



Development Communication as Development Aid for Post-conflict Societies

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Introduction

For a couple of years now, a discussion has been going on about the role that journalists should play in so-called fragile states. According to the following understanding, the journalist should not only report on the most up-to-date, neutral, and objective events but also “educate,” “mediate,” “convince,” and thus adopt a “mediation function.” Although this function is often seen as the core responsibility of the media in the developing countries, so far hardly any differentiation has been made as to what exactly this “concept” means for journalism education and how this could be integrated into the models of journalism education. Here, this gap is to be closed by developing a competence model for academic journalism education for a fragile state, using Afghanistan as a case study. This article presents the partial results of the project “Professionalization of Academic Journalist Education in Afghanistan.”

Development Communication as Education for Post-conflict Societies

Approach, aim, and purpose of the project “Professionalization of Academic Journalist Education in Afghanistan” funded by the Volkswagen Foundation was to develop a theoretical competence model for the reform of academic journalism training and initiate a communication studies program in Afghanistan based on the current state of research on the one hand and a discussion and negotiation of possible solutions and problems with the recipients on the other hand. They were specifically asked for their ideas and how the reform shall proceed. Thus, 40 interviews with Afghan experts of media practice, media policy, media studies, and higher education policy were conducted to determine which journalistic skills should be taught to students in academic journalism education in a fragile state such as Afghanistan. For the project, the premise was to derive the model for an academic journalist education not only from the scientific theory or from Western academic models and to introduce it from a “foreign” perspective. A sustainable reform of academic journalist education will only succeed if this reform takes into account the social and cultural value orientations, the structural conditions, as well as the interests, expectations, and opportunities of the actors involved in this reform process. An essential prerequisite for success, therefore, is to seek from the experts involved in this reform, on the one hand, opinions and assessments of the theoretical and practical training objects and, on the other hand, experience and recommendations for the process steps to ask their coordination and sequence, which are necessary at different levels, to successfully develop and test the model. To achieve this goal, the “participatory action research” (PAR) strategy was applied. The approach of participatory action research differs in some key points from other empirical social science methods. Characteristic of participatory action research is not a concrete method, but the underlying understanding of how and by whom research is to be conducted. “Participation” and “action” are here the key aspects. The term “participatory” means that persons in the field are not only included as research objects in the

research, that is, as researched on which data are collected, but actively participate as “co-researchers” (Wöhrer and Arztmann 2017, p. 29). It is generally requested that persons, groups, and institutions are involved who are affected by the research topic and the expected results. For this study, 40 interviews were conducted with stakeholders from academic journalism training over a period of time from mid-February to the end of May 2017 via Skype. Each interview lasted for about 2–3 h and was in either Pashto or Dari. They were recorded, transcribed, and translated into English. This sample included (1) 20 university and college teachers, (2) 5 representatives of regional and national higher education policy, (3) 10 heads of regional media organizations (press, radio, public relations, news agency, online services), and (4) 5 executive boards of regional and national professional associations of journalism. The second important term in the PAR, “action,” means that a change in the sense of problem-solving is sought. The PAR research process often starts with a problem that causes “pausing” or “stopping” and reflection begins. This reflection leads to a research question for which answers are sought. In order to be able to answer, data is needed that is collected, reflected, and analyzed. This brings new options and solutions. The purpose of this study, with the help of the interviewed experts, was to first assess the current state of academic journalism education in Afghanistan (problem) and identify the needs and expectations for improving (approach to) journalism education in Afghanistan both inside and outside state universities. Accordingly, the survey instrument was divided into three parts, each with a detailed explanation and a guide with 35–55 questions. The first part of the survey asked about the general function of the media and journalism in Afghanistan. In the second part, we asked the co-researchers which journalistic skills (theoretical and practical skills) in academic journalism education should be offered to students. Specifically, we asked the co-researchers referring to Weischenberg (1998) and others the items that belong to the theoretical skills in journalism education and asked them if they should also be offered training in journalism in Afghanistan and what additional skills should be taught. The third part of the survey then dealt with the implementation of solutions and suggestions for improving journalistic training. In this article only the partial results of the second part (theoretical competencies) are presented. The answers were evaluated by (MAXQDA) software and subjected to a cluster analysis.

