

Dilemmas in Creating Content and Teaching Approaches for the Course *Introduction to Journalism and Mass Communication*

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Abstract

This article aims to analyze the different conceptions of content and teaching approaches for introductory courses within the profession in Higher Educational Institutions in Georgia, specializing in the fields of journalism, media, and mass communication. Based on a wide-ranging study of a number of academic sources used in most of the syllabi of introductory courses, interviews were conducted in-depth with 10 professors who lead the introductory courses in 8 Higher Media Schools or Journalism/Mass Communication Departments at Universities in Georgia. The study was driven by the supposition that, following the rapid technological and essentially content-centered development of the fields of journalism and mass communication, it is becoming increasingly difficult to create a unified introductory course for both disciplines as a whole. The main findings of the article raise problematic questions related to the dilemmas of what to teach students in the introductory course: media and democracy or communication as a process and as the construction of meaning?

Keywords

Journalism, Communication, Introduction, Georgia, Curriculum-Building

1. Introduction

1.1. The New Trends in Debates about Journalism Education: Motivation, Contextualization, Organization, and Management

Numerous academic sources, not only from American and European scholars but also from researchers in various countries focusing on Western media systems, point to a new wave of discussions and debates on media literacy that

emerged in the mid-1990s. These discussions were triggered by diverse circumstances determined by ideological factors. For instance, in post-Soviet Georgia and other former Soviet countries, debates on journalism education were prompted by the shift in the ideological foundation of the profession. The Soviet conception and paradigmatic framework of journalism became irrelevant and inadequate in the face of new transitional conditions.

Higher Educational Institutions that retained journalism faculties faced the challenge of theorizing the evolving journalist practice. This practice was undergoing spontaneous development, partly mirroring Western media discourse and partly diverging from the Soviet experience, disregarding the ideological rules and news value standards of the Soviet media. These debates sometimes even questioned the necessity of journalism education altogether.

In the same time period, scholars specializing in journalism education worldwide engaged in discussions about the field's pressing issues, albeit from various perspectives and for different reasons. Journalism educators from Western Europe, the USA, Canada, the Asia-Pacific Region, and South Africa addressed the conflicts between the profession and education, as well as academia and industry. Kunkel (2003) highlighted that journalism schools in the USA lamented the "insufficient curriculum" within universities. Deuze (2006), in his discussion of journalism education issues, cited the works of other scholars. Among them, Dennis (1988: p. 4) characterized the debate between profession and education as "a dialogue of the deaf," a sentiment also echoed for the Asia-Pacific region by Loo and Lau (2000: p. 3), expressed in similar terms for South Africa by De Beer (1995), and mirrored in Europe by Stephenson (1997: p. 23) who noted, "the relationship between the world of academe and the world of journalism is not a bed of roses" (all sources as cited in Deuze, 2006: p. 21).

Alongside the transformative changes in the countries of the former Soviet and Socialist blocs, the challenges commonly associated with Western media also became relevant to media education in Georgia. This included issues related to curriculum development. These changes were driven by the integration of Georgian universities into the Bologna Process and the establishment of state accreditation standards for educational programs. Nordenstreng (2007) explains the challenges posed by the Bologna Process in the context of the identity of the journalism and mass communication discipline at various levels:

"In addition to the inherent reasons prompting introspection within the field itself, Europe faces an extra challenge in the form of the Bologna process, which necessitates a reform of the entire higher education system. Media and communication studies are also undergoing a rapid transition to a two-tier BA-MA degree system across Europe, introducing further upheaval to the field. The Bologna process compels each major subject to revise its curriculum, a process that inevitably involves defining the disciplinary profile and core elements of each subject. This naturally leads to introspection not only within individual departments but also at higher faculty or college levels. The prospect of interdisciplinary programs is particularly challenging, as they gain popularity at the MA lev-

el, offering opportunities to blend diverse BA backgrounds and concentrate on cutting-edge topics, especially in ICT and new media” (Nordenstreng, 2007: p. 213).

The entirety of these issues was delineated by Deuze (2006: p. 23), who, drawing from the framework established by Hanitzsch (2005), formulated analytical categories that can be distilled into ten fundamental questions: “1) Motivation: why journalism education? 2) Paradigm: what guiding ideas shape journalism education? 3) Mission: how does journalism education position itself in relation to the profession and its audiences? 4) Orientation: which aspect(s) of journalism form the foundation of education (e.g., media, genres, or functions of journalism in society)? 5) Direction: what are the desired attributes of graduates? 6) Contextualization: within what societal context is journalism education situated? 7) Education: does journalism education socialize or individualize students? 8) Curriculum: how is the balance between practical and contextual knowledge achieved? 9) Method: what pedagogical structure or approach is favored, and why? 10) Management and organization: how is journalism education structured?”

Consequently, one could contend that the initial phase of the discourse on journalism education in Post-Soviet Georgia focused on three dimensions as per the Deuze-Hanitzsch framework: motivation, contextualization, and management and organization.

