

Contents lists available at Sjournals

Scientific Journal of
Pure and Applied Sciences

Journal homepage: www.Sjournals.com



Review article

Mapping the development of Chinese journalism education: progress, problems and prospects

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ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 04 December 2013

Accepted 08 January 2014

Available online 29 January 2014

Keywords:

Chinese journalism education,
development

Problems

ABSTRACT

Chinese Journalism education has gone through rapid development in terms of curriculum setting, student enrolment, as well as its cooperation with the media industry during the past decades. However it has long been criticized for its lacking of needy knowledge required in the labor market and unqualified teaching resources. This paper pictures the development of Chinese Journalism education at the tertiary level, summarizing its major achievements and problems, and raise suggestions accordingly for its further development.

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1. Introduction

Founded in the early 20th century, Chinese journalism education grows with the rising of information dissemination and social communication. Over a century's development, Chinese journalism education seeks its bloom in subject setting, large enrolment and research strength, outputting a large population of journalists or researchers. Compared with the development of western journalism education, the Chinese journalism owns the

following features: it has a late start but rapid growth; its academic cultivation is somehow departed with practice; and its course setting can hardly seek synchronization with the update of technology.

This paper is derived from the following thoughts and considerations. Is Chinese journalism education output talents accordingly to the media market? With low employment of journalism graduates in recent years, is journalism cultivation produce waste in resource year by year? As a discipline connect tightly with society developing and technology advancement, are the courses keep on updating? Chinese Journalism education has been given more responsibilities in the context of mass communication and globalization, cultivating professional journalists and researchers to pursue the truth, record the times, supervise society, guide the opinion, and seek communication both inner and outer of the context. Focusing on Chinese journalism education in higher education institutions, it is practical significant to figure out the current problems as well as its future development.

After a brief introduction on the growing process of Chinese journalism education, and the features of the past development, the paper firstly describes two major improvements: diversity in subjects and emphasis on cooperation, followed with the analysis on problems and embarrassment faced by Chinese journalism education, back grounded with the input and output theory. The last part of the paper highlights a vision for the future development of Chinese journalism education.

2. Acknowledging the input and output theory

Input and output theory in economics is employed in the paper to give implications of the journalism education. Inputs are defined as each participant's contributions to the relational exchange and are viewed as entitling him/her to rewards or costs (Walster, Traupmann & Walster, 1978). The journalism Inputs typically include schooling years, resources preparation, teaching ability, structure setting, curricular planning, and even enthusiasm in journalism and adaptability in the field from both academy and the individual. Outputs are defined as the positive and negative consequences that an individual perceives a participant has incurred as a consequence of his/her relationship with another. Outputs can be both tangible and intangible (Walster, Traupmann & Walster, 1978). Journalism education outputs should be: discipline knowledge, employment, recognition on the field and sense of responsibility.

Generally, individuals or groups intend to seek maximized outcomes (Guerrero, 2007). In this sense, with the driving force of the media market, Chinese journalism education adjusts its inputs for more satisfying outcomes. If the input adjustment makes sense with profound brains and meaningful communication, we conclude this as an improvement. On the other hand, when the outcomes are less qualified and not cognized and authorized by the media market, we try to figure out the problems and enlighten the future development, as stated in the following parts of the paper.

3. An historic overview

The Journalism Study Society of Peking University was founded by Cai Yuanpei¹, Xu Baohuang, and Shao Piaoping² in 1918. A course named Journalism Effect was then set by Xu Baohuang in Peking University which is generally considered as the beginning of Chinese journalism education (Tong Bing & Gao Jinping, 2001).

After the foundation of People's Republic of China in 1949, the wartime media were either banned or converted into public media, under the unified administration of Chinese government. Journalism education at that period has been adjusted to accustom the new environment. Since the shortage of experience and resources, journalism education in 1950s' China mostly imitates the model of Soviet Union. Textbooks in that period employed leader's quotes as chief content and conference decisions as theory basis, without systematic acknowledgement on news value and professional skills. The following ten years of culture revolution turned out to be a catastrophe to Chinese journalism education, with only 24 books published from May, 1966 to October, 1967, and most of them were published inside of the media (Xu Peiting, 2000).