Literature Review: Mass Communication and Development Countries

Hallin and Mancini’s *Comparing Media Systems*, published in 2004, has become a classic in comparative media studies. These four comparative dimensions are not enough to summarize the media systems beyond Western countries (Shen 2012) or fragile state (Schulze and Hamidi 2016). The reason for this is that comparative cross-national or intercultural research too often starts from an “implicit Western bias” and “models and frameworks developed in a Western context are used as templates for evaluation and comparison” and “implicitly disregards, apart from the

proverbial lip service, the importance of cultural dimensions in media systems and societies” (Servaes 2015). For some years now, there has been a discussion about how media should be organized (and described) in so-called developing countries and what functions they should include. According to this understanding, mass communication should not only report on the most up-to-date, neutral, and objective events, but primarily journalism should assume a kind of “mediation function” and not only inform, but “educate,” “mediate,” and “convince” the population. The common denominator of these approaches could be summarized under the following normative view: The mass media should contribute to *national development* (Kunczik 1985, 1988) and *social harmony* (Massey and Chang 2002; see also Bandyopadhyay 1988; Menon 1996). The central assumption of the *first conception* is that mass media (newspapers, radio, television, and ICT) have not only programmatically but have an extraordinarily important role as facilitators of development policy programs for the formation and consolidation of social change. Therefore, various international studies show that the professional attitudes of journalists are very different. Christians et al. (2009) argue that journalism tend to fulfill four core-normative roles, namely, a monitorial, a facilitative, a radical, and a collaborative role, and do point to different ways in which journalism is positioned on society: the *monitorial role* refers to the classic liberal role of a neutral and objective media watching the authorities; the *facilitative role* refers to the need for more independence from power structures as this refers to the media’s role to provide a platform to citizens (ordinary citizens); the *radical role* is fulfilled by oppositional forces that challenge those in positions of power; and the *collaborative role* is taken up by those media and journalists who operate and act unequivocally to protect and safeguard the interests of those in power. Especially the last two rolls fit in this context. Hanitzsch et al. (2011, p. 275) refers to three central areas in which journalism cultures materialize the perception of journalism’s institutional roles, epistemologies, and ethical ideologies. He mentions these three domains together constitute “the basic elements of difference between journalism’s cultures and the domain of institutional roles refers to the normative and actual functions of journalism in society.” His key empirical findings on role perceptions (Journalistic role perceptions denominate the journalists’ self-image of their social roles and functions (Hanitzsch et al. 2011, p. 281). They can be defined as “generalized expectations which journalists believe exist in society and among different stakeholders, which they see as normatively acceptable, and which influence their behavior on the job” (Weischenberg 1995, 1998)) from a comparative survey of the “role perceptions” of 1800 journalists from 18 countries show that “that journalists across the globe pay high regard to the normative ideals of detachment, providing political information, and acting as a watchdog of the government.” But the journalists from non-Western contexts tend to be “more interventionist in their role perceptions (. . .) for particular values, ideas and social change” (Hanitzsch et al. 2011, p. 273). The journalists in developing countries point that they pursue an “active, interventionist role” (Hanitzsch et al. 2011, p. 273) and to understanding “social change” as an elementary goal (see also Hamidi 2016; Ramaprasad 2004, 2006, 2007). Such a function, which can be placed in the context of the idea of “development journalism” (Hanitzsch et al. 2011,