1.2. Curriculum and Method. Introduction Course: A Premise for What? Part of the Whole or an Independent Entity?

As mentioned in the abstract, this article centers on a single training course within the curriculum and teaching framework: the introduction to what is often termed “profile knowledge.” The author’s interest in introductory courses within the profession emerged within a professional academic context—during informal discussions at a media educators’ workshop held in 2021 in Chicago, hosted by Vincent DePaul University and Illinois State University. In comparing fundamental questions about the profession, noticeable disparities not only in the concept of introduction but also in the specific elements included in the curricula or syllabi of these instructional courses became evident. The initial question that arose can be articulated as follows: Is it feasible, and to what extent, to attain conceptual coherence in the content and teaching methodology of introductory courses? Alternatively, can the introduction be seen as a somewhat arbitrary program with equally arbitrary design?

The challenges encompass not only the identity of the nomenclature construct “Journalism and Mass Communication” as the sole-identity paradigm, but also the concept of communication itself. The question arises whether communication is merely a broader background concept for journalism, a distinct field, or a discipline in its own right. The integration of this component into educational nomenclature is widely attributed to American scholar Wilbur Schramm. Despite the existence of a long tradition and established principles, ongoing prac-

tices reveal numerous discrepancies. While journalism education boasts a relatively long tradition and a somewhat uniform structure for introductory courses, the communication component sparks disagreements among educators. This discrepancy is evident in the substantial differences between the most popular and recognized textbooks. A comparison of three fundamental textbooks in this field illustrates the validity of this assumption: “Introduction to Mass Communication: Media Literacy and Culture” by Baran (2009), “McQuail’s Mass Communication Theory” by McQuail (McQuail, 2011; 6th edition), and “Introduction to Communication Studies” by Fiske (2010). These textbooks exhibit minimal convergence in terms of content and approaches.

Baran delves into the dynamics of media type development, McQuail’s extensive book spans from the inception of media to public opinion and the effects of communication over six editions, and Fiske examines communication through the lenses of two doctrinal approaches: signs, codes, signification, and ideology, alongside types of communication such as verbal and non-verbal communication. Fiske’s approach also includes a range of Communication Models (Lasswell, Shannon and Weaver, Gerbner, Newcomb, etc). Another influential book, “Understanding Media and Culture: An Introduction to Mass Communication,” by an unnamed author [Joseph B. McFadden (2010, 2016) as the unnamed author of the source (2010, 2016)], melds the concepts of media and culture. Considering the rapid development of media technologies, an approach centered on media history might not ensure the enduring relevance of academic sources, in contrast to approaches that establish more stable and gradually evolving frameworks.

The curricula of most Media Schools simultaneously incorporate two concepts in their programmes titles: “Journalism” and “Mass Communication.” Russian scholar E. Prokhorov (2012: p. 35) delves into the analysis of scattered terms in journalism theory, explaining the origin and usage of this new umbrella construct (Journalism and Mass Communication as a combined curriculum term), which later evolved into a cliché term: “In addition to the array of terminologies, it appears necessary to account for media, mass media, mass communication(s), communication theory(s), media theory, and *communicology* (a term introduced by Prokhorov—K.M.), all serving as overarching substitutes for **journalism theory**” (bold emphasis added by the author—K.M.). Evidently, in modern Journalism Studies, the concept of communication is not employed in its literal sense; rather, it has supplanted the term “scientific journalism.” As K. Nordenstreng (2007) observed, “the discipline’s nature often remains unclear, and its identity is typically molded by administrative convenience and market demand, rather than being defined through an analysis of its historical evolution and scholarly position within the realm of arts and sciences” (p. 211).

The majority of curricula in High Media Schools across Georgia feature a mandatory course titled “Introduction to Journalism and Mass Communication” (in various iterations). This trend emerged in the mid-2000s, as new educational plans were revised to align with “the demands of the time” or “in accordance with Western journalism educational standards.” Despite this prevalence, no

academic or pedagogical guidebook provides an exact operational or functional definition of what precisely falls under the term “introduction to the profession.” While the structural identity of the discipline is relatively clear, questions still persist: Is the introduction a precursor? If so, a precursor to what? Is it a comprehensive compilation of all profession-related subjects, or does it possess distinct content of its own, correlating with the central professional subjects to the same degree as they correspond with the same paradigm? Is it akin to a “framework” encompassing all prior knowledge and potential future prospects?

Georgian scholar *Khatuna Maisashvili (2023)* attempted to apply certain concepts from the Deuze/Hanitzsch framework to a specific training course, “Introduction to Journalism and Mass Communications,” with a focus on identifying the paradigm. Maisashvili conducted a critical analysis of widely recognized academic sources¹ on “Introduction to Mass Communications/Journalism.” Many of these sources have been published and republished more than five times. Her analysis revealed trends in methodological development, manifesting in two directions: the broadening of communication studies and the deepening of journalism studies (*Maisashvili, 2023: pp. 52-54*).