The growing season of Chinese journalism study and education arrives from 1978 when China carries out the Reform and Opening up Policy. During the 1980s, discussions were spread out in journalism academies and media mainly on the relationship between academic study and practice (Xu Peiting, 2000). What is more significant in that decade is the voice of setting the journalism education reform in agenda. The growth of journalism education was under incredible speed during the time. Here are some data from former statistics. In 1982, the whole country owned 16 journalism education units in higher education institutions with an enrolment of 1685. In 1992, the number of universities to offer journalism education increased to 52, expanding journalism subjects to 77 and enrolment to 17910 (Li Jianxin, 2003).

Throughout the development of the discipline, we could summarize the features of Chinese journalism education as follows.

a) The Chinese journalism education has tight connection with politics from the very beginning. The first educators themselves are political activists and most of them possess abounding experience in running and writing for newspapers. Taking the political activist Shao Piaoping as an example, the cofounder of the Journalism Study Society of Peking University owned high reputation of running the first newspaper Jing Bao in China. This connection determines the importance of political thoughts and moral motivation in Chinese journalism education. Marxism Thought on Journalism is a compulsory course for all journalism students.

b) Another feature is that the development of journalism education in China is always under adjustment and discussion. Chinese journalism education is somehow lack of a profound discipline basis. It first copied Soviet Union model in history, and then influenced by the American journalism mode. Topics and issues discussed in the field are always similar or imitate the focus of western journalism. Chinese journalism education and research is somehow losing its speaking power and creativity.

4. Status quo: progress in Chinese journalism education

¹ Cai Yuanpei was a Chinese educator and the chancellor of the Peking University, known for his critical evaluation of the Chinese culture that led to the influential May Fourth Movement.

² Xu Baohuang and Shao Piaoping were journalists, educators, authors and political activists in China during the 19th century.

In the world of globalization and mass-communication, the aim and functions of journalism education are not only to cultivate a journalist or media participator to write about what is going on with the world, but also to understand and represent. This point is extensively agreed by the contemporary world. Meanwhile, the spirits locate in journalism education of seeking the truth, obey the professional morality and supervise society have greatly promote the process of democracy and help societies and cultural contexts to achieve freedom.

Looking on Chinese journalism education from a general point of view, the education structure has been enlarged with more subjects and enrolments as stated in the introduction part of the paper. This part focuses on two aspects of the progress or adjustments accustomed to the new environment. They are: a) talents training and professional developments transform to a compound and specialized mode; and b) acquire more cooperation with media and institutions.

4.1 Talents training and professional development

The transformation from the single training mode into a compound and specialized one begins with the self-doubt, what kinds of journalists are needed in society? Besides the basic goal “to serve society by informing the public, scrutinizing the way power is exercised, stimulating democratic debate, and in those ways aiding political, economic, social and cultural development”(UNESCO,2007). What other qualities are demanded in modern society?

With the context of market economy, Chinese journalism has come to market segmentation era, with specific audience focus and media positioning. Specialized newspapers, magazines and television channels were established in succession. The first finance and economics newspaper, the 21st Economics Report was established on January 1st, 2001 with the circulation of almost 486,000 copies per time. Nanfang daily newspaper group established Titan Sports on July 1st, 1988, with a stable circulation of 3 million copies per week(Pang Chunyan, 2008).China Central Television (CCTV) now own 18 channels specialized on information, economics, music, sports, movie, children, education ,etc , and the adjustment is going on with new demands.

Reflecting on journalism education, the first transformation is the setting of journalism subjects in specialized higher education institutes. Acknowledging the emergent need in society, all the four universities specialized in finance and economics in the “Project 211”³ specially established journalism departments, with directions to finance and economics journalism. Central University of Finance and Economics set up the department of finance and economics journalism which is the first among universities in “Project 211”. Shanghai University of Finance and Economics built its economics journalism department in 2000, with the objective of training professional

³ Project 211 is a project of 106 (as of 2007) Key universities and colleges in the 21st century initiated in 1995 by the Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China. The project aims at cultivating high-level elite for national economic and social development strategies. The project began from the idea that, in the mid 1990s, the 30 elite universities at the time were too low by international research standards. Inclusion in the project means that universities have to meet scientific, technical and HR standards and to offer set advanced degree programs. The figure of 21 and 1 within 211 are from the abbreviation of the 21st century and approximate 100 universities respectively.

journalists and editors with basic journalism skills and economic theories. Zhongnan University of Economics and Law expanded its journalism department with radio and TV journalism, aiming to output compound talents with pioneering spirit and sense of innovation. And Southwestern University of Finance and Economics established journalism department (economic journalism direction) in 2007. Detailed objective was demonstrated in the department teaching plan to let students grasping modern journalism theory and knowledge related to the economy, trade, finance, management; familiar with the policy and regulations; has strong skills on news coverage, writing, editing and comment.

