

Journalism and Communication Education in China (mainland)
An Introduction

by

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The concept of journalism education in China started with print journalism education. Now journalism education in China is no longer limited to print journalism, rather it has come to include broadcasting, public relations, advertising, mass communication and even internet, as it is the case elsewhere. Therefore, in recent years, journalism education in China is more often referred to as journalism and communication education. For the sake of convenience, the chapter sometimes still uses journalism education to mean journalism and communication education.

History: US Origin and Unstable Progress

The origin of modern journalism education in China can be traced back to the 1920s when modern newspapers and universities started to emerge and expand in big cities like Beijing and Shanghai. Since modern newspapers were started in China with colonial influences from the western countries (Huang, 2001, p.p. 13-30), it is no surprise that journalism education in China was also introduced from western countries, particularly the U.S. practice.

Modern journalism education history in China can fall into five stages: first Stage (1920s to 1940s), second stage (1950s), third stage (early 1960s), fourth stage (ten years of the Cultural Revolution, 1966-1977) and fifth stage (1978 to 2000) (Ding, 1997).

During the first stage, journalism education in China was influenced by and in fact modeled after two journalism schools in two American universities. One was the School of Journalism at the University of Missouri and the other was the School of Journalism at the University of Columbia. The School of Journalism at the University of Missouri not only advocated the modern concept of journalism education in China but also started the first journalism department at St. John University in Shanghai in 1920 and journalism departments at Yenching University in Beijing in 1924¹ and Fudan University in 1929. These journalism programs and schools employed American journalism professors to teach Chinese students in

English and borrowed journalism curricula and course designs from the U.S..

As a result, the Missouri model became an accepted model for journalism education in China even at this stage. Together with Columbia University, the School of Journalism at the University of Missouri is still one of the most renowned schools among Chinese journalism schools nowadays.

The U.S. journalism education model trained the first group of Chinese journalists as well as journalism education professors who later joined journalism schools at Fudan University in Shanghai and Renmin University in Beijing, the two most prestigious journalism schools in 1949 when new China was founded.

Early influences of U.S. journalism education had also created a bilingual tradition (mainly Chinese and English) for journalism education in China, which is still practiced in some journalism programs at Chinese universities. Even for those Chinese journalism programs, English is also emphasized. For instance, all Chinese students are required to take an English exam before they enter journalism programs and are also required to take an English course after their admission into journalism programs (Guo, 1996).

The second stage saw the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949, a watershed for journalism education in the country, after which China started to swing away from U.S. influences and resorted to the Soviet tradition in journalism education, which stressed political orientation in all social science sectors. As a result, journalism programs in China were soon re-organized, with Marxist-Leninist theories listed at the top of their curricula. Courses like business management and advertising were replaced by courses like newspaper's mass work and public propaganda (Ding, 1997).

In the third stage, China broke up with the Soviet Union and became more realistic and self-dependent. The target of journalism education was shifted to the "the training of journalistic teaching and research personnel" (Ding, 1997). The curricula of journalism education favored courses on theories and cultures, which deviated from the Soviet model and suited the Chinese practice better (Ding, 1997, Hao & Xu, 1997).

However, this did not last very long. Normal journalism education was soon interrupted in the mid-1960s (the fourth stage) when the chaotic ten-year “Cultural Revolution” started. Journalism faculty members and even students were required to go out to rural areas of the country to receive “re-education.” Although new students who had been workers, farmers or soldiers were still enrolled, they no longer underwent normal journalism training, but were evaluated by their political attitudes rather than academic performances (Hao & Xu, 1997). Journalism education suffered great setbacks and came to an actual stagnation at this stage.

In the fifth stage, open policies as inaugurated by China’s paramount leader DENG Xiaoping brought about dramatic social changes and rapid economic growth, unprecedented in the history of China. Social changes stimulated media development, particularly the TV industry. Competitive operations of Chinese media in this period led to the increase of newspaper pages and broadcasting time. In an effort to attract more advertisers, Chinese media employed more lively reporting styles such as phone-in hotlines, talk shows, field reporting, criticism reports (negative) on social issues, larger pictures and separated pages for finance, sports and entertainment (Guo, 1996).

Rapid media development left Chinese media industry in great demand for more professional and qualified journalists and editors, who were supposed to have undergone traditional journalism training.

In 1977, journalism education began to restore four-year undergraduate programs in universities in Beijing and Shanghai. In 1978, these journalism schools started to enroll journalism graduate students. The first group of doctoral students was recruited in 1981.

Journalism programs increased from the original 14 programs in 1982 to 57 in 1996 and student enrollment also grew from 726 in 1980 (Greensberg & Lau, 1989) to 6,186 in 1997 (Hao & Xu, 1997). During this period, except for Beijing and Shanghai, there normally existed one journalism school in a university in one province.

In an effort to carry out effective communication to the outside world, China also resumed bilingual journalism education, known as international journalism education, in five universities in 1983,² after the national Xinhua News Agency and the party organ *People's Daily* initiated a graduate school at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences in 1978. These bilingual journalism programs hired American professors and used US journalism textbooks for theory and writing courses and integrated journalistic training with English learning, which aimed to train qualified Chinese reporters and editors for China's effective international communication because they could understand foreign and Chinese cultures and learned how to report news stories in an English style (Guo, 1996). Basically modeled after the US system in the early days, international journalism programs were unique to the Chinese society and met the increasing demands of the country that interacts and cooperates closely with the outside world after a long period of separation since 1949.³

In addition to international journalism programs, expansion of other sequences such as sport journalism, photojournalism as well as advertising, public relations, radio and TV broadcasting and communication have also added greatly to the scope and variety of journalism and communication education in China at this stage.