p. 273), is much more endorsed among journalists in developing societies and transitional contexts. In another paper Hanitzsch et al. (2011, p. 278) extracted the four global professional milieus (These professional milieus (re)constitute themselves on the ground of “shared assumptions and beliefs” that provide the cultural framework for journalistic practice (Bourdieu 1998, p. 47 zit n. Hanitzsch et al. 2011, p. 274)): the “populist disseminator,” “detached watchdog,” “critical change agent,” and the “opportunist facilitator.” He points out that the “detached watchdog milieu” clearly dominates the journalistic field in most Western countries, while the milieu of the “opportunist facilitator” reigns supreme in several “developing, transitional, and authoritarian contexts.” The main characteristic of journalists in milieu of opportunist facilitator group he describes “their relatively strong opportunist view of journalism’s role in society, namely as constructive partners of the government in the process of economic development and political transformation (286). So many scientists and practitioners in developing countries argue for a “mass media development model” that should or should be in line with key concerns in their countries, particularly “nation-building” (see McQuail 2000; Jayaweera 1987). McQuail (1983, p. 95) speaks in his approach of “a specific media model for the developing world” as an important common feature, considering “the acceptance of economic development per se” and the “emergence of a nation as the ultimate goal.” The mass media can play a crucial role in social progress, as any transitional society will encounter new attitudes, a new mindset, and a new value system (Namra 2004, p. 17). Basically, it is assumed that mass media are able to influence the social development process by reporting on development programs (ibid., Grossenbacher 1988), because only mass media might reach the vast rural population and give them a voice in debates affecting their lives. In this context, Hedebro (1982, p. 16) attributes to the mass media the potential for conveying the meaning of “nationhood” (sense of nation-ness). He justifies this by arguing that “many developing countries are mixtures of different cultures, languages, political systems and religious beliefs. This is regarded as a serious obstacle to social change on the national level.” For Lozare (2015) the key roles of communication in the “building of a nation” foster “meaningful dialogue among different sectors of society,” “nurture a shared vision for the country’s future,” and “harness non-material and material resources to realize the national shared vision.” In particular, reporting on national projects that could “constructively” contribute to the development and improvement of living standards is desirable (Kunczik 1992). Of course, one cannot attribute omnipotence to the media, as modernization theorists have thought. The media system should be considered as reflectors or indicators of progress, freedom, state of development, and modernization of a country rather than determinants. They can be a factor among others that can bring national development and harmony (ibid.). The *second view*, that the media and journalists have a “social responsibility” and are therefore responsible for the preservation of “social harmony,” is represented in the context of so-called Asian values. The “classic models” to describe the media systems are based on a “too restricted (Western) description of concepts like “freedom,” “democracy,” “objectivity,” and so on, which allow little or no generalizations” (Servaes 2015), for example, to explain journalism in the context of Asian values. In this

context of “Asian values,” journalists and the media are also expected to maintain “social harmony” through “sensitive reporting” and to be constantly aware of the effects that the impact of coverage may have on society (Bayuni 1996; Xu 1998). Therefore, Gunaratne (2000, p. 15) states that the concept of “social responsibility” is understood differently in Asian societies than in Western countries. While the Western approach is defined by the individual’s political, social, and economic freedom, the Asian approach refers to “collective social security and economic prosperity.” This means that mass media have to generate more than anything else “nation-building,” “national consciousness” and “unity,” and the “encouragement of co-operation and peaceful co-existence between diverse and sometimes hostile communities” (Massay and Chang 2002, p. 991). These *two views are interlinked with the definition of development communication*, which is mainly used by researchers from countries in global south, emphasizing the aspect of “societal consensus” enabled by “development communication” (Quebral 2012). Nora Cruz Quebral (2012, p. 14) from the Philippines, an important representative of this view of development communication, explains in detail what the usual tasks of communication media in developing countries are. She states four basic items: (a) circulate knowledge that will inform people significant events, opportunities, dangers, and changes in their community, the country, the region, and the world; (b) create and maintain a base of consensus that is or community life may be discussed to achieve a better life needed for the stability of a state; (c) provide a forum where issues affecting the national; and (d) teach those ideas, skills, and values that people need. First, Quebral (2006) sees “development communication” as “an art and science of human communication apply to the speedy transformation of a country and mass of its people from poverty to a dynamic state and the larger fulfillment of the human potential.” Second, she reacts to the question “how can communication media help create and maintain consensus?” and argues “[l]ike a marriage, a nation is founded on a bedrock of common experiences and shared values. Conflicts among groups in a nation cannot be helped, but with a wide enough base of agreement, the answers are sought not in secession but in accommodation and compromise. It is communication through the mainstream and new media that can project this national identity to a people and that can demonstrate to them that a united nation can be fashioned out of diverse cultures.” Third, she describes what “providing a forum” means. Discussion through communication media is one of the basic features of a democracy. There must be a marketplace where ideas and opinions on public issues may be heard, answered, or exchanged. How to give voice to the voiceless is a concern of the development communicator, as well as reporting events as they happen, which certainly is not a new task for communication media. Fourth, she considers the question why communication media should assume the role of a teacher and argues that for a country to develop, its citizens must be exposed to progressive ideas, skills, and accompanying values. Formal education that happens in schools cannot do this yeoman task alone. It must be supplemented and reinforced by other social institutions, not the least of which is a country’s communication system. Therefore Quebral (2012, p. 7) defines “development communication” as it “circulates useful information and knowledge; provides a forum where problems and issues may be aired,

teaches needed ideas, skills, and values; and creates a base of consensus that stabilizes the state.”