In the same article, Maisashvili introduced an operational definition for the concept of “introduction” in the curriculum. She stated: “In the theoretical context, our primary objective was to elucidate, through specific examples, the meanings attributed to the concept of ‘introduction’ in terms of content and methodology. This leads to questioning the nature of the course: is an introduction a segment of knowledge, a preliminary discourse, or a preparatory course that prefigures the core material? Alternatively, is it an independent academic content that is, or could be, as closely related to other courses within the profession as it is aligned with the same paradigm? [...] For our study, we adopted the following operational definition of an introductory course: we refer to introductory courses at the bachelor’s degree level designed for first-semester students. Their content metaphorically signifies ‘the gates of the profession’ or ‘the entrance to the profession’” (2023, p. 53). Two other metaphors, “capsule” or “pod,” also appear pertinent in this context.

¹Among them were: 1) *Mass Communication: An Introduction to the Field (Farrar, 1988)*; 2) *News as it Happens: An Introduction to Journalism (Lamble, 2016)*; 3) *Introduction to Journalism from Tennessee Journalism Series (Stovall, 2012)*; 4) *Introduction to Journalism: Essential Techniques and Background Knowledge (Rudin & Ibbotson, 2002)*; 5) *Media & Culture: An Introduction to Mass Communication (Campbell, Martin, Fabos, & 2017)*; 6) *Introduction to Mass Communication: Media Literacy and Culture (Baran, 2009)*; 7) *Converging Media: A New Introduction to Mass Communication (Pavlik & McIntosh, 2011)*; 8) *Media Impact: An Introduction to Mass Media from Wadsworth Series in Mass Communication and Journalism (Biagi, 2016)*; 9) *News (Routledge Introductions to Media and Communications) (Harrison, 2005)*; 10) *An Introduction to Communication Theory (Stacks et al., 1991)*; 11) *Introduction to Communication Studies (Fiske, 2010)*. And at last we can’t avoid mentioning Denis McQuail’s “McQuail’s Mass Communication Theory” (*McQuail, 2005*), which despite having not included the notion of “introduction” might be a brilliant guideline for the professors seeking for new themes and frames of teaching.

To be back to Deuze/Hanitzsch's system, it becomes obvious that in this case we need to study two of its dimensions: curriculum and method.

2. Research Design and Methodology

2.1. Design, Strategy, and Method

This article serves as a continuation of a comprehensive study on introductory courses within Georgia's Higher Media Institutions. The initial endeavor to examine the requisites of the introduction course involved surveying the Heads of University Programs in Journalism and Mass Communications/Communication at the undergraduate (Bachelor) level. Between April 2022 and August 2022, Maisashvili conducted interviews with 8 Heads of Programs from 8 higher educational institutions. These interviews primarily focused on the pertinence of teaching introductory courses to the profession and the expectations for their content. The present article delves deeper into this topic, offering an analysis of the perspectives held by the instructors of introductory courses themselves (Maisashvili, 2023).

To comprehensively outline the research design in all its facets, it is most appropriate to employ terminology from "Research Methods in Education" (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007).

The nature of the research design can be classified as mixed. Philosophically, this research leans towards pragmatism, distinct from the other three types delineated by Cohen (2007: p. 5). The article adheres to a selected strategy of inquiry that aligns with both methodological and epistemological considerations. As for research methods and specific operational techniques, the author employed several approaches:

a) Questions (in-depth interviews): Participants were engaged in face-to-face interviews using a semi-standardized questionnaire. While the order of questions was not consistently maintained, all participants were presented with the same set of 20 (or more) identical questions, ensuring uniformity across responses.

b) Reduction of responses to statements and attitudes: The author reduced the collected responses to extract pertinent statements and attitudes.

c) Validation of results: To validate the results, a process of scaling was conducted by employing both the "semantic differential technique" and "Likert-type scaling." Eight "judges" participated in this validation process.

The central focus of the interviews included the following key inquiries:

a) Subjective insights, views, and attitudes towards the content of the course and teaching methods as perceived by the professors.

b) Rationale for the preservation or transformation of the sustainability of the content within introductory courses in journalism and mass communication. This consideration encompassed the rapid advancements within both the "industrialist" and "culturalist" dimensions of both paradigms.

c) Exploration of terminology and challenges linked to the utilization of spe-

cific terms established by different Media Schools and scholars.

2.2. Research Questions and Scope

In a broad sense, the research questions align with the content of the teaching course, particularly addressing the examination of the following topics:

RQ1. What guiding requirements and perspectives shape the syllabus for introductory courses within the profession, as outlined by the authors and professors?

RQ2. What constitutes the structure of syllabus content, and is there a prioritization of distinct sub-paradigms? (This question includes three specific sub-questions: q1, q2, q3, q4).

RQ3. How is the essence of the term “information” conveyed to students?

These research questions mirror the schema proposed by Deuze-Hanitzsch, encompassing three dimensions:

1) Motivation: Why is an introduction necessary? Could the traditional components of an introduction be integrated into other courses?