Sports universities have taken the same pace. Shanghai University of Sport established Sports Journalism Department in 1985, which is the first among Chinese higher education institutes. Other sports universities followed this tendency in the next 20 years. Till now there are totally 16 sports departments in China.⁴ The setting of sports journalism department is a perfect example for the connection between journalism and the age. With the coming of Beijing Olympic Games in 2008, journalism education departments specialized directions as Olympic reports and Olympic photography not only in sports universities but also in other higher education institutions with journalism education.

Curricular settings transformed as well. The requirements and objectives of journalism education are no more limited in journalism writing, history, interviewing, and comments. Courses such as Media Management and Media Regulations are employed in almost every journalism departments. These adjustments in the journalism education are improvement to the old pattern, not enough, but still progressive.

4.2 Cooperation

Cooperation is achieved initially under the demand of the development of the age. Isolate growing of a discipline is unavailable and impossible in the globalization world. Cooperation is a mutual-benefit method in every field of the world, from politics and economics to culture and education. Another reason of cooperation in journalism education is the inner need of mass-communication. Journalism is described as a complex discipline, emphasizing on comprehensive knowledge. It outputs talents to media which has the most frequent contact with the world. All these features of journalism determine the connection and link with external world, the closer, the better.

Cooperation and communication is firstly achieved among institutions inner or outside of the nation. Studying programs have been established under the agreement by institutions to exchange students, bring in teaching resources and employ extra scholars. The most famous universities with high overseas recognition and world-class distinguished alumni are likely to have more chance to communicate with international institutions in past decades. The new trend is with the depth of the degree of globalization, an increasing number of Chinese universities have involved into the process of cooperation. Zhongnan University of Economics and Law, ranked as number 86 in Chinese universities (Wu Shulian, 2008), was not a member of "Project 211" until September 2005. This university co founded a bachelor program of radio and television journalism (video content direction) with

⁴ <http://edu.people.com.cn/GB/8216/7145537.html>

Dongseo University in Korea in 2007. The four-year study is divided into two parts with the first two schooling years in China and the rest years in Korea. The 2007 enrolment plan is 100 students, co-cultivated by both universities.⁵

Another form of the academic cooperation is to hold lectures with speakers from outer universities or cultures. It enriches the Cooperation forms between media and academy from internship to opinion and experience sharing. Taking Peking University for example, among all the external communication activities in March, 2008, there are five activities related with the mass-media, either from the topic, or from the participants. They are: lecture on new media studies by Jenny Sundén from School of Computer Science and Communication, Royal Institute of Technology (KTH) in Stockholm; Forum of Zhou Enlai and Journalism presented with universities teachers and mass-media people; seminar on Impact of climax TV advertising on public attitude, presented by Sakaki Hilobumi from Japan's Institute of Negotiations and Persuade; lecture on the mainstream of new media and the road to the future by CEO of People's Net; and lecture on the changes in Chinese media and the impact on future industry by vice president of CTR Market Research⁶. Well-prepared lectures, seminars and presentations offering accurate timely information and diverse opinions, are more flexible than the agreement-based programs and more available to operate.

5. Status quo: problems in Chinese journalism education

Chinese higher education is a combination of many contradictions. It owns the largest number of universities in the world but has only very few universities to be authorized internationally. The number of students accepting higher education is the biggest in the world and at meanwhile the rate of employment keeps a level of less than 70% in recent years. Chinese journalism education faces all the challenges towards higher education in China, from its inner construction to the employment embarrassment. What's more, with the output of recording the age, supervising society and promoting equality, journalism education specialized with its function to improve the process of democracy for the society.

The aim of journalism education is mostly focused on three parts: (1) grasping systematic theoretical knowledge and skills in journalism and communication; (2) familiar with Chinese journalism advocacy policies and regulations ;(3) compound professionals with comprehensive abilities. However, the aim is not reached in reality.