Development, Journalism, and Education

The challenge to develop curricula and do research based on the realities in developing countries and steeped in contextualized theory is one that is acknowledged by several journalism educators (see Mensing 2010). Apart from creating the appropriate political and economic environments for an independent media system, it is crucial to educate journalists to the highest ethical and professional standards possible (Servaes 2015). Professional education of journalists should be based on local or national parameters (ibid.). Journalism that ignores a community dimension can end up being used as a tool to divide people by interests, rather than build relationships critical for functioning communities (Mensing 2010).

The journalism education in developing countries must contend with defining a new academic identity for itself, extricating itself from dependency on Western-oriented models of journalism education and training (ibid.). Many feel that the Western or “libertarian” model of journalism had not contributed fully toward national progress because of its emphasis on the entertainment function of the mass media and its treatment of information as a “saleable market commodity” (see Ali 2011). Western news values of timeliness, prominence, proximity, conflict, and the bizarre exclude the ordinary people in the news unless they are involved in accidents, violence, or catastrophes (ibid.). For very different reasons, journalists in developing countries are dissatisfied with the Western model of journalism and have been trying to develop models they feel would serve their needs better. Development journalism is stemming from the dissatisfaction with the Western news values that do not serve the cause of national development (Ali 2011; Yin 2008). Development journalism is an important part of development communication that can be conducted by professional or lay journalists. In the first case, one speaks of “constructive journalism” and in the second case of citizen journalism. Accordingly, community journalism is often associated with this type of journalism. In all cases, the aim is to report on answers to social problems and to shed light on the effectiveness of approaches to solutions so that the recipients of such reporting can learn from them or be inspired by them. The concept of development journalism has been developed and tailored to the needs of countries in the Global South, especially in Asia since the 1960s in contrast to Western watchdog journalism, but is currently also being adapted in Western countries. According to Xu (2009, p. 358), the main components are, among other things, not only to focus on current affairs, but long-term development processes; to work independently of the government and criticize the government constructively, but to place the journalistic focus on news about economic and social development and to constructively engage in nation-building with the government; and to empower “normal” people to improve their lives and those of their communities. Here communication not only means the transfer of information but also includes the participation in the society and in the community

(Namra 2004) and focus on the educational function of the news, stories about social needs, self-help projects, and obstacles to development (Gunaratne 1996). Each journalist role (creator of forum and consensus, teaches or advocate) could be associated with a specific set of competencies (and skills and values), which the journalist (fragile states) of the future needs to acquire in order to perform adequately (see also Servaes 2015).

Journalism and Competence

The job description of journalists has changed over the past decades toward more professionalism. Nevertheless, there is still no uniform or legally prescribed way in which future journalists can gain their journalistic competence. Weischenberg (1995, p. 492) defines journalistic competence as “specific knowledge, values, norms and standards of conduct of the profession acquired through systematic training.” Competence therefore includes knowledge, values, and behaviors. If skills are to be acquired during training, knowledge, values, and behavioral patterns must be systematized. Within the project “Journalism and Competence,” Weischenberg (1990, p. 21f) developed together with Sigrid Schneider and Lutz Michel an analytical grid of journalistic competence. Despite some shortcomings, this competence model became an important basis for later competence and curriculum discussions in Germany (Nowak 2007, p. 82). He divides journalistic competence into professional competence (Fachkompetenz), special competence (Sachkompetenz), presentation competence (Vermittlungskompetenz), as well as social orientation (Soziale Orientierung). According to Weischenberg (1990, p. 45), “professional competence” includes research, selection, editing, and organizational techniques, often referred to as “craft,” and specialist media knowledge of media studies, media economics, politics, law, history, and technology. This media knowledge should provide in the mediation process the theoretical basis for the fields of competence “functional awareness,” “reflectivity,” and “autonomy awareness.” In terms of special competence, Weischenberg (1990, p. 34) attaches great importance to the fact that the requirements in this area are constantly increasing. On one hand, he demands the study of a special subject in order to acquire departmental knowledge. On the other hand, aspiring journalists should acquire orientation knowledge in order to classify their knowledge in social, political, and economic contexts. The presentation competence includes a general articulation ability and knowledge of the forms of presentation in order to present the contents in a recipient-oriented manner. According to Weischenberg, social orientation differentiates the university training program significantly from other offers. It is mainly about “thinking about journalistic actions.” Functional awareness, the first component of “social orientation,” is designed to help journalists use their influence responsibly while assuming their role as critics and controllers of politics and society. Not all assignments in Weischenberg’s competence model are easily comprehensible; one or the other element could be supplemented (Nowak 2007, p. 82). The rapidly increasing mechanization of the journalistic working environment – not only of the means of

