

China's Journalism Education: A Localization Perspective

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Abstract

Despite a long history of journalism, China started its modern university education in journalism only in the 1920s and under the heavy influence of American journalism education system. However, in the 50-odd years of development since then, China has always seen its journalism education modified and adapted to the different needs in its different development periods, a consistent process of localization in its curriculum and teaching methods as well as its targets. The paper will first discuss the process of localization in the 50-odd years development of journalism education in China in terms of educational purposes and changes of curriculum. Based on the a survey of the five journalism programs in Shanghai, the paper will then turn to discussion of the diversity and development of the journalism education in Shanghai as showcase, particularly since the 1980s when China witnessed dramatic social changes and rapid economic growth. The paper will also explore the problems of the journalism education in China during its process of localization since the 1980s, with an attempt to propose solution to these problems in the end.

Introduction

China's journalism history could be traced back to Di Bao, a kind of news bulletin in the imperial court of the Tang Dynasty (618-907) (**Search a book of source here**). However, the journalism education in the modern sense did not start in China's universities until the 1920s when American journalism education exerted a direct and great influence on the formative stage of the Chinese journalism. The overall journalism educational system in China was in fact modeled after the American system (DING Ganlin, p70, Jour. Univ.). However, in the 50-odd years of development since then, China has always seen its journalism education modified and adapted to the different needs in the different development periods in the modern history of China, a consistent process of localization in its curriculum and teaching methods as well as its targets.

The process of localization for the journalism education in China obviously sped up in the early 1980s when China's reform and open policy stimulated great social changes and rapid economic growth, a period in which the journalism education in China expanded greatly and became more varied and diversified than ever, to meet the increasing demands of media. The number of journalism teachers and undergraduates students increased almost three times from 1980 to 1984 (Guo Ke, p. 80, Journal). (**May need more information here**)

In this paper, the writer will first briefly discuss the process of localization in the 50-odd years development of journalism education in China in terms of educational purposes and changes of curriculum. Based on the a survey of the five journalism programs in Shanghai, the write will then discuss the variations and diversity of the journalism education in Shanghai, particularly since the 1980s when China witnessed dramatic social changes, earmarked by the economic growth as well as how the five journalism programs have suited the needs of the society as a whole. Finally, the writer will also explore the problems of the journalism education in China during its process of localization since the 1980s, with an attempt to propose solutions to these problems.

The Concept of Localization: Chinesenized.

The concept of localization is just the opposite of globalization. In China today, the concept of localization is very often being applied to the research on mass communication in China, a process of how the research of mass communications, originated from the West, can coherently be integrated with local characteristics in China, a country with five thousand years of history and rich cultural and philosophical heritages and also a country which was lagged behind in the modern times and needs to revitalize its brilliant past by learning from the West, rather than modeling after the West (SHAO Beiren, Localization: The Common Pursuit of the Research of Mass Communication Across The Straits, a paper presented at the “Mass Media Across Taiwan Straits for the 21st Century” Conference, October 26-28, 1998, Taiwan).

Simply speaking, the concept of localization refers to the Chinesenized process of how something foreign or imported is absorbed into the local Chinese culture and society, to the best of China, rather than a simple modeling process of the West. As the journalism education in China started with heavy influence from the American journalism education system, the process of localization for the journalism education in China refers to the process of how the American model of journalism education or later the Soviet model (HAO Xiaoming, P. 37, Educator) is best tailored to the Chinese practices and society, regardless of the fact that it is good or not so good.

However, during the discussions of the localization process of the journalism education in China, this paper is unable to provide specific criteria to measure its localization process except for the general rule of thumb mentioned above.

Five Stages of Journalism Education in China

Professor DING Ganlin, a famous journalism history expert from Fudan University, has categorized the 70-odd years of journalism education development China into five stages: First Stage (1920s to 1940s), Second Stage (1950s), Third Stage (early and middle 1960s), Fourth Stage (ten years during the Cultural Revolution) and Fifth Stage (since 1978 to present) (DING, pp. 70-71, Jour. Univer.).