2) Paradigm: What set of ideas guides the introduction? Does it lean towards societal or cultural aspects?

3) Orientation: On which aspects is the introduction grounded?

During the course of in-depth interviews, participants responded to more than 20 questions. However, for the purposes of this article, we selected questions and answers relevant to the aforementioned key points. These selections were deemed most pertinent and significantly influenced the trajectory of the entire study.

2.3. About the Research Population

Georgia has 11 institutions which offer Bachelor-level studies. Practically, all of them (with rear exclusion—2 institutions) use the same name for the discipline: “Journalism and (mass) communication”. Of all the 11 institutions in Georgia, 9 are called universities, while 1 is the faculty of Institute and 1 is titled as High Media School. Number (10) of the participant professors makes the survey valid.

The research population was selected taking into consideration the status/employment specification of the respondents. So, the population is defined as follow: 10 Professors/teachers of the introductory courses of those High Educational Institutions that have notion of Journalism/Media/Mass Communication/Communication (in various invariants) in their titles. Interviews-in-depth were conducting with: 3 professors from Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University, 1 Professor from the Technical University of Georgia, 1 Professor from Black Sea International University, 1 Professor of Shota Rustaveli Cinema and Theater State University, 1 Professor of Akaki Tsereteli Kutaisi State University; 1 Professor from David Aghmashenebeli University, 1 Professor from Gori State University and 1 Professor from the Caucasian International University.

The titles, the names and the qualification frames.

It is notable to indicate as well the titles and names of the Programmes themselves so teaching structures which they are integrated in.

Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University—Programme “Journalism and Mass Communication”, Department of Journalism and Mass Communication, Faculty of Social and Political Sciences.

Technical University of Georgia—Programme “Mass Communication and Journalism”, Department of Georgian Philology and Media Technologies/Faculty of Engineering Economics, Media Technologies and Social Sciences.

Shota Rustaveli Cinema and Theater State University—Programme “Mass Communication (Multimedia and Culture Journalism)”, Department of Mass Communication and Media Studies, Faculty of Arts Sciences, Media and Management. The Programme suggests three introductory courses: to Mass Communication; to Journalism; to Creative Basics of Journalism.

David Aghmashenebeli University—Programme “Journalism”, Department of Journalism, School of Journalism and Humanities.

Black Sea International University—Programme “Journalism”, Faculty of Social, Humanities and Educational Sciences.

Caucasian International University—Programme “Journalism”, Faculty of Social Sciences.

Akaki Tsereteli Kutaisi State University—Programme “Mass Communication”, Department of Social Sciences, Direction of Journalism, Faculty of Business, Law and Social Sciences.

Gori State University—Programme “Journalism”, Department of Journalism, Faculty of Social Sciences, Business and Law.

The total amount of students at the moment of the interviews was 1055 (cumulatively).

Academic Degrees and Teaching experience of the Professors of Introductory courses

PhD in Philology (journalism)—5 professors; (2) PhD in Journalism—2 professors; (3) PhD in Mass Communication—1 professor; (4) PhD in Social Sciences—2 professors;

Experience according to years is spread from 7 years to 26 years.

It is noteworthy that almost the absolute majority of professors of the introductory courses (with the exception of one respondent) have continuous work experience in higher educational institutions, and not only in those media schools which they are currently affiliated with. They conducted introductory courses at other universities/media schools as well.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Insights and Attitudes

One of the first questions concerned the arguments of professors—how could they argue for the existence of an introductory course in the curriculum with

given status and given content? Each of them had to formulate their opinions or attitudes in the range from 3 to 5. The interviewers did not use leading or clarifying questions to get an answer.

After receiving the answers, the professors' statements and attitudes were developed using scaling procedure of semantic differential. Before the scaling procedure, 8 "judges" with a Master's degree in Media and Communication Studies were selected and trained. The "judges" were given the following instructions—they had to evaluate each statement/attitude on a 7-point scale with two poles (absence of profile value—presence of profile value, which with the help of adjectives was formulated as "worthless-valuable"): a statement that does not fall into the logic of the scale had to be evaluated either verbally "not suitable" or with the sign "0" (the sign beyond the scale) (See **Table 1**). The scaling develops from negative to positive attitude.

Internal validity of the scale by Cronbach's Alpha coefficient is 0.950, what reveals the highest degree of validity (**Table 2**).

The correlation matrix (**Table 3**) indicates that statements make an equal contribution in the size of the Alpha coefficient. The withdrawal of the 14th judgment—"The introductory course with its content contributions to the student knowing and following the norms of professional ethics"—makes the coefficient higher, but the difference is so small and the initial Alpha coefficient is so high that there is no need to filter this judgment.

