

Problems and disadvantages of education in the field of public relations (international and Ukrainian context)

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Abstract. In this article the problems related to preparation of public relations specialists are examined. A review of foreign scientific papers related to research of PR-education problems is carried out. The experience of national scientists who have been working on problems of national education in the field of public relations is studied. A basic list of problems inherent in modern PR-education is determined. In this article the author conventionally divides the problems of education in the field of public relations into global and local to which the problems of national education also belong in the author's opinion. Each of the above mentioned problems is described in details in the research. Some ways of overcoming the crisis situation existing in PR-education are proposed.

Key words: *Public relations, PR-education, social communications, preparation system improvement.*

Introduction. National education system requires an essential reframe, a modification of the approach to staff training in order to provide its competitiveness. Due to the fact that nowadays Ukraine is experiencing fundamental changes in economical and socio-political field, the state faces some new challenges. One of the directions of solution for difficult contrarities of social development is humanistically oriented formation of public opinion in order to create an atmosphere of common understanding and harmony in the society. Today such a goal can also be laid upon public relations specialists, because PR contributes to forming a respectable image and a public opinion as well, due to understanding based on the sufficient information awareness.

The existent national practice of public relations specialists' activity demonstrates some serious disadvantages in their training, which results in losing information wars, social pressure increase etc. A big number of problems in PR-education exist in global context and in national PR-segment as well.

An analysis of papers written by foreign and national scientists who have researched the problems of staff training in the field of public relations has served as **the scientific basis for our research.**

Concerning to the foreign scientists who have researched the problem of PR-education, we will mention scientific experience of such scientist as E. Bernace, J.Grewing, I.Lambert, S.Harisson, I.Perimo, M.Sanders and L.Hatchinson. These scientists have researched global problems existing in public relations education and the ways of their solution. Concerning the national scientists we would like to emphasize the experience of such scientists as G.Pochepstov, V.Risun, V.Ivanov, O.Kurban, N.Grytsiuta, L.Havkina, E.Tykhomirova who have researched problematic aspects of public relations education in Ukraine.

The objective of this article is to research basic problems existing in the public relations field.

Basic material presentation. In spite of the increase of interest to public relations researches, the themes related to educational training in this field have not been studied enough. For example, in the USA some questions, among which are the following: "Is a correspondent scientific degree necessary for public relations practitioners?"; "Shall public relations be considered to be a component of a programme in communications or management?" are still under the discussion [3].

In the scope of giving a complex answer to the questions, we will mention a critical review of higher education institutions providing a high-level public relations

education, which exists all over the world. In order to go ahead Ukraine needs to reach at least the level of the problems existing in advanced countries.

The interest to the field of public relations has been increasing permanently. The number of students who want to study exactly this specialty has being increased. In spite of the popularity of public relations as a field of education and science the preparation in this field still has a great number of problems and has been surviving an identity crisis. There are not enough faculties where a high-level preparation is provided.

PR-community has been continuing the debate concerning to the question of how the public relations should be classified: to communication or to management. Today public relations education is still focused on programmes of journalism and communications and it has already appeared in business-schools. Practical specialists and employers have still not come to agreement concerning to the necessity of science degree in the public relations or communication field to start the teaching activity. A lot of successful practitioners have started their career having non-core preparation.

Moreover, during the latest five years a problem of an increased demand in the public relations field has been demonstrated. A boom from the part of the students has resulted in the situation when public relations are studied by one third to half of the total number of students within the scope of many national communication programmes all over the world.

In spite of job market weakening, the administrators of most of higher education institutions evaluate the increase of the number of graduates in this field as a positive phenomenon. However, the students' expectations often do not meet what they really obtain. The quality of public relations education significantly decreases and it does not prepare specialists of an appropriate level to the job market. For example, entrance courses to public relations studies in the USA have been transformed into lecture courses of bigger excess where one lecturer teaches 100-200 students. At the same time training in pre-entry courses in other concentrations within the scope of one department is executed in small laboratory sections with the number of students which does not exceed 20 persons.

The public relations education is also characterized with a critical shortage of teaching staff. Many positions in this field are vacant due to the lack of qualified graduates who desire to get a PhD degree. Those who have already got a correspondent preparation far from always are engaged exactly in teaching.