The writer holds that the process of localization existed in almost all the five stages of the journalism education in China. Although the journalism education were initiated with heavy influence from the American system, there is no doubt that the journalism programs were designed to meet the practical needs of the Chinese society, to be exact, the media development. After listing the five stages, Professor DING concluded that except for the chaotic ten-year Cultural Revolution stage, each stage had clear and effective targets and curriculum systems for its journalism education, which basically met the social needs in the relevant stage of social development and that the journalism graduates had proved themselves to be qualified enough in each stage (DING, P. 71).

During the first stage, China's first regular journalism department was established at St. John's University, a missionary school in Shanghai. This is followed by journalism departments and programs in Yenching University in 1924 and Fudan University in 1929 and several others in the 1930s and 1940s (Haoxianming/ZHOU L.F., 1997/1992). All these early journalism departments and programs borrowed the American educational system. For instance, the journalism department at Fudan University was based on the system of the Journalism College of Missouri University, with a four-year program which had 34 journalistic courses and required a total of 89 credits. The target of the program was "training of the editing and managing personnel for the Chinese newspapers." To tailor the program to Chinese society in this warring period when newspapers were set up by different sectors of the society, courses like Military Education, Geography, Newspaper Organization and Management and Chinese Language were added to the program as selective courses (P. 70, DING, 1997).

Meanwhile, the Communists under Mao Zedong also started training their cadres for journalistic purposes in their areas under control (HAO Xiaoming, 37, Educator). And the focus of this of journalistic training was on political courses and courses that dealt with current affairs and policies (P. 70, DING, 1997). This was of special importance to a period when the Communist Party fought with the Japanese and later on the Nationalist Party.

The second stage saw the establishment of the People's Republic of China, a tense relationship between China and the United States and a warm-up between China and the Soviet Union. The target of the journalism education in China was "training of news writing personnel with solid foundation and potential." This reflected the single purpose of the media at the time, which was later coupled with a strong sense of political orientation, Professor DING commented ((P. 70, DING, 1997).

As a result, the journalism programs were soon re-organized, with Marxist-Leninist theories added to the curriculum and the Soviet model replaced the American model in the curriculum design and teaching methods, which emphasized service to the working class and basic political knowledge and theoretical political learning (HAO Xiaoming, 37, Educator). The courses like business management and advertising were replaced by the courses like Newspaper's Mass Work. Journalism students were told that "journalism, in Lenin's words, should consciously treat itself as part of the party, consciously obey the party and identify with the Party's political stand" (GAN, 1994. P. 41, see Hao's

paper). However, it should be noted that the Soviet Model became popular in this stage of China because it was more relevant or easier to be localized to the Chinese society at the that time due to the similarities of ideology and political system.

Because of this, the target of the journalism education was shifted on the “the training of journalistic teaching and research personnel in the third stage after China broke up with the Soviet Union. The curriculum of journalism education favored the courses on theories and cultures and history knowledge (p. 71, Ding, Journalism Univer.). But the normal journalism education was soon interrupted in the mid 1960s when the chaotic ten-year “Cultural Revolution” started. All the students and teachers were required to go to the countryside. Although new students who had been workers, farmers or soldiers were still enrolled, they no longer underwent the normal journalism education but were evaluated with their political attitude rather than academic performances (p. 71, Ding, Journalism Univer.p.37. HAO, Educator).

In these two stages, the journalism education experienced great ups and downs and was surely characterized by that special period of time in China, however chaotic it may be. For most Chinese, it may be a bit awkward to regard this as a kind of localization process, but it is true that journalism education was modified and adapted to such a way as to meet the needs of this special period in the history of China, for better or for worse.

In the fifty stage, the reform and open policy started in the early 1980 brought about the dramatic social changes and rapid economic growth, unprecedented in the history of China. The great social and economic changes also stimulates the media development, particularly TV industry. The number of TV stations in 1986 was almost six times that in 1983. At the same time, the rise of TV set ownership per 100 households from 1983 to

1986 also triggered the expansion of the TV audience size (GUO, p. 81, 1996, Journal of Development). Besides, the relative competitive operations of the media also led to the increase of pages of newspapers and liveliness of reporting style. In the past 20 years, almost every newspaper in China has tripled their number of pages, which doubled their amount of news reports (GUO, p. 85, 1996). In an effort to attract more advertisers, media in China also employed more lively reporting styles such as phone-in hotlines, talk shows, field reporting, criticism reports (negative), larger pictures and separated pages for finance, sports and entertainment.

