

# Personal Determinants Of Social Competence Of Future Journalists

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**Abstract:** The research presents a pedagogical strategy for the journalist's education in the system of higher education in modern Europe in the case of Ukraine. The article deals with a problem of social competence development as a part of the teaching and learning process. The main objectives of social competences development are defined. Personal, social and universal dimensions of such competence are the main parameters of the curricular and academic content of such professional engagement. The most recent research and the best practices of world journalism education determined several fundamental principles of the most effective educational process management. The personal determinants of the future journalist's altruistic intention dynamically depend on natural and managed factors. The six binary pairs described the factors in terms of personal orientation, objectification of social interest and level of competences. The authors believe that both the presented strategy and the research will inspire educators and researchers for challenges and innovation in order to get the best result.

**Index Terms:** Journalists, Journalism, Personal Determinants, Personal Development, Social Competence.

## 1 INTRODUCTION

The journalistic profession belongs to the socio-cognitive type, in which it, like the field of psychology and pedagogy, has a transformative, socially modelling character and includes the broadest possible range of specific social competency. For example, the Council of Europe's regulations on the necessary skills that a modern person should possess has indicated that, alongside socio-political, multicultural, and technological-informational, the key is the ability and desire to learn throughout life and communication (speaking and improving oral and written skills) [1]. On the other hand, the integral and professional groups of competencies, approved, according to the resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine No. 225 (from April 5, 2017) for the bachelor's degree in the speciality of Journalism does not include any proper social, whereas the professional in the items 6 - 9 contain: a) the ability to adapt and act in a new situation; b) the ability to conduct safe activities; c) capacity for interpersonal interaction; d) the ability to socially responsible and conscious function [2]. Due to the lack of this problem development, it is crucial to find the key determinants of students' social orientation, based on a person-centred approach following world best practices. The first principle that confirms the validity of the subject of research is the social characteristics and definitions of the journalistic profession, in which the decisive role is given to the "social dialogue" with the exchange of emotions and information between different group and personified members of society to achieve a common socially important goal. The study subject matter determines its future results (the specifics of the determinants of social competence of future journalists) and the object (objective indicators of communicative intention obtained during the diagnostic-forming experiment). The hypothesis of the study appeared after the propaedeutic observation of the dynamics of socialization and social activity of students in the direction of preparation of "journalism" at the

stage of obtaining the bachelor's degree. The main goal is to prove that the social competence of the future journalist is a result of the interaction of personal and external factors, correlation of professional Self-image, and professional interest in the development of social issues and the need to actively influence the external environment. In doing so, both the conscious (rational) components of both factors and the associative, irrational elements of the professional self, were considered.

## 2 RESEARCH BACKGROUND

Journalism is one of the most dynamic professions. The journalism practice has faced lots of challenges since the first media appearance. Recent researches describe modern journalist education as a very changeable process and underline lots of difficulties and developmental problems due to different social and political approaches [3], [4], [5], [6], [7], [8]. On the other hand, the media role in modern democracy is incredible, and the journalist's power and influence are growing fast by day so that it is impossible to divide professional skills and personal attitude and values of a future journalist [9], [10]. That is why the effective system of education and social values creating and personal development is crucial for the profession surviving and success [11].

## 3. METHODS AND CONDITIONS

Diagnosis of personal determinants of social competence of future journalists appears at the initial and final stages of educational activities (1st and 4th year). In the first year, the presence of social interest and social orientation determines personal development, and competence is not yet formed or spontaneous). In the 4th year – through the establishment of internalized consistent determinants of social interest – social orientation – social needs – social competencies. Accordingly, the following methods of obtaining the initial data were used: in the first year – questioning, writing an essay 'I am a future journalist' group discussions with audio fixation. At the same time, written and audio materials were obtained and are subjects of associative analysis (irrational component) and analysis by basic terms (rational part). The following method applied to the natural experiment as a result of the accumulation and analysis of current intermediate tasks for creating a media product. Questionnaire of first-year students

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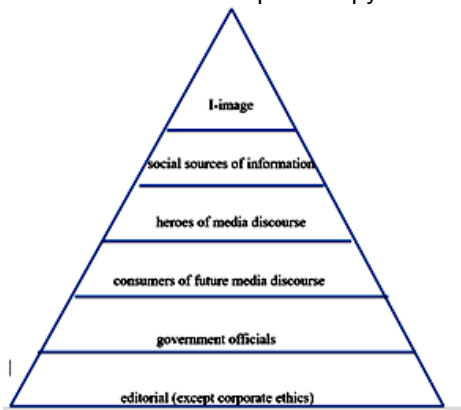
for a) motivation for choosing a profession; b) interest in covering specific issues; c) the desire to work in a particular type of media has revealed several trends that have evolved over the following years of study.