Moreover, the lack of research interest in the public relations field should be noted. PhD scientific degree is a necessary condition to find an employment in a higher education institution and to take up an appointment. Considering the ratings, two of metric parameters, which are often used, are a per cent part of PhD in the teaching staff, as well as the quantity and quality of research which result is exposed in scientific journals.

Journalism faculties in the USA which are focused on professional preparation acutely react to this problem and do their best to improve the qualification of the teachers. For example, according to the accreditation standards of the *Accreditation Council on Education on Journalism and Mass Communications, ACEJMC* [1], a teaching staff member is obliged to take part in research or creative activity. The preparation obtained within the scope of doctoral programmes helps the teachers to maintain the spirit of competition in the research field.

Concerning the improvement in the field of public relations education, we should note the following: it would be good if practitioners more often consider a career in teaching and obtaining a scientific degree as a supplementary variant of their earnings. A good start here could be part time teaching at the university and a possibility of promotion to a full time job.

University departments specialized in social communication should encourage a bigger number of students to focus on public relations as a subject matter with an attractive prospective of employment.

In Ukraine the problems with staff assistance for PR education also exist: those who teach public relations quite often are specialists in history, marketologists, journalists, economists who have mastered one or another subject matter.

Due to the fact that specialists in other fields get involved in the professional field of public relations and the practice itself is constantly enriched and changed, there is a need for division of training system for public relations specialists into two parts: a system of basic preparation in special higher education institutions and a system of constant professional development for PR specialists who have already have practical activity, has becoming of special importance [13, p. 452].

Foreign experience in the field of higher education demonstrates that European teachers perceive ethical norms in the education and ethical teaching as an important element of the academic activity of the students learning PR specialty.

The peculiarity of our higher education system is in the fact that in Ukrainian higher education institutions the course of ethics is a separated subject, optional or obligatory, whereas in Europe the programmes of ethical education are integrated in all educational activities. European specialists emphasize: "A recommended way of implementation of ethical instructions is an implementation of the latter into each course of public relations academic programme. The most effective methods of teaching ethics are thematic research, modelling and discussion in small groups. The less effective are Socratic dialogues (for example, a method of discussing some question on the grounds of respect of the interlocutors to each other and common search for truth), scientific articles and lectures" [6].

The ethical component in PR has been researched by such scientists as G.Pocheptsov and V.Korolko, but they emphasized in a greater degree on following ethical

norms by PR-specialists themselves. N.Grytsiuga has defined a number of problems appearing in the process of PR teaching in higher education institutions. First of all she has paid attention to low professional level and insufficient qualification of PR specialists, the lack of well-thought and professionally provided staff training system, an insufficient scientific and methodical level of training courses and special courses [8].

In the USA public relations teachers have made a step ahead in the question of ethical education: they have created their own ethical code in PR-education: "PRSA Ethical Code" [6]. This is not a code of ethical norms for PR-specialists, but a code of ethical norms in PR-education field. It determines the principles and rules based on such values as honesty, fidelity, professional development and objectiveness. PRSA and its sections implement ethical instructions by means of periodic programmes for public relations specialists, including "Month of Ethics" held annually in September. Similar programmes are offered to the students in public relations of American student community [2].

Public relations teachers and practitioners in the USA and Europe pay a significant attention to ethic practice in education and public relations, what is reflected in the latest studies executed by members of the Association of American PR experts who consider that "PRSA Ethical Code" is an important value of the Association [7].

Scientific finding of the scientists from Boston Communications College H.Shen and I.Tock [3] who have studied the questions of ethical education and have revealed that the situation with insufficient exposition of ethical subjects is characteristic for the universities in the USA, should be mentioned. American public relations practitioners and teachers consider that the public relations education should pay more attention to the questions of ethics and include such topics as fundamentals of ethics, corporative social responsibility, law in the field of public relations [5].

The results of computer-assisted web interviewing held by a scientist from California Design and Communications University Y.Yerzikova, has demonstrated that almost all public relations teachers consider ethics to be an obligatory subject. In this context most of the respondents confirm that ethical basis and norms and ethical behavior should be taught to the students during all the period of their studies, but not just one time within a certain course.