Wuhan University, founded in 1893, is an institution with wide and comprehensive subjects and lofty reputation. It was ranked as one of the most outstanding Chinese universities by Science in 1999. The journalism department (the name changed into school of journalism and communication since 2000) was founded in 1983 with six professional directions including journalism, radio and television journalism, advertising school, advertising design, communication networks, broadcasting and the arts. Today the school owns five sub-disciplines doctorate authorized points, two master's degree authorization points, two academic publication Media Comments and

⁵ <http://xwcb.znufe.edu.cn/2007-7/2007717104727.htm>

⁶ <http://sjc.pku.edu.cn/News.aspx>

China's Annual Report on Media Development, and two national research base: Wuhan University Media Development Research Centre, and News Media of Social Communication and Innovation Base.⁷

Founded in the establishing tide of journalism department in 1980s, and achieved great professional research strength after 20 years' development, Wuhan University could be considered as a representative in Chinese journalism education. In this part of the paper, I tried to analyze the most serious problems located in Chinese journalism education with the seeking of the reasons. Wuhan University is used as an example in the argument.

5.1. Employment

As part of nearly every established Chinese university, journalism schools or departments are locations to train not only journalists or reporters, editors, photographer, but also columnists, commentator, news presenters and meteorologists in the age of mass communication. It is true among the world region that a great number of famous journalists were not trained in a formal journalism school, but learned their craft with their jobs. The new trend is, since the prosperity of journalism schools from 1980s, it is usual for the future journalists to first complete university-level training which incorporates both technical skills such as research skills, interviewing technique and shorthand and academic studies in media theory, cultural studies and ethics(UNESCO,2007). The embarrassing situation is, it is increasingly difficult for the outputs of Chinese journalism education to find a suitable position in the current media market.

Chinese higher education institutions expanded the enrolment since 1999 to offer more chances of accepting higher education and meet the needs of talents for the development and construction. However, the pace of expansion is not consistent with the personnel demands and professional development. The oversupplying situation in Chinese talent market is not improved till now. Figure one shows the serious state faced by Chinese higher education. What's more, Journalism education is continuously considered to be hot subject with the public acknowledgement of mass-communication which also adds difficulty to the employment.

According to the data offered by the ministry of higher education, the number of journalism major points in China has increased to 661 which is ten times more than the number of 66 in 1994. The registered students in journalism higher education reached to 120000 to 130000, with anniversary graduates of 30000. The general number of news media in China is controlled as follows: about 2,200 kinds of newspapers; 8,000 kinds of magazines and periodicals; and 1000 radio, television, cable television stations by each. The output is statistically far beyond the offering of media. Another data is until November 2006, the total number approved by the country to issue the new press card is only 180000, including the staff for less than 150,000(Zhou, 2007).

Wuhan College Graduate Employment Management Office published the 2007 University Graduate Employment Rate Index Report in the city region, which shows that the employment rate of journalism in Wuhan is 77.4% in 2006 and 78.6% in 2007(Zhang Zhenzhen,2008). These two numbers are relatively higher than those in

⁷ <http://journal.whu.edu.cn/intro/>

other cities and disciplines. Here come the problems: if the positions offered by media are so limited, what fields did employed graduates could go? Are they all entering the media?

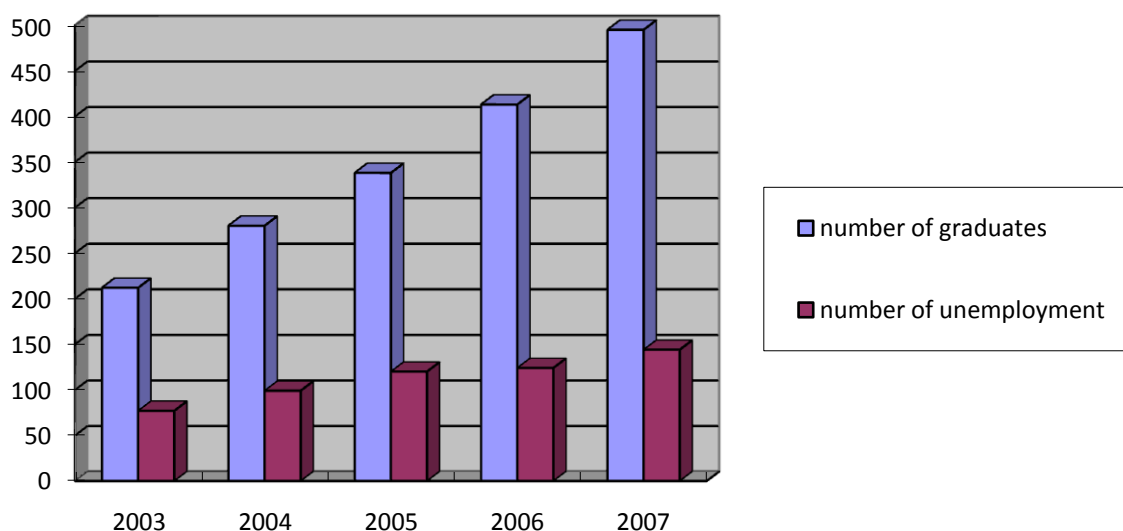


Fig. 1. The increasing of graduates and unemployment in Chinese higher education from 2003 to 2007