#### 4 RESULTS

Recent humanistic trends, such as loyalty to socially disadvantaged groups, minorities with socially, psychologically, or nationally predisposed characteristics, cause the particular actuality of the issue. Modern subcultural movements, social injustice, and personal choice issues also determinate social development. Preliminary observation of the activity of the latter allows reflexive social competences distinguishing (etiquette, linguistic) and non-reflective (there is a time to think and apply) - the choice of the act, subject matter, and method of its presentation, social activity, social participation. One of the primary practice and mostly natural tendencies observed during the work with students of the 1-4 years of undergraduate studies in journalism is the gradual internalization of social skills and the practical development of individual social issues in terms of niches in the general background expansion. This tendency can be qualified as a student's self-specialization, as well as his / her educational motivation for specific, as a rule, personally significant problems, events, impressions. Within the educational process, the acquisition of social competences is occurring: a) reasonably organized; b) independently; c) spontaneously. Since these developmental factors are not equal in each case, we should pay attention to all experimental group participants. The socially-oriented youth: students with special needs or with benefits related to social status, students who initially exhibit specific social interests, and communicative intentions need to be in a particular focus. The hierarchy of acquiring social competencies thus naturally acts as a cognitive link 'socialization – social position – social activity – transformative social event'. At the beginning of the training, the social orientation of the media product problem created by the students within the framework of current tasks is consistently high. The main reason is a need for socialization at this age when social competence is still at an initial level. The current generation of students is rapidly gaining adequate socialization, but it has difficulty with the journalistic social competencies – establishing contacts with sources of information, interviewing, moderating conversations. The reason for this is low communicative competence, which, due to the protective functions of the novice psyche, hinders professional socialization. The weak skills of fluent verbal business speech, the lack of non-verbal and operative-instrumental professional competences, which, in practice, require conscious, not automatic, tactical choice caused the psychic prerequisites of this state of affairs. From the very beginning, there is a low level of resistance in journalistic students to work with non-personalized sources of information – documents and the subject-matter environment, since the relation "I – the subject environment" does not require a high level of socialization and communication skills. It is due not only to age but also didactic reasons. Thus, the formation of the labelling aspect of the future journalist's social competencies correlates with most higher education institutions (HEIs) with several technical-instrumental and psychological-pedagogical problems. A significant drawback is a study, according to the curriculum, of the disciplines of Journalistic Ethics, Practical Stylistics, Rhetorical, and

Publicistic Discourse only in the 4th year of undergraduate studies. It is clear that by this time, students have sporadically and mostly spontaneously formed ideas about etiquette and rhetorical-stylistic forms of interaction with sources, including representatives of different social groups within the changing and not always predictable environment. In mass social interaction, for example, there are manifestations of confusion, stiffness due to lack of experience when moderating online events with the participation of several participants at the initial stage of learning. The skills to interact freely with members of social groups in their quality are directly proportional to the number of members of the group and their social status. The main focus of work for equalizing such disproportion is to appropriate measures and exercises to produce the student's self-image as a dominant component. A journalist is always a leader when receiving information from a person of any social status and number. An essential prerequisite for such competence formatting is to focus on the latency of the future journalist's dominant attitude toward a personalized source of information. Although subject-subject interaction with individuals when collecting information or moderating online discourse is less regulated and provides more communicative flexibility, competencies to exercise it are easier for students (quantitative phenomenon) than skills for interacting with groups of people, organizations, masses. In this regard, the practice of such interaction requires special attention. It is facilitated by the principles of journalistic deontology and ethics, according to which communication with groups (sources, heroes, consumers of media products) is more formal and regulated. Interaction with individual representatives of the society (or real small groups) creates a need to develop a unique communication style. Linguistic, etiquette and other communication tools determine the flexibility of interacting with real large groups, organizations, and their official representatives or the press centres. The regulation and ready-made etiquette forms, professional maintenance, etc. are the primary instruments of such communication. The ability to communicate spontaneously with casual respondents has a high degree of stress, as does the interaction with real social groups, organizations, and officials. Other vital components of the future journalist's communicative competence are 1) the acquisition of professional deontology in collaboration with organizations and their representatives; 2) ability to prepare for expediently created media events (interviews, press conferences, briefings); 3) ability to mobilize in orientation during the event conduct (participation form, regulations, etc.) The main danger in communicating with representatives of different, and especially socially vulnerable population, acting as a source (hero, consumer) of information lies in the stereotypes and attitudes available to the journalist regardless of their register (scornful, reduced conversational, business official, pathetic). The dilemma that exists is that a journalist should adapt to the discourse with representatives of different social groups and, at the same time, interact equally with them effectively in the course of their professional activities. The basic principle of such an approach is tolerance and benevolence. It also means the interviewer's discourse acceptance and appropriate paralinguistic parameters usage (distance, tone, facial expressions, and gestures, etc.). The primary psychological and pedagogical direction to improve the student's etiquette competences is to develop a sense of tact. A balance between socially meaningful and personal information and the primary