A similar study has been executed together by the universities of the USA and Great Britain in order to find out how ethical education is implemented into the educational process in the field of public relations. The universities from 39 countries took part in the project. The scientists have found out that in most countries ethics was not taught as an independent subject, but it is just a subject of general courses taught to all students regardless of specialty.

In European countries and in the USA the scientists have studied for many years how ethical basis had to be taught to the students and what form the teaching should have. They studied not only ethics in the public relations field, but also effective pedagogic approaches to teaching ethical social relations. These studies underline the importance of including ethics into the plan of study.

The question of ethical education in Ukraine came up long ago, and during the recent years it has become more topical, especially taking into consideration euromigration processes which include as the integration into European

educational space, as the assimilation of the best experience and European models of education. However, in national education the attention is not focused on ethical questions. Nowadays teaching ethics is still very limited: if such a course is taught, it has a volume of one lesson a week during one term only. Needless to say, the questions on how to implement ethical norms teaching into educational subjects or how to widen a course of ethics are still pending.

In the modern conditions of social medium functioning an effective planning of academic programmes of preparation of public relations specialists should be based in a greater degree on the approach which consists in constant monitoring to find out whether any changes concerning to their qualification take place. Quite high rate of socio-cultural changes in combination with the inertness of the education system, fast and intensive development of modern technological society in many things determines the necessity to intensify studies and education systems, to provide constant observation of professional product market, to adjust the academic process to up-to-date education programmes in an effective way [14].

Concerning other problems related to PR-education in Ukraine, the national system requires cardinal reinterpretation from all points of view. It concerns the approaches to staff preparing in different subjects, particularly, public relations specialists as well. Today the first step is taken at the level of all the system of higher education: a new law of Ukraine "On Higher Education" which is meant to democratize the education field and make it more competitive, has been adopted. Due to the fact that Ukraine has been surviving cardinal changes in economic and social field, the state faces new challenges of XXI century [12], particularly, such as the skill of teaching and preparing new qualified staff in PR. Present approaches to examination of this question require a wide reinterpretation achieved in PR field in order to obtain a possibility to determine new directions of improvement and development in public relations specialists preparation.

Economic programmes of the course "Public Relations" appeared in the world in 80s of the last century, i.e., not so long ago. Due to this fact the question what to teach, how to teach and who must teach future PR-specialists, are still opened [11]. In the opinion of the scientist A.Kryvonosov, Ukrainian PR has the same problems other postsoviet countries [9].

Concerning to the question of PR specialists training, many problems related to adaptation of those who have graduated from the higher education institutions to modern conditions of the job market and the development of new training standards appear.

The analysis of papers written by national and foreign scientists concerning to the preparation of public relations specialists and the components of this profession allowed to determine theoretical insights which concern the concept itself, its structure and functioning. So, the scientists V.Korolko, V.Moyseyev were first who have proposed "the concept of applied aspects of using public relations", V.Risun, G.Pocheptsov, V.Korolko, Y.Tykhomyrova, A.Chumikov proposed a theory of modern ideology of public relations and V.Korolko, O.Nekrasova, V.Ivanov, O.Dudko were the first who developed the principles of interaction of public relations as a social institute which collaborates with other institutes. Concerning to foreign scientists, we should mention the paper of Scott M.Catlip

who has proposed different methods of effectiveness increasing for PR education.

Having analyzed the situation which is taking place in the national market we can generalize something related to the problems which are in the way of improving the level of education in the public relations field in our country. First of all we should note that the problems which are on the way of Ukraine to PR staff training actually are the same as in other countries.

Since in Ukraine the preparation of bachelors in public relations started only in 2007, and the preparation according to the level of "specialist" and "master" started only in 2010, our country has not have enough time to lend a weighty contribution to the development of staff preparation in the specialty "Advertising and Public Relations" under which the training of specialists in public relations is executed: there are higher education institutions which prepare specialists in public relations and there are courses of advanced studies, but it is not enough to provide an appropriate level of public relations education. This fact has a negative influence on the development of PR education in Ukraine, because in this situation the level of education decreases.