work but also of the sources of information – therefore demands a high level of technical skills. Klaus Meier (2011, p. 223; see also Hanitzsch 1999, p. 119) adds another area to the four areas of competence proposed by Weischenberg: technical competence and composition competence. On one hand, knowledge of commonly used tools such as the Internet or basic computer software is meant; on the other hand, the journalist needs in particular ready-to-use knowledge in dealing with special technologies. In particular, this area of expertise includes cross-media competences. The organizational and conceptual competence strengthens the journalist's ability to innovate when he knows how media are used and with which concepts the target groups are optimally attained through quality journalism (Meier 2011, p. 223). On one hand, the subjects of organizational competence are specialist knowledge of editorial organization and quality management and, on the other hand, specific expertise on the current economic structures and fundamentals of journalism in society.

Social Framework in Afghanistan

The Islamic Republic of Afghanistan is a landlocked country in southern Asia with roughly 29 million inhabitants. The population is made up of more than 30 ethnic groups for whom their tribes and clans are far more important than their shared national identity (CIA 2015). Pashtun (ca. 40–50%), Tadjik (ca. 20–35%), Hazara (ca. 7–20%), and Uzbek (ca. 8–15%) form the four largest ethnic groups (see Schetter 2009, pp. 123–133). Economically, Afghanistan is one of the poorest nations on earth predominantly practicing agriculture. Afghanistan is classified as a fragile state (one of roughly 46 fragile states worldwide), since Afghanistan still struggles after three decades of civil war with serious internal conflicts and problems (Deane 2013, p. 15; Barker 2008; Page and Siddiqi 2012, p. 4). Widely known is further the term “fragmented state,” because those states are characterized by religious, political, ethnic, and other rifts (Putzel and Van der Zwan 2005, p. 41). No unified definition of fragile statehood exists so far, but as a rule, fragile states can be recognized when presenting with a “lack of security, capacity and legitimacy” (ibid.). An important solution for a successful state formation is the “increase in similarities between social groups” seen as the “key to success” (Putzel and Van der Zwan 2005, p. 39). Collier (2010, p. 9) also speaks of a “shared identity” and argues that the development of this identity is essential to the long-term stability of a state. Similarly, Hippler (2004, pp. 5f) sees “integrative ideology” as a very important component of successful state formation. This could arise from the “integration of a society” from the previously only “loosely connected groups.” The basic point here is that “the communication patterns between the social groups are condensing so much that communication does not take place mainly within the groups.” This implies a significant amount of internal social communication, which must be promoted by mass and communication media (ibid.). Kaltenborn-Stachau (2008, p. 21) describes the necessity of a “national dialogue process” in a “media public sphere” in which these similarities can emerge as the “heart” of any state formation.

Key actors in media development cooperation, such as the USA and bilateral organizations such as the World Bank, recommend the liberalization and privatization of media in transition countries, including fragile states (Putzel and Van der Zwan 2005, p. 59). “Unregulated media revolution” is causing “fragmentation of the media sector” (Deane 2013, p. 7) as many minorities have their own community and local group-based media. The inevitable consequence of this expansion is the progressive fragmentation of target groups and a consequent strengthening of the “ethnicization of politics.” The trend makes it increasingly difficult to mobilize larger groups of people for a task or a common goal, which is central to state-building (see more Deane 2013).