3.2. Structure, Methodologies, Priorities

The analysis of the structure and priorities of introductory courses is based on the professors' answers to three questions:

(q1) If you are the authors of the syllabi, what approaches were you guided by when drawing up the teaching plan? (by approaches we meant both substantive and methodological approaches and the estimated number of responses from each survey participant was from 3 to 5 statements);

(q2) What do you consider a priority in the structure of the training course: a) conceptual aspects of the elements of communication, mass communication, media and journalism; b) terminological aspects and terminological accuracy; c) natural history of the development of media (variety of medium); d) study of the scientific contributions of Communication Schools (Frankfurt, Toronto, Birmingham, Glasgow, Annenberg, etc.). The answers to the questions had to be arranged by their priority.

(q3) What potential changes may affect the content of the course?

(q4) How many sources do you use in teaching process?

The answers to the first question (q1) were reduced to the certain numbers by Likert-type scaling (**Table 4**). 12 "judges" at the first stage of the scaling procedure had to filter out the answers, removing duplicated or invalid ones from the data. At the second stage, on a 10-point scale, they should evaluate with a certain figure how much the statement corresponded to the research construct—the structure as a certain proportion of content and methodology? On the scale, the

Table 1. Attitudes and insights of the professors and scaled scores assigned.

N	Statements/Judges' assigned score	I judge	II judge	III judge	IV judge	V judge	VI judge	VII judge	VIII judge
1	A Bachelor's degree in Mass Communications requires knowledge of field specifics.	5	2	4	7	7	7	3	3
2	Constantly changing and updating forms of mass communication require study in a generalized form.	3	3	3	7	7	7	5	4
3	Mass communication requires the study public relations in accordance with the requirements of the modern era.	2	1	4	4	7	7	5	4
4	The introductory course in journalism or in the basics of journalism includes creating awareness about the specifics of the industry.	6	4	6	6	7	7	6	4
5	The introductory course is the basis for studying other professional disciplines.	6	4	5	6	7	7	6	5
6	The introductory course promotes orientation in professional activity.	6	6	5	5	6	7	4	0
7	The introduction implies the first entrance to the creative processes, and it is desirable that the student be familiar with them from the very beginning.	5	2	4	6	6	6	5	4
8	Introduction to journalism and its creative foundations, caused by the requirements of the market, includes familiarization with the use of more creative forms, including art forms.	2	1	3	6	6	6	2	3
9	The course "Introduction to Creative Foundations of Journalism" in order to overcome the competitive environment on new media platforms, offers students knowledge of the latest visual forms and trends.	5	1	4	7	7	7	4	4

Continued

10	The introductory course is the entrance to the profession, the entrance to all the compulsory subjects that will turn a student into a professional reporter or an analytical journalist.	6	5	5	7	7	7	7	7
11	The topics included in the content of the introductory course will be studied in depth in other training courses.	4	4	4	7	7	7	2	3
12	The introductory course with given status and content will help the student to use professional values in her professional activity—truthfulness, objectivity, confidentiality, independence, honesty, respect for human rights.	7	4	5	3	7	7	6	0
13	The introductory course helps the student to obtain information, process and transmit it to the audience.	7	2	5	4	7	7	6	6
14	The introductory course with its content contributes to the student knowing and following the norms of professional ethics.	7	4	4	2	2	7	6	4
15	The introductory course provides the student with basic, fundamental knowledge of the functions and principles of mass communication and journalism, which is a necessary prerequisite for mastering other training courses and for developing skills for practical professional activity.	7	6	4	7	7	7	7	6
16	The introductory creates awareness about professional terms and concepts and teaches how to operate with them.	6	5	7	6	7	6	7	7

Continued

17	The introductory course shows how paradigms have changed in mass communication and strengthens students in the opinion that media, professional activity in media and media research should constantly take into account changing realities and changes caused by new technological opportunities.	5	5	5	7	7	7	7	5
18	The introductory course offers the main characteristics of the specialty and terms.	7	5	5	6	7	6	5	6
19	The introductory course creates the theoretical foundations of future practice and develops skills for critical understanding of the material covered.	7	4	4	6	7	7	5	5
20	Introduction develops skills and abilities to solve problems characteristic of the profession.	7	2	2	5	7	7	4	2
21	The introduction should contain basic knowledge in the discipline it concerns.	2	3	2	7	7	6	2	4
22	Through the introductory course, the basic theories and postulates are studied.	6	4	5	5	7	7	1	2
23	The introduction expands the student's knowledge of related disciplines.	6	3	3	5	7	5	3	4
24	Introduction is the study of the circulation of a meaning-carrying messages (ideas, ideologies, culture).	5	3	6	7	7	6	1	6
25	The introductory course gives the student broad civilization knowledge—this is an introduction to modern media thinking.	5	6	6	6	7	7	6	6
26	Introduction by nature an interdisciplinary course—it is not designed to “facilitate” the study of journalism.	1	1	5	5	7	7	0	6

Table 2. Reliability statistics by Cronbach's Alpha.

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
0.950	0.961	26

Table 3. Correlation matrix.