Data collected from the website of Chinese Ministry of Education⁸

Unit: 10 thousand

Besides those want to continue the study, students graduating this summer are hunting jobs now. Wuhan University owns a transparent employment information website to benefit students. The website shows the information of students who sign employment contracts per month, with names, subjects, and accepting units. There are 4 graduates' information from the School of Journalism and Communication in April, 2008. Two of them signed the contract with the same media group, one signed with an investment company, and the one signed with an automobile company.⁹ From the employment of these four students, not all the journalism outputs come to the media market.

Accordingly to the Equity Theory, a balanced and equal relationship is sought between the inputs bringing to a field and the outcomes received from it against the perceived inputs and outcomes of others (Adams, 1965). If the output of journalism education is beyond the need of society and mass-media, what is the meaning of all the inputs of resources, finance and brains? Is it a waste of educational resources?

The expansion of enrolment should not bear all the responsibilities to the hard employment. The quality of journalism education is not satisfying as well. Institutions could not promise qualified teaching resources. A great number of teachers giving lectures on basic courses have no systematic knowledge on journalism. Many of them come from Chinese language departments, specialized in writing and Chinese literature. That is why many

⁸ <http://www.moe.gov.cn/edoas/website18/level3.jsp?tablename=207&infoid=37128>

⁹ <http://202.114.75.194/jyweb/article/view.do?articleId=251>

journalism departments are originally set in Chinese language schools and then isolated. On the other hand, media kept on complaining that graduates from journalism education cannot meet the practical needs. They are lack of ability of practice and sense of creativity. All these factors formed the employment problem and conducted a long way for Chinese journalism education to go.

5.2. Content

Disciplines are not fixed without adjustment. New theories and methods may come out to take place of the former ones. This is the rule of scientific development. With close connection to mass-media, journalism is not only updated with its discipline theories, but also with the new technology. Every step of journalism education is tightly related to communication technology. The appearance of medium aroused the theoretical innovation in the past century.

“The idea of ‘new media’ captures both the development of unique forms of digital media, and the remaking of more traditional media forms to adopt and adapt to the new media technologies” (Croteau and Hoynes, 2003). The last thirty years witnessed the spread of internet and rapid transformation within media from printing press to on-line instant publications. New media “radically break the connection between physical place and social place, making physical location much less significant for our social relationships” (Croteau and Hoynes, 2003). The evolution of new media technologies leads to globalisation (Flew, 2002).

However, issues towards new media are not given enough attention to in the content of Chinese journalism education, at least at the curriculum level. In the teaching plan of journalism in Wuhan University, professional courses are set from the second semester, including basic courses, compulsory courses and selective courses. Among all the forty professional courses, those related to new media development including Introduction to Digital Transmission as a compulsory course and Principles and Application of Multimedia Technology as a selective one.¹⁰ The course setting is far from enough. The good news is since 2007, the university opened a new subject, journalism with the direction of online communication, to supplement education on new media. Courses in the direction include Overseas New Media Review, An Introduction to the Network Economy, The Mass Survey Methodology, Site Planning, etc¹¹. This change is an advance guard to most Chinese journalism departments.

5.3. Blocking the process of democracy

Ethics is a great part of journalism education. Courses on moral cultivation are listed in every journalism education curricular in Chinese higher education institutions. In the journalism teaching plan of Wuhan University, Ideological and Moral Cultivation and Legal Basis are two compulsory courses respectively carried out in the first two terms? In spite of the stress on ethics construction, its realistic effect is not good enough.

It is significant that outputs of journalism education are core power of the media in contemporary world while mass media, with broad communication channels and audience, own incalculable impact towards society. In

¹⁰ http://journal.whu.edu.cn/cultivate/read_cul.php?id=792

¹¹ http://journal.whu.edu.cn/cultivate/read_cul.php?id=132

this sense, moral education is more important than the cultivation of journalism skills. It is an ideal state that the outcome of journalism education shares the character of justice and objectiveness, helping to improve the democratic process of the society.

Chinese media, as platform for journalism education outputs, however, have large space to improve. It has firstly been stamped with scars of political propaganda. This issue owns specialty in Chinese society and has its strengths. But still, the function of supervising society and environment is not emphasized enough. Facing the problems in Chinese society such as bribery and corruption, Chinese media is not responsible enough.