Media System and Journalist Education

The media system in Afghanistan has been through an extraordinary dynamic development since 2001, initiated by the political liberation and propelled by the commitment of international stakeholders, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), and the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF). Afghanistan has a dual media system as to state and economically privately organized press, broadcasting, and online providers. Within the scope of this system, around 800 periodicals and more than 75 televisions, as well as 175 radio broadcasting providers, were registered at the end of 2015 next to state media institutions (Altai 2015, p. 118). In sum, it can be observed that the Afghan media system currently experiences the difficult transition from dependency on international subsidy to self-sufficient financial viability and future; yet in a fragile state, this is an enormous challenge (Hamidi 2016). The so-called media boom caused a rapid expansion and differentiation of the job market in the journalistic field. As a result of the media boom, the number of journalists increased significantly. It is assumed that between 8000 and 10,000 people in the country are somehow engaged in journalistic work. Through the expansion and differentiation, many unqualified workers got into the Afghan media industry. Journalism as a profession suffers from loss of credibility in the population and thus loses partially its function (Hamidi 2016). Therefore vast improvements, reform, and ethical schooling for journalists were demanded for a considerable time. Overall, two mutually dependent phenomena can be observed in the Afghan media development: on the one hand, social and economic change in the direction of democracy and, on the other hand, a strong media market liberalization, which has fragmented ethnic groups public. It has been criticized that international organizations were spending “hundreds of millions of dollars” on the media in Afghanistan (Barker 2008, p. 6), but only a few have considered policies that provide a supportive role for the state-building process (Deane 2013; Page and Siddiqi 2012). The “media boom” initiated an enormous expansion and differentiation of the journalistic professional field. In the last 10 years and more, journalism as a profession has gained popularity dramatically in Afghanistan – especially among the young generation. Notwithstanding the expansion of media offers, the number of “professional” media formats remains relatively small since, although

mass media structures have profited from international media funding, lasting projects aimed at the professionalization of media personnel have done so to a lesser extent.

This circumstance has resulted from the fact that in effect a qualitative and long-term oriented good academic journalism education is still missing (see Hamidi 2013, 2016). Just a few fundamental problems of Afghan journalistic education shall be mentioned here. First, university training programs mainly aim to transmit professionally relevant special competences (theoretical knowledge regarding the law and the organization of the media, the journalistic work process, etc.). In contrast, the established and systematic reflection as to the societal and cultural, political, and economic significance and the ethical tenets and challenges of increasingly economical journalism are hardly considered. Second, subject-specific training at state universities can be criticized in so far as their curricula contain no systematic praxis elements but are organized to desist practical work in an editorial office. Third, training programs in journalism schools mainly concentrate on the transmission of individual practical skills in order to “produce” journalists rapidly. Fourth, communication studies research exploring the changing societal demands and needs of journalism in Afghanistan and offering its findings to academic journalism training is equally nonexistent as a subject-specific discussion concerning quality assurance of journalism. Finally, it can be deduced from the research findings as to journalistic education in Afghanistan that there is a need for a model that combines theoretical and praxis simulating training elements by taking into consideration the specific cultural, societal, communicative, and especially confessional scopes and medial structures in Afghanistan while transmitting and reflecting its training aim apart from the mentioned professional competences, especially a mediation competence. Especially these areas have so far been severely neglected in the subject-specific Afghan research. Last but not least, the mediation function according to unanimous views, considering the fragile state structures and the fractured relations between the ethnic groups, has to be the central function of journalism in Afghanistan. It is the task of the media in fragile states like Afghanistan to shape a national identity and deliver compromises between the different fractions and opinions (Deane 2013).

Mediation as a (New) Journalistic Competence

In international comparison, attitudes to intermediary competences in journalist education of respondents in Afghanistan are quite similar to those of the competency models by Nowak (2007), Weischenberg (1998), Hanitzsch (1999), and Meier (2011). The similarity among the interviewees is particularly evident in the fact that professional competence, special competence, presentation and cross-media competence, organizational competence, and social orientation are described as most important for journalistic education. The journalistic competences suggested by Weischenberg (1998), Hanitzsch (1999), Nowak (2007), and Meier (2011), which should be taught in training, are also largely shared by the participants in the study. However, statements made by respondents in this study in Afghanistan suggest

a correction of the above developed model of journalistic skills to be necessary. Respondents agreed that in addition to these areas of competence, another area of journalistic training should be added and taught. This competence can be summarized in a memorable way under “mediation competence.” This competence field, which emphasizes a journalist’s dedication to the public good in fragile state like Afghanistan (national development and harmony), falls under the umbrella of “mediation.” Mediation journalism techniques include to be a creator of a “forum,” to aim for “consensus,” and to act as a “teacher.” This involves reporting on stories that foster hope, healing, and resilience, as the interviewed strongly believe that this style of reporting can contribute to the country’s positive future. Overall, the respondents’ statements on this area of competence can be included in eight clusters or dimensions. So far, mediation competence is not offered in academic journalism education in Afghanistan.