Item-Total Statistics					
	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Squared Multiple Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
o1	131.83	850.167	0.967	.	0.944
o2	132.17	858.167	0.841	.	0.945
o3	133.00	844.800	0.831	.	0.945
o4	133.50	1042.300	-0.526	.	0.962
o5	131.33	900.267	0.988	.	0.946
o6	131.33	954.267	0.347	.	0.950
o7	132.33	877.867	0.954	.	0.945
o8	133.17	849.367	0.876	.	0.945
o9	132.00	832.800	0.955	.	0.943
o10	131.00	914.000	0.942	.	0.947
o11	131.67	885.467	0.847	.	0.946
o12	131.67	917.067	0.476	.	0.949
o13	131.83	875.767	0.744	.	0.946
o14	132.83	975.767	-0.070	.	0.957
o15	130.83	924.567	0.610	.	0.948
o16	131.00	950.000	0.440	.	0.950
o17	131.17	913.367	0.852	.	0.947
o18	131.17	931.767	0.703	.	0.948
o19	131.33	892.267	0.870	.	0.946
o20	132.17	843.767	0.852	.	0.945
o21	132.67	861.067	0.730	.	0.947
o22	131.50	905.100	0.884	.	0.946
o23	132.33	892.667	0.791	.	0.946
o24	131.50	898.700	0.775	.	0.947
o25	131.00	946.000	0.527	.	0.949
o26	132.83	850.167	0.711	.	0.948

Table 4. Structural and methodological priorities and judges' scores. Correlation Matrix.

N	Priorities/judges' score assigned	I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII	VIII	IX	X	XI	XII
1	Combination of as well specialization "mass communication/journalism" so priority of the programme "journalism" in favor of journalism-freedom of speech and expression, professional ethics, fundamentals of media functioning, media performance.	9	9	7	8	9	9	8	9	8	3	5	6
2	Emphasizing theories about media, about the relationship between media and society.	9	10	9	8	7	9	9	6	10	2	3	2
3	Introduction to communication should be as independent as possible from narrower and professionally oriented courses, not repeated in other academic disciplines. Introduction—knowledge, not skills.	8	7	8	9	7	8	9	8	9	1	4	7
4	The introduction to communication should give the student knowledge about the communication process, about the chain of the process and the elements of the communication phenomenon itself. The course is based on a combination of the following components: definition of communication, types of communication, hierarchy pyramid of the types of communication, communication from the perspective of semiology, information as a measure of communication; mediums (media) and their development; audience phenomenon, effects.	9	10	9	10	10	10	9	10	10	10	10	9
5	Priority of the effects as the result of communication, the explanation of each effect in the relevant conventional terms, the characteristics of each effect and their dependence on intention (planned/unplanned) and time (short-term and long-term).	7	9	8	7	9	10	9	10	10	1	7	6

Continued

6	Priority is making awareness in the models of communication— Aristotle's, Lasswell's, Shannon and Weaver's, Gerbner's models.	7	9	10	8	9	10	10	10	9	1	9	10
7	The introductory course is focused on creating an idea about the phenomenon of mass communication, about its composition, about the place and importance of journalism in the system of mass communication, as our program aims to train journalists-reporters.	10	9	9	9	9	9	9	10	10	1	7	7
8	The introductory course should be a basis for all profession-centered courses and classes in various proportion.	8	7	6	5	6	5	6	6	7	5	4	0
9	The introductory course is the mixture of theories about press (namely, Four Theories of Press and Agenda-setting), Genres and discourse and Ethics.	4	4	5	4	6	5	5	6	7	5	3	4
10	Priorities are fact-based journalism, importance of truth in journalism and social responsibility.	4	4	3	5	4	4	5	4	4	3	3	3
11	The relationship between communication and journalism. The essence of information, the typology of information, aspects of functioning, communication channels and their specifics. Meaningful characteristics of the journalistic text, creative strategies of journalism. Media systems.	9	9	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10
12	Prioritization of development of mass communication according to the certain stages taking into consideration of contextual knowledge, local and global experience.	6	4	3	4	5	6	7	6	6	6	2	4
13	Teaching introduction has to be developed in the context of globalization and intercultural communication taking into account new technological platforms.	7	6	5	5	4	5	7	5	6	5	5	4

Continued

14	Re-thinking mass communication as a broad field where journalism is operating so the determining approach must be interdisciplinary: freedom of media, legal and ethic aspects of journalism performance, advertising as a mixed kind of media art and commercial communication, popular culture and mass media.	9	8	8	9	9	10	8	8	9	6	7	5
15	Early forms of communication, their development to nowadays forms; Theories, models and conceptions of communication, diversity of media channels, carriers and platforms.	10	9	9	9	10	10	9	10	10	7	9	9
16	Priority of institutional approach: common nature of media, natural history of the channels of mass communication; Public Relations, Ads, Video and audio texts, Photo messages.	10	7	9	8	8	7	7	8	7	7	5	0
17	The introductory course has to be oriented to make awareness about informational society, how to avoid “informational chaos”, the issues of regulation of the cyberspace.	9	10	9	8	7	6	6	7	0	7	5	3

number 1 meant extreme discrepancy, and 10 meant extreme compliance. The numbers from 2 to 9 meant a gradual increase in positive attitude. The “judges” reduced total amount of statements/attitudes to 17.

