To apply to UNESCO to get the status of UNESCO-department
- Professional orientation activities for school students before they chose journalism major
- To launch joint masters programs with universities in other countries through Erasmus+ and other programs
- To conduct research on Journalism and Media education in Kyrgyzstan



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-To organize annual national media education conference

### **Promotion and visibility of the event**

1. Public Broadcasting TV News Channel "Ala-Too 24" made a TV news report about roundtable and they showed it twice one in Kyrgyz and one in Russian language evening news.  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a9wfoUaGUW4>
2. Ministry of Education's news website "Kutbilim" also wrote a news article about our event and published photos - <https://kutbilim.kg/news/inner/zhurnalistik-bilim-ber-n-n-k-yg-yl-r-talkuulanyp-kyrdaaldan-chyguu-zholdoru-aytyldy/>
3. Bilim (Education) Akipress news agency wrote news article about the event and published with photos:  
<https://bilim.akipress.org/ru/news:1736054>
4. National News Agency website Kabar.kg also published a news about event along with photos:  
<http://kabar.kg/news/problemy-zhurnalistskogo-obrazovaniia-v-kyrgyzstane-staliglavnoi-temoi-na-kruglom-stole/>
5. Community Media news website [kyrgyzmedia.kg](http://kyrgyzmedia.kg) also published news about event with photos:
6. <https://kyrgyzmedia.kg/2021/10/11/kyrgyzstanda-zhurnalistika-zhaatynda-sapattuu-bilim-ber-n-n-kt-r-talkuulandy/>
7. They also made a post about our event on their Instagram account:  
[https://www.instagram.com/p/CU4431fs9zy/?utm\\_medium=copy\\_link](https://www.instagram.com/p/CU4431fs9zy/?utm_medium=copy_link)
8. Association of Communicators of Kyrgyzstan did live broadcasting of the event on its Facebook account (it got more than 100 views)

### **Further comments**

The working group was formed in the end of roundtable which will be responsible for further activities to solve the problems of journalism education to foster collaboration with the industry.

It was really important meeting for all after pandemic and both educators and journalists asked for more such gatherings to discuss their problems and to talk about possible solutions and collaborations.