The rapid media developments have left the industry in great demand of more professional and qualified journalists and editors, who are supposed to come from the traditional journalism education. Besides, the media’s focus on external reporting, radio and TV, management, advertising and public relations not only resulted in a greater demand of traditional reporters and editors but also required a more diversified and special training from their new recruitment (p. 71, Ding, Journalism Univ.).

In the fifth stage, the process of localization has been intensified to a unprecedented level in a sense that journalism education in China has been tailored to meet the growing demand of the media industry in the country and in a practical way. The journalism

programs increased from the original 14 programs in 1982 (Greenberg & Lau, Revolution in journalism and communication education in the PRC) to 57 in 1996 and the student enrollment also grew from 726 in 1980 (Greenberg & Lau,) to 6,186 in 1997 (p 40, HAO, Educator) while the teachers increased almost five-fold from 1980 to 1986 (Greenberg & Lau) **Need to be updated here if possible.**

Besides the expansions of journalism programs and increase of journalism students and teachers, the journalism education in China has also become more diversified or more localized in its sequences. In an effort to carry out effective communication to the outside world, China started its international journalism education in five universities in 1983, that basically integrates journalistic training with English learning and aims to train for Chinese media reporters and editors who are qualified enough to be internationally communicative (Guo, 1996, pp. 77-88, journal of Development) because they could both understand foreign and Chinese cultures and master the Western style of news reporting (P. 38, Hao & Xu, Educator). The international journalism program is certainly unique to the Chinese society and meets the increasing demands of the country that needs to be open to and to exchange and cooperate with the outside world after a long period of separation since 1949. It is more so considering that the fact that the formation of the Chinese language is so different from that of western languages and is quite possible to become an obstacle for China to carry out effective international communication.

In addition to international journalism programs, the expansion of other sequences including advertising, public relations, photojournalism, broadcasting and sport journalism, also greatly add to the scope and variety of the process of localization of the journalism education in China. Although the Journalism Discipline was officially renamed as the Journalism & Communication Discipline by the Ministry of Education in 1998, which include four sub disciplines: namely Journalism (print), Radio & TV Broadcasting, Advertising and Publishing, many journalism programs in China still keep their former journalistic priorities or educational orientations under the new sub disciplines as is shown in the five programs in five universities and colleges in Shanghai.

Five Journalism Programs in Shanghai ----- A Show Case.

As is mentioned above, the local journalism education in Shanghai started with the establishment of the Journalism Department in Fudan University in 1929. Though modeled after the Journalism College of Missouri University at the very beginning, the Journalism Department (now Journalism College) of Fudan University has basically undergone the above five stages of journalism education development, or what this paper has considered to be a process of localization. After 80 years of localization, the Journalism College of Fudan University has developed itself into a journalism program with Chinese characteristics and has become one of the two flagships of journalism programs (The other is the journalism program of the People's University) across China. The Fudan Journalism College not only has its traditional sequence in Journalism, but has expanded to other sequences of Radio & TV Broadcasting and Advertising as well. Besides, it enrolls students on all levels, including doctoral students, master students and undergraduates (see Table One).

Table One

Universities with Journalism Programs	Year of Setup	Sequential Focus	Student Enrollment
Fudan University	1929	Journalism/Radio & TV Advertising	Doctoral / MA students Undergraduates
Shangwai (SISU)	1983	Journalism (Int'l)	MA / Undergraduates
Shanghai University	1987	Radio & TV	Undergraduates
Shanghai Sports Institute	1989	Journalism (Sports)	Undergraduates
Jiaotong University	1996	Radio & TV	Undergraduates

Table One shows the expansion boom of journalism education in the Fifth Stage also occurs in Shanghai. As we can see, all the other four journalism programs in Shanghai were established from 1983 and 1996 in the Fifth Stage. However, this is also the a period in which the process of localization is most obvious as reflected in the following trends:

Firstly, all the above journalism programs have their own distinctive features when they were established and are targeted to meet the growing and diversified demands of the media development in Shanghai as well as across China. Shanghai International Studies University (SISU), which started as foreign language school, lays great emphasis on the training of the English language ability in its journalism program. Because of its language advantage, it is natural SISU was selected as one of the five universities to start its international journalism in 1983 and is one of few universities in China that still plays up its sequential focus on international journalism. International journalism, which integrates English language skills training with journalism, is certainly unparalleled in the rest part of the world and is very Chinese to the Chinese society (QIAN Shaochang quote, September 5, 1999). Shanghai University emphasizes the Radio & TV Broadcasting as it is a local comprehensive university in Shanghai and has special appeal to local students in Shanghai. Its Radio & TV program was established in 1987, a time when Shanghai was preparing to set up its second radio station (Eastern Radio Station) and second TV station (Eastern TV Station) in 1992, a breakup of the practice of one radio and TV station in one Chinese city since 1949 (GUO, p. 82, Journal). Shanghai Sports Institute (SSI) started its sports journalism program in 1989, just one year after China joined the Olympic Games in Los Angeles in 1988, the first time since 1949. The sports journalism program of SSI, maybe the only one in China, has sent hundreds of sports journalists to all the media in China in the past years and helped promote the colorful reporting of sports activities and expansion of the sports pages of Chinese media since 1988 (REN Guangyue, interview on October 4, 1999). The journalism program of Jiaotong University, though a bit late in its establishment, plays up its technological advantage of the University and emphasizes the improving technology involved in the Radio & TV Broadcasting. Particularly with modern communication technologies such as digitalization and internet, when the traditional reporting and editing are somewhat being replaced by the electronic editing, journalism students from Jiaotong University

is sure to find their right position (CHEN Xianyuan, October 4, 1999, Interview) **(May want to add something for Jiaoda).**

This trend is also reflected in the designs of the curricula of the five journalism programs in Shanghai, which all focuses on their respective sequential focuses. (List the percentage of the respective courses **(Languages for SISU, and sports for Sports Journalism, Fudan as a whole balanced and Shangda and Jiaoda focus on the technology).**)

Although the journalism education in the country has yet to make a substantial impact on journalistic practice in the country and journalism educators in the country have yet to gain the authority to provide theoretical, practical, and training guidance for the media industry (HAO, p.35, Educator), journalism education is certainly to have been closely related to the media via the student's internship programs in media institutions, regarded as a kind of cooperative education between journalism programs and media in recent years. To some degree, media institutions have become a kind of "natural media labs" for the journalism programs in Shanghai while at the same time, assisting them to develop themselves (ZHANG Weijiang, interview, during the Hong Kong conferences in 1998).

This is the third trend in the process of localization: recognition of the importance of journalistic practice for journalism students among all the five journalism programs in Shanghai (It may be true in all the journalism programs in China). In their curricula, all the journalism programs in Shanghai have required their students to complete a four-to-six-month period of organized journalistic internship in various media in their sixth or seventh semester of their undergraduate years. Besides, students are also encouraged to participate, during their vacations, in a relatively short period of internship (two months) at media institutions and participating students are given credits after the evaluation of their performances.

The reason why journalistic practice is so much emphasized among the journalism programs in Shanghai also lies in the Chinese perspective of localization as the internship practice is beneficial to all the parties (GUO, 1998, How Has the Cooperative Internship Program Promoted the Journalism Education in China?). To students, they have been offered the chance during the internship to apply or enrich what they have learned from classroom into practice, or learn something outside, or even what can not be learned in the classroom, taking the fact that the most Chinese journalism teachers lack practical media experience and most universities lack sufficient funding to create enough media labs for students (Survey results).

What is more, it is also a good opportunity to attain their academic proficiency and even the availability of future professions that may best suit their own professional talents. In a survey done among the former and future student interns at Shanghai International Studies University in 1998, 80% of the former and future interns think internship has widened or will widen their scope of knowledge. 80% of the former interns agreed that internship helped them to better prepare for challenges while 76% of the future interns think it will help them to be better prepared. Besides, most students interns (61% for the

former interns and 48% for the future interns) have used what they learned in the classroom into the practice and have helped or will help them find a good job (83% for the former interns and 88% of the future interns) (Guo, Hongkong Paper, 1998).