Journalist Should Mediate Between State and the People

According to the interviewees, mediation between the state and citizens is seen as one of the most important tasks of journalists. They believe that Afghanistan has a communicative problem between the government and the people. The population does not know what the government is actually doing. As a result, the population is resigned and disappointed with the state’s activities. Through mediation, journalists should increase their confidence in state structures so that these structures can consolidate themselves. The journalists should therefore learn how to communicate and explain government programs of the population and how they can act and function as a bridge between the state and the population. But it also means that journalism students learn how to monitor and control government activities “critically” and “transparently” so that the results can then be revealed to citizens. In summary, respondents are expected to learn that not only do students impart knowledge between the state and the population but that state programs also critically monitor and control activities. To train and professionalize students is seen as an important task of the universities.

Urban and Countryside

The interviewees also consider that journalists not only produce information for the urban population but also always have an eye on the rural population, because in Afghanistan over 70% of the population live in rural areas. It is emphasized by respondents that journalist students should learn to take the two strata of the population equally serious. They should also learn to act as mediators between the two populations. However, a journalism student should also learn to connect other layers of society, such as children, women, adults, or the elderly (see also Quebral 2012, p. 14).

State and Opponents

A journalism student should learn how he later could mediate as a journalist between the state and opponents of the state (Taliban). In this context, she should learn to be “fair” and “objective.” He should learn to treat the population living outside of state influence as equal.

Social Consensus Between Ethnic Groups

Respondents argue that journalism students should be qualified to work for national consensus. This is explained by the fact that Afghanistan has been in a civil war for 40 years and that the country is a multiethnic society and ultimately a fragmented society. The cause of the civil war, according to the interviewees, is that the different ethnic groups in Afghanistan have problems with each other and these problems are not communicated. That’s why journalism should teach students to see the media as a social “forum” in which the various social groups can share and communicate their concerns and problems. Through this communication, long-term peace could be secured. But if this communication does not take place, this conflict can still continue. That’s why journalists are very important here to take on this role. Respondents emphasized that journalists should be trained on how to implement this role.

Conflict Resolution

Respondents point out that there are long-standing ethnic conflicts in Afghanistan and journalists have the task of finding solutions to these conflicts by providing information about the problems. This could reduce the conflicts in society. In this context, it is central that journalism students learn not only to present the problems but also to look for their constructive solutions. The task of the journalist is not only to offer the solutions themselves, but to seek these solutions in society and show them to society. Especially Afghanistan needs such journalism graduates. These aspects are central and should be taught in journalism studies.

Constructive Journalism as an Agent for Change

Respondents agree that most media in Afghanistan engage in “war journalism” and are constantly focused on negative news. As a result, the population is now tired of this “negative reporting.” The negative mediatization of society makes the population “depressed.” This leads to a great loss of confidence in social developments. Therefore, the respondents expect that journalist training does not only focus on reporting on negative developments but also to engage with positive developments and successful projects in society and to communicate them to society. The role of

journalists in Afghanistan should also be that, according to interviewees, to provide guidance and future prospects for society by reporting on positive developments. For this the journalist students should be trained and conditioned. This view has many interfaces with the concept of so-called constructive journalism. Gyldensted (2014, p. 42) described constructive journalism as a more comprehensive form of journalism that accurately portrays the world by covering not only stories about conflict and destruction, but stories about collaboration and progress as well. The concept has been defined and introduced to the academic literature as an emerging form of journalism that involves applying positive psychology and other behavioral science techniques to news processes and production in an effort to create more productive and engaging stories, while remaining committed to journalism's core functions (Gyldensted 2014).

Education and Enlightenment

The respondents argue that most of the population in Afghanistan has no education. There the media and journalists should take on an educational intermediary role. They could take on the role of a teacher. For example, in the rural areas of the population, the media could communicate that it is important to send the girls to school. Journalists need to educate people about their problems and solutions. Journalism must not only have the task of communicating information, but should also educate and enlighten. For that the journalism students should be qualified.

Conclusion

The need for mediation skills is seen as urgent by respondents in Afghanistan along with the other areas (professional, special, presentation and cross-media, organizational, as well as social orientation) of competence. They argue that, first, Afghanistan suffers from protracted war; second, that different ethnic groups have been fighting each other for several years; and third, that there is no social understanding among the groups. In this respect, respondents believe that "every journalist" in Afghanistan should have the job of mediating between different social groups and thus possibly foster peace in the long term. Respondents are of the opinion that Afghanistan is undergoing a process of transformation resulting in economic, social, and political problems. For this reason, it is important for respondents that journalists should assume the leadership or orientation role in the transformation process. It is also important that they promote national and cultural identity. They should sensitize people for it.