Another issue is the fake reports especially with contents of entertainment and legal cases. The most important essence of media is to transmit the facts. If this principle is abandoned by the media people, it turned the moral courses in journalism education into empty words. It is somehow satire that the whole society is asking who should be responsible for the media losing of self-discipline without perfect answers. Reflecting on journalism education, we could at least require the content of moral cultivation to be more realistic and a objective supervising system for the whole society.

6. A vision for the future development

The current problems and embarrassment threaten the developing of Chinese journalism education but also supply room for its further improvement. This part of the paper tries to figure out a vision for the future development of Chinese journalism education which could also be suggestion for the problem solving.

6.1. Control the scale, develop accordingly

Journalism education has expanded to a considerable scale since 1980s, supplying 30000 graduates every year to limited positions in media market (Zhou, 2007). At the same time, media demands for qualified outcomes of journalism education. This contradiction has become a hot issue in society.

The first measure for the future development of journalism education is to limit the scale of the expansion while develop specialties accordingly. The college enrolment expansion has been restricted from 2005. The ministry of education employs the new policy to release the pressure of employment. Institutions with journalism education could take the same pace. Specialized subjects should be set up accordingly. Establishing finance journalism in finance and economics universities or sport journalism in sports universities is far from enough. Comprehensive universities, with profound experiences and resources, should also specify the discipline into more subjects, not only in finance journalism and media management, but also in democratic cultivation and information technology.

Restraining the scale of enrolment advances journalism education in two points:

a) Releasing the pressure of teaching. The excessive development of journalism education in the past 30 years created press for the whole discipline to borrow teachers from other subjects or to deep the research without systematic background knowledge. They need time and space to update.

b) Meeting the media market demands in a practical and feasible way. The traditional output of journalism is somehow general and omnipotent with all the professional skills and background knowledge of every discipline which is impossible and unreasonable. Following the trend of division of media with forms of specialized publications, television channels and websites, the division of journalism is unavoidable and practical.

6.2. Joint journalism education with media

Cooperation between media and academy in China is close and mainly reflected on seminars with media people and internship. The connection between the two sides should never be overestimated. Media is the recipient of the outputs of journalism education and meanwhile, with rich experience in journalism practice, media people and media itself could be the most precious resource for journalism education.

Joint journalism is not a new concept. In most of the western countries, journalism from the very beginning appears with the participation of media. The first journalism school in the world, The Missouri School of Journalism, was founded by Walter Williams in 1908, on the campus of the University of Missouri–Columbia. The Missouri School of Journalism is famous for its “Missouri Method” to emphasize the practice of journalism knowledge learnt through lectures and discussions. The feature of the school is to offer practice constantly with international magazines, TV stations, newspapers and networks (James and Vera Olson, 1988).

It is not necessary to duplicate the “Missouri Method” into Chinese journalism education but this mode offers implications of the future development. Chinese journalism education could gradually transform into a co-construct way with mass media. The joint construction could be carried out in the following three aspects:

Seeking financial support from the media to institutions. The funding of journalism departments in China are mostly from the government finance, the portions differ with the research strength. Basically, the cost of journalism cultivation is not high without scientific equipment and basement. But with the population and extension on new communication technology, digital basement and computer rooms become necessities for journalism education. Mass media could also share the equipment with institutions. As payback, media get the most suitable talents with agreement.

Strengthening the internship and practice. Internship should not just limit in a certain period of the schooling but a part of the cultivation. Joint journalism education with media could make this available.

Involving media staff in the teaching. With rich experience and latest information, students receive the first-hand resource from media. The academic ideas from institutions could also enlighten media to reflect on its social functions. This is undoubtedly a mutual-beneficial method.

7. Conclusion

In the context of globalization and mass-communication, Chinese journalism education owns at least three driving forces of growth. Firstly, in spite of the oversupplying of general journalism outcomes, professional journalism talents are emergently demanded; secondly, the Chinese media market is gradually open as a promise

of entering WTO which offers more communication and cooperation on journalism education; and thirdly, the public cogitation about the shortcomings of journalism as well as media could stimulate the development.

In the tide of Chinese higher education reform, it is reasonable and appreciable for Chinese journalism education to restructure with restrained scale and updated content, to future communicate in the academic level, to seek closer connection with mass media and finally, to improve the process of democracy in society. Just keep open mind!

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