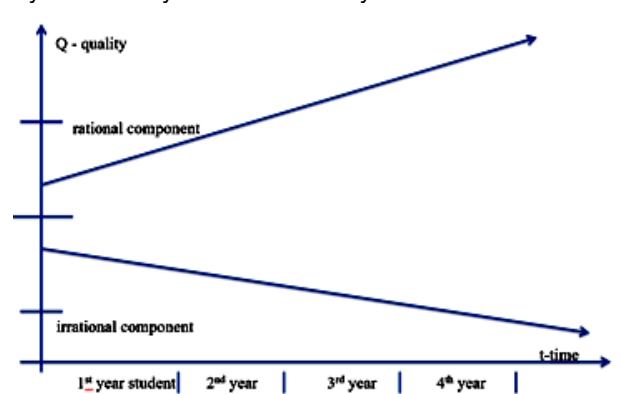
progressive and non-linear awareness of the acquisition of professional social responsibility are not less outstanding too. We can describe such a relationship like a pyramid:



**Fig. 1.** The "pyramid" of a journalist's social responsibilities

Medium links are groups or individuals with vulnerability. The editorial staff is also a social micro-group. In the corporate sense, a network of social micro-groups, so the principle of the lowest level of responsibility to the editorial board is relative. The highest level of responsibility - to their human and professional ego, which requires from the didactics and practitioners to reorient the emotional, reflective component of the "I-image" of the student to a rational, conscious, and internalized. In particular, powerful socio-communicative segmentation of professional interests, most students acquire 3 - 4 years of research after receiving basic knowledge, media-making experience, passing industrial practices, etc. There is a noticeable decline in awareness of personal transformative participation in social processes, a decrease in the irrational "romantic halo" of the profession. At the final stage, 60% of those surveyed have a distinct species differentiation regarding future activity in specific types of media: photojournalism - 15%; newspaper and magazine production - 21%; television journalism 42%, Internet journalism 22%. At the final stage of obtaining primary higher education, 87% of students have a professional internalized approach to the main types of interaction with society (the average of all kinds of communication), which is related to the deontological skills. The most professionally engaged among individual examples of such cooperation is the subject-subject interaction with individuals (95%), the least engaged - individual-group communication (69%). At the initial stage, the primary source of social activity is the degree of socialization and the professional "I-image" formed during its acquisition, which can be effectively measured by the method of associations. Cultural orientation in the future self-image is initially high and irrational. In the 4th year, only 47% of students expand the thematic range. They seek for universalism or try to find their socially valuable but thematically heteromorphic segment. 76% of students complete an undergraduate degree of temperament and character on the one hand and type of professional social interaction on the other. Persons with introverted symptom complexes tend to create analytical materials, work remotely with personalized sources of information, and work in Internet publications (rewriting and copywriting of information messages). 7% of students in the experimental groups, even in 4 courses, have a high level of resistance to interpersonal and social interaction and often conclude that the journalist's

profession is not for them. An integrated result of social self-awareness assessment is a graphic representation of the dynamics of a typical "I-image" of a student, responsible, his primary social self-identification in the process of personification, personal development and socialization. We present its rational and irrational components at fig.2 According to the associative analysis of copyrighted material and thematic conversations, the components of this image contain a significant irrational element in the initial stage of education. It deals with macro concepts of JUSTICE, PRESTIGE, INTEREST, POPULARITY, as well as students' objectifying the external attributes of the profession (an opportunity to express oneself, work with high-tech equipment, have some display symbolism). On the other hand, the peak of the irrational component in the awareness of "I-image" and its professional participation in social processes is reached in the first year of study and then steadily decreases.



**Fig. 2.** The social intention of the future journalist

The rational component is growing almost linearly throughout the educational process. If we continue the temporal abscissa in the figure, it is clear that the sensible segment will slowly grow in the further professional activity, gaining own experience and journalistic style, and the irrational one will remain at a relatively low plateau.

#### 4 CONCLUSION

The personal determinants of the future journalist's altruistic intention are dynamic and depend on natural (personally produced) and managed (acquired during training and production practice) factors. The six binary pairs described them fully: a) extra- or introverted student orientation; b) rational or irrational objectification of social interest; c) level of competences (initial spontaneous / acquired and internalized). The social intention of the first-year student is personality-centred, directed at the self, the irrational component generalized in concepts dominates. In fourth-year students, it is directed externally and contains more rational conscious own needs, requirements of society, and means of their solution through professional activity. As a result, at the final stage of obtaining a bachelor's degree, we have the effect of "imposing" journalistic specialization on social intentions and, as a result, ideas about the emergence of thematic author's TV shows, columns, journalistic attempts – up to establishing their own media (usually a newspaper or the Internet edition) with a distinct socially segmented direction.

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