Mr. WANG Xiangxing, the Director of the Student's Division in charge of the student's jobs at SISU (**need to phone other universities to see if this is also the case**), agreed that internship has offered a good chance for students to find their jobs. He confirmed that, during the past five years, about 65% of the journalism students can directly go to work in the media institutions where they have serviced under the Internship Program, and another 20% of the graduates can find jobs in media-related institutions (such as PR and advertising) companies because of their internship experiences and performances (Wang, May 7, 1999).

The internship has certainly benefited the media institutions as well in a sense that it has provided a possible channel of recruitment of new staff members for these media institutions as they have a period of four to six months to observe and evaluate the student's performances during the internship before their formal recruitment. QIN Shaode, the Editor-In-Chief of Jiefang Daily in Shanghai, stressed that Jiefang Daily will not employ a new staff reporter unless he or she has served the internship at Jiefang Daily (Qin, November 12, 1997).

Of course, there are other incentives for media institutions to receive the members of the Internship Program. One editor at Shanghai Television Station frankly admitted that the student interns have provided an inflow of "cheap laborers" as well. In case of some large scale events, such as the Shanghai Film Festival or the Asian Games, the student interns have even been positioned as full-time reporters (Gu, May 20, 1999).

Internship has also been beneficial to the curriculum development of the journalism programs at universities. In an effort to make the journalism programs more suitable (or localize) to the media development, most journalism programs in Shanghai have always paid close attention to the students' feedback after student interns completed their internship as the feedback from students can provide one practical standard to which the department or college can refer to when adjusting and developing its curriculum. For instance, the courses like the Theory of the Marxism have been merged or condensed since 1995, to make room for more practical courses like "Media Management" and "International Communication" (Record, 1998).

Problems in the Process of Localization

Problems are inevitable in the process of localization of the journalism education in China. In order to have a more practical understanding of the problems now facing the journalism education in Shanghai, the writer has conducted a survey among the sophomores and junior students among the five journalism programs in Shanghai in September 1999. With 17 questions for the testing at SISU, the survey has listed 16 questions regarding their majors, curricula, teaching methods and textbooks and their

overall impression of the journalism education now. Table Two shows the numbers of students who participated in the survey and their grades and majors.

Table Two

Journalism Programs Surveyed	No. of Students Surveyed	Student Grades		Student Majors			
		2 nd Year	3 rd Year	Jour.	Radio /TV	Int'l Jour.	Sports Jour.
Fudan University	60	60		22+7*	12	14	
Shangwai (SISU)	78	43	35			78	
Shanghai University	41		41		41		
Shanghai Sports Institute							
Jiaotong University	52	17	20		52		

Note: * +7 refers to the number of students who major in advertising.

Problems (need to be supported by the data collected).

Mixed response to the public courses

Skills Courses and Writing Courses preferred / Special emphasis on English

Mixed response to the Teaching Methods: some good and some not so good.

Some of textbooks outdated.

Great emphasis on the internship.

Shortage of qualified teaching staff

Insufficient input of investment from the government

Studies at universities are yet to provide guiding principles for the media practice

The survey has assisted and/or coordinated by Professor ZHANG Guoliang, associate dean of the Journalism College from Fudan University, Professor HUANG Wei, chair of the Journalism Department from Shanghai University, Professor CHEN Xianyuan, chair of the Communication Department from Jiaotong and Professor REN Guangyue, chair of the Journalism Department of Shanghai Sports Institute. Mr. CHEN Yi and Mr. ZHANG Wei have helped in designing the questionnaire and processed part of the statistics. **(may want to be put in an endnote)**

Concluding Remarks: Problems are in fact the beginning of the process of further localization, with more changes to come in the future. That is for sure. Also the writer disagree with fact that the journalism education in China simply borrows the

American style and Soviet model. It may be the case in the first four stages, but may not be the case in the Fifth Stage (more summaries of the discussions).