The internal validity of the scale requires calculation of Cronbach’s Alpha. The Alpha Coefficient was scored as 0.874 that is considered as enough high degree of internal validity (**Table 5**).

The correlation matrix (**Table 6**) indicates that statements make an equal contribution in the amount of the Alpha coefficient. The withdrawal of the 17th statement—“The introductory course has to be oriented to make awareness about informational society, how to avoid “informational chaos”, the issues of regulation of the cyberspace”—makes the coefficient higher and gives a chance to reach higher coefficient of Alpha but the difference is so small and the initial Alpha coefficient is so high that there is no need to filter this statement.

Question (q2) about ordering priorities of the content of teaching course was caused on one hand by the content of mandatory literature and syllabi and on another hand by the answers of the participant professors.

Table 5. Reliability statistics.

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
0.874	0.852	17

Table 6. Item-Total statistics.

	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Squared Multiple Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
b1	115.73	249.418	0.951	.	0.847
b2	115.91	233.891	0.848	.	0.849
b3	116.27	235.818	0.928	.	0.844
b4	113.64	317.455	-0.326	.	0.882
b5	115.45	240.273	0.814	.	0.851
b6	115.00	248.400	0.691	.	0.859
b7	115.00	233.400	0.916	.	0.844
b8	117.45	289.273	0.561	.	0.868
b9	118.45	301.273	0.246	.	0.876
b10	119.45	297.273	0.600	.	0.870
b11	113.55	316.273	-0.291	.	0.881
b12	118.36	299.855	0.186	.	0.879
b13	117.91	302.491	0.274	.	0.875
b14	115.09	281.491	0.798	.	0.862
b15	114.09	286.691	0.808	.	0.864
b16	115.82	291.764	0.426	.	0.871
b17	116.64	314.055	-0.095	.	0.903

The survey participants were offered a list of four elements, each of which was to be marked with a number from 1 to 4, which would express the importance of the component for the professor. In this scheme, the number 1 meant the most important choice, and 4—the most insignificant (**Table 7**).

The purpose of the third question (q3) was to find out what reasons the study participants considered as prerequisites for changing the content of the syllabus. Options were selected from the answers of the professors (from particularities) modifying and generalizing them in relatively common constructs. **Table 8** portrays categories which have potential to cause the changes in syllabus.

The next question concerns the amount and nature of the academic sources used in teaching process. Only two Professors indicated two or three academic sources with their titles and authors while others answered that they used either their own reader or several sources. Several sources meant 4 + sources (see **Table 9**). Those who marked the usage of reader so marked usage of the reader composed by their own.

Table 7. Ordered priorities of the teaching course structure.

Components of Course Structure	First Choice	Second Choice	Third Choice	Fourth Choice	No importance
Conceptual aspects and basic elements of Communication/ Mass Communication/Media/ Journalism.	8	2	0	0	0
Terms and Terminological Accuracy.		6	2	2	0
Natural History of Media (Set of Channels).	1	2	6	1	0
Contribution of International Communication Schools.		1	3	5	1

Table 8. What settings can cause changes in syllabus content?

Participants/options for changes	Technological novelty	Legislation	New terms and platforms	New handbook/ New theory	New trend (as well in methodology)
1	+	+		+	
2	+		+		+
3	+				
4	+				
5	+	+		+	+
6	+	+			+
7	+				+
8	+	+		+	
9	+			+	+
10	+	+	+		+

Table 9. The sources used as mandatory literature in teaching process of introductory courses.

N Sources/Participants	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Sole academic source										
Two or three sources	+			+						
Several Sources (4+)		+	+		+		+	+	+	+
Professor's reader		+	+		+	+			+	+

3.3. Terminology: What is Information?

As far the paradigm itself develops in different media systems in the different invariantly, and as far technology is progressing very rapidly, the conceptual apparatus of journalism and communications begin to lose conceptual unity, and this looks, if not reasonable, then at least subjected to explanation. But the discrepancy in terms and concepts must have a rational limit, beyond which chaos can begin and academic debates can turn into a “dialogue of the deaf”. To test the conceptual unity, we resorted to the simplest method—to ask the study par-

ticipants how they teach students “information”, how they present the essence of the term to them and what theories and models they use for this purpose (see **Table 10**).

3.4. Discussion: What are the Paradoxes of the Course Introduction?

It is reasonable to track how the findings of the article come into accordance with modified by us Deuze-Hanitzsch’s schemata: 1) *Motivation*: why introduction? 2) *Paradigm*: what (set of) ideas guide introduction—societal or cultural? 3) *Orientation*: on what aspect (or aspects) is the introduction based?