However, in the author's opinion, the main problem is the lack of qualitative filling of curricula in the specialty "Advertising and Public Relations", the same as the absence of developed models of PR-education, teaching methods and technologies. To increase the educational level of the specialty the problem must be examined thoroughly; seminars, round tables must be held etc. However, in fact the question of the content and methods of teaching the PR specialty has still not been raised. V.Berezenko says concerning to the above mentioned: "In Ukraine the practice of use of national, but not foreign experience of teaching PR subjects is popular, and there is nothing bad in it if we follow the best international standards of such education. In the worst case (especially in commercial schools and in courses of advanced studies) it results in an eclectic, unspecified combination of the elements of marketing, advertisement, journalism, certain communication technologies (even neurolinguistic programming) according to the principle "all we have at hand" (depending on which trainer, coach, teacher we have managed to find and engage)" [9, p. 452]. Certainly, such an approach is better, than ignoring the problem, but it cannot solve the problem of unsatisfactory and ineffective education.

One more important component of the problem is the fact that the education in public relations in Ukraine does not have a developed, clear educational model. There is a lack of systematic methodical and methodological experience [9, p. 454].

Another problem is the fact that the specialty in public relations, in particular, the management of the process of communication between a subject and an object, seems to many people to be very accessible and simple. Let's notice that in national education there are cases of substitution of public relations with the subjects related to applied social technologies which is absolutely incorrect from the point of view of specifics of this or that subject. As the result we have the situation of preparing specialists in image technologies, but not high-effective PR managers.

The third problem can be considered as too big enthusiasm to conjuncture and the intentions of PR experts to fill free space, what is noted by the scientists V.Korolko and O.Nekrasova: "There is no doubt that the conjuncture

has the right to exist. However, we must clearly see the limits between the utility and the serious work in forming the public relations as a social institute" [10].

The next problem is the fact that in national PR community there is no clear understanding in many questions related to public relations, particularly: what exactly can be considered PR and how to differentiate it in the system of marketing communications; what is the difference between public relations as a profession and as a type of activity of an individual; what is the activity which can exactly be classified as belonging to PR; what is the list of qualification characteristics which can be considered obligatory for a PR practitioner with a university degree [9, p. 49].

The problem also is the fact that the level of organization of academic activity in PR field is insufficient. Very often out-of-date methods are used, and innovational methods and approaches are neglected.

Conclusions. In summary, let's generalize the basic problems existing in the public relations education. They could be conveniently divided into global and national or

local. Identity crisis in the field can be classified as educational: polemics on the question about what category of activity PR shall be classified to have still been carried on. A high demand, but at the same time a low quality of education which predominantly does not meet the expectations, also belongs to this category. The profession is quite popular, and that is the reason why a higher demand for specialists in this field is observed in the job market. There are also such problems as the lack of highly experienced teaching staff and the problems of ethical education in public relations. One more quite pending issue is a permanent controversy between teachers and practitioners concerning to the question of how an effective education model must be created.

An out-of-date post-soviet education model, a lot of theory and not enough practice, non-formulated clear model of education in the field of public relations, the lack of dialogue between practitioners and teaching staff and as a consequence the low level of preparation of a student in all the fields can be classified as national or local problems.

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Аноація. В статті розглядаються проблеми пов'язані з підготовкою фахівців зі зв'язків з громадськістю. Проводиться огляд зарубіжних наукових праць пов'язаних із дослідженням проблем PR-освіти. Досліджуються напрацювання вітчизняних науковців, що працювали над проблематикою вітчизняної освіти зі зв'язків з громадськістю. Визначається основний перелік проблем, які притаманні сучасній PR-освіті. У статті автор умовно поділяє проблеми освіти зі зв'язків з громадськістю на глобальні проблеми та локальні, до яких відноситься і проблеми вітчизняної освіти. У дослідженні детально описано кожен із зазначених проблем. Пропонуються шляхи виходу із кризової ситуації, що існує у галузі PR-освіти.

Ключові слова. зв'язки з громадськістю, PR-освіта, соціальні комунікації, удосконалення системи підготовки.