All respondents agreed that this area of expertise should be systematically integrated into the curriculum of academic journalism education, so that journalists can acquire this qualification or qualify it for later use in professional life. In this respect it is important to integrate the concept of "mediation competence" systematically into journalist training (competence model), since the journalistic

responsibility in fragile contexts can only benefit from it, when social cohesion is seen as the most important solution. If these connections are solidifying in basic and advanced training, they could serve a crucial contribution to constructive nation-building. This area of competence represents an additional concept in the competence model of academic journalism education, which offers a basic orientation: How should we report on national development, how should conflicts be reported, and how should intercultural sensitivity be shown in a multicultural and multiethnic society? The aim of the study program with this competence model could be to train journalists who are qualified to work in currently reporting media. The focus should be on a wide range of qualifications. The training should be multimedia, that is, it should cover newspapers, agencies, radio, television, and online journalism. The study of journalism could convey a mixture of knowledge and ability:

- Communication science basic knowledge, so that the students can deal with the media and the journalism, with the functioning and the legal and political conditions of the media system as well as media-ethical questions.
- Basics in journalistic mediation and production for print and electronic media.
- The ability to understand complex issues and make them journalistically accessible to an audience.
- Scientific skills and techniques to enable them to be applied to a research topic by combining, analyzing, and interpreting the methodological-analytical tools, as well as mastering the skills of documentation and presentation.
- Communicative and social skills to work successfully in the editorial offices and mass media editorial offices.
- Knowledge of the social context in order to report competently and critically on current events from different event fields from different perspectives.
- Reflection and ethical competence to work journalistically on the backgrounds and contexts of events and to develop a critical attitude to their own actions in the journalistic profession.
- Mediation literacy skills to enable journalists to live up to their journalistic responsibilities in a development process, thus making an important contribution to building a constructive nation-building.

For reasons of space, many questions could not be addressed in this article. First of all, of course, the mediation system used is seen as a multilevel process involving expertise on different components: *approaches to development and communications, communication and conflict*, as well as *intercultural communication* (intercultural dialogue). It cannot be explained here for reasons of space, but this field introduces the students to the issues of development and the specific role played by the media in development support communication, communication and conflict, and intercultural communication. Secondly, it was not possible to differentiate in this article who could study in such a degree program and where the graduates could later work as journalists. Basically, this competency model is best suited for academic education, as it may have the resources to do so. Here, of course, there is the question of whether the economic imperatives in the media even allow the journalists to be

able to implement such skills, which are supposed to promote “public good,” in everyday professional life. However, it can be assumed that journalist graduates in the fragile states should be sensitized and generally equipped for these six spheres of competence in principle and in general. Whether or not they can implement this competence in everyday professional life would then be a question for another study.

Future Discussions

The subjects of theoretical and practical training correspond to the competences found in international literature, which a journalist has or should acquire during a professional study. The international standard is (1) professional competence, (2) specific competence, (3) cross-media competence, (4) organizational competence, and (5) social orientation. A new and important finding from the project’s specific perspective on Islamic multiethnic developing countries and fragile state such as Afghanistan is the recognition that the political, social, and especially cultural and economic framework conditions demand from journalists a high degree of and mediation competence. Referring to these models, the own model for journalist training is divided into six competences, because the competence (6) “mediation competence” was added as a result from the expert interviews. It must be assumed that the societal circumstances in the fragile society (such as Afghanistan) demand a high measure of mediation skills in journalism. The mediation competence plays only a minor role in Western journalism education (e.g., USA, Germany), while it is central to the academic training of journalists in Afghanistan, as stated by the interviewees, and therefore receives an equal position with respect to the areas of competence. The competence area mediation may still be a marginal topic in classical journalistic education, but the main points of contact are inherent among the respondents: They interpret it as a vital goal. They have fewer problems with the concept of mediation than their counterparts in Western industrialized countries, because “they themselves are affected by these crises.” This “ultimate goal,” which can be called “a constructive contribution to national development,” is consistently seen and expected to be an important responsibility and main function of mass media in fragile states. That means that media and journalism have to create more than anything else “nation-building,” “national consciousness” and “unity,” and the “encouragement of co-operation and peaceful co-existence between diverse and sometimes hostile communities.” This meaning implies the culturally sensitive ideology of journalism in Islam too (see Pintak 2014). The goals of this field in journalism education should instill in students a passion for journalism that helps to transform communities, a critical sense of being a mediator of community development, and develop a sense of moral obligation and professional duty to represent the interests of the masses.

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