Motivation and Orientation are closely interrelated and correlated so we can discuss them jointly. As can be seen from the broad picture of attitudes and opinions expressed in the previous chapter “Results”, attitudes and requirements to the content of the course *Introduction* by the authors of syllabi and lecturers can be designated rather than as philosophical view on profession, which is a set of the most general postulates—with the rare exception of some answers containing specific opinions, attitudes or principles. But these exceptions practically do not change the overall picture. It means that the notion “introduction” is observed as an entity devoid of both functional and structural uniformity, homogeneity. The existence of the entity called *introduction to journalism/mass communication* by all means implies that of being identified as the first (like a “gate”) element to the larger system but nothing more. The larger system obviously could be reduced to above-mentioned Prokhorov’s definition of the concept of communication in our journalism educational system—elaborated meaning of journalism, artificially differentiating it from applied practical journalism. The answers at the question what this small entity “does” in this larger system obviously does not lead us upon discussing the truth or falsity of the opinions expressed, or upon talking about the degree of “satisfactory” of the results obtained. We are discussing our generalizations as a trend that can most likely be observed in any other media educational system.

Paradigm: what (set of) ideas guide introduction? If we imagine these results as a “screen of knowledge”, it turns out that teaching, even in an orderly academic schedule, is mainly not based on the principle of successive “steps”. Proceeding from the supposition that the introductory course should carry entry information about future profession-related classes (the majority of respondents adhered to this change), the certain topics from syllabi are sent from the core of fundamental concepts, but do not form a logical hierarchy and remain connected by the force of adhesion. According to the data from **Table 1** and **Table 4**, knowledge consists of separate fragments that are connected to each other by different logic: in some cases, this connection can be caused by associations of ideas or thanks to them, and in other cases—even by the time of assimilation. The latter is especially true about knowledge related to technological innovations. Dominant presence of notion of technology in the responses of survey

Table 10. What theories are used in teaching of essence of “information”.

Participants (N)	Typology of theory	One single theory (with notion/mention)	Two or more theories (with notion/mention)	Theories in general (without notion/mention)
1		Shannon and Weaver’s Model of Communication	-	-
2		-	Lasswell (message, not information); Shannon and Weaver (as information)	-
3		Shannon and Weaver’s Model of Communication	-	Semantic and Pragmatic Aspects of Information
4		-	-	+
5		-	-	Information and desinformation
6		Shannon and Weaver’s Model of Communication	-	-
7		-	-	True and False in information
8		-	-	Western Theories
9		-	-	+
10		-	-	+

participants with the same dominant lack of specifics is critically important aspect of survey.

Another aspect concerns the pattern we can construct from the answers that is unify marketing communication (ads, PR, promotion) with non-marketing communication, for example—journalism. The reason is differential perception of the current practice in Journalism and Mass Communication and willingness to reflect them immediately without solid academic background. The survey data also show firsthand the dilemma in building a syllabus on *introduction*—whether the paradigm is considered in the context of a social field or culture. Those professors who prefer issues of freedom of speech, ethics, social responsibility, and the development of individual mediums adhere to the social theory of media. And those professors who prefer questions about the study of the subject of transmission and the cycles of its dissemination (domination of semiotic and structuralist issues in syllabus), most likely consider communication as one of the syntagmata of modern culture (in the broad sense of the word), which is mainly disseminated through the media. Inconsistency and mosaic-likeness can be traced in the perception of the message/information dichotomy, information and disinformation. The identification or blurred differentiation of the concepts of message/information is somehow explained by the inertia of the Soviet school and its characteristic terminology. The Soviet School of Journalism called the totality and system of mediums (media) a “system of mass information media

and propaganda” [Sredstva massovoj informacii I propagandy (until the mid-50s)] and “mass information media” [Sredstva massovoj informacii] until today. That is, the term “information” was perceived not in the sense of a measure of reduction of entropy (as in the Shannon and Weaver’s model) and not in the sense of a measure of novelty in a message, but any message delivered in the process of communication. The answer of one of the professors, who uses two theories to study the object/subject of transmission, namely Lasswell’s and Shannon-Weaver’s models, testifies to one single correct approach, how it is possible to combine message and information in their exact meaning for the study of the paradigm as a culture. As for the other “information/disinformation” dichotomy, which was discovered in the answer of one of the professors, includes a different type of bipolarity: the truthfulness and falsity of both the message and the information what is a milestone of social responsibility model of media. Actualization of the paradigm true-false (so-called fact-checking) is a small part of the global trend of arise of media literacy.

4. Conclusion

If we place the results of study in a broader perspective of the history and tradition of teaching and apply it to current process, multiplication of understanding and perception of the essence of concept of introduction is quite problematic. The efforts and attempts to catch up and embrace in the introductory course expansion of technologically determined and increasingly differentiated media development are not spectacular. They are ineffective because it is impossible. Also, it is not academic approach to teach all professionally oriented subjects part-by-part. The introduction of communication and introduction to journalism must be differentiated taking as the basis for differentiation functional and structural criteria. As for introduction to communication in order to avoid meaningful and methodological chaos, it is advisable to divide introductory course building up to choice: or the social-political (Media and Democracy content) either cultural (Semiotics/Structuralism/Meaning-carrying signification content) viewpoints.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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