Ever since 1998, like its booming economy, fast development patterns of journalism education in China continued in the 21st century. According to a recent report provided by the semi-official Journalism Discipline Supervisory Committee (JDSC) under the Ministry of Education, 360 colleges and universities in China have offered a total of 650 undergraduate programs in journalism (180), broadcasting journalism (128), advertising (230), editing and publishing (50) and communication (20) as of May 2009. These journalism schools now enroll an estimated number of 40,000 undergraduates each year, with an average of 110 students in one school. These colleges and universities now hire about 8,000 faculty members, with 14% of them full professors, 27.5% associate professors, 38.5% lecturers and 22% assistant teachers (JDSC, 2009).⁴

Meanwhile, the number of graduate programs has also risen dramatically in the new century. As of March 2006, China has approved a total of 123 MA programs in journalism (60) and communication (63), while only 15 universities were approved to host 21 doctoral programs, including 11 doctoral programs in journalism and 10 doctoral programs in communication (Chen, 2006). So far, these figures remain roughly the same, according to the above report.

Recognition of Journalism and Communication as a Discipline of Social Sciences

On a macro-level, China's economic development has boosted the expansion of journalism programs in China. However, the direct driving engine has resulted from the official recognition of "journalism and communication" by the state as the first-tier discipline of social sciences in 1998 while "journalism" had been listed only as a second-tier concentration under "literature" ever since 1949.

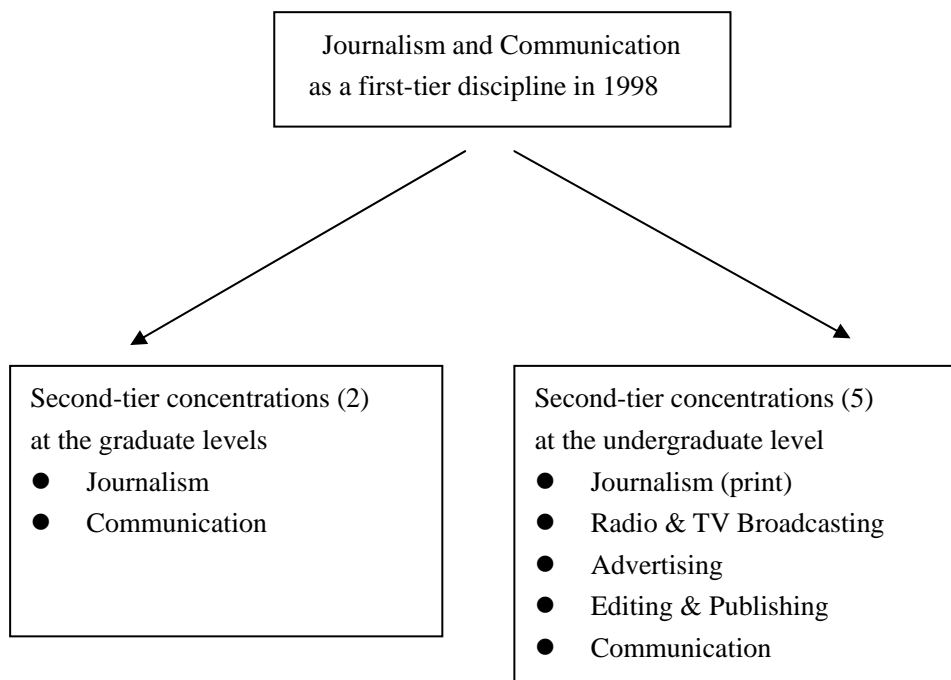
The recognition has significant impacts on journalism education in a centralized system of the nation. First, the recognition itself means that "journalism and communication" is an independent discipline of social sciences in China, which means an independent funding channel for journalism and communication education, because the state allocates funding budgets according to the first-tier disciplines in Chinese colleges and universities in terms of student enrollment, faculty teaching and research. When "journalism" was placed as a second-tier discipline under "literature," state funding first went to literature departments and colleges that diluted funding to journalism and communication education.

Second, the recognition allows evaluation and assessment on journalism and communication programs by journalism and communication professors instead of Chinese literature professors or experts who may not well understand journalism and communication education. To some degree, this can explain why most journalism programs in Chinese universities used to be affiliated to Chinese departments or colleges and why quite a number of professors at journalism programs are of Chinese backgrounds.

In addition, the recognition of “journalism and communication” as an independent first-tier discipline helps to systematize academic divisions of journalism and communication education and encourages the establishment of different concentrations under the discipline of “journalism and communication” as is shown in Table 1. At the graduate levels, two concentrations of “journalism” and “communication” are now listed for both master’s degrees and doctoral degrees. At the undergraduate level, five concentrations are included, namely, “journalism,” “radio & TV broadcasting,” “advertising,” “editing and publishing” as well as “communication.”

Academic divisions of different concentrations at the graduate and undergraduate levels are not only the basis for evaluating and assessing journalism and communication programs in Chinese universities, but also allow a clearer statement of journalism and communication majors (instead of “literature”) in the diplomas of graduate and undergraduate students upon graduation.

Table 1: Disciplinary Structure for Journalism and Communication



Journalism & Communication Education Organizations

The recognition of “journalism and communication” as an independent first-tier discipline also determines the structure of organizations for journalism and communication education. These organizations are professional and sometimes semi-official in China, because they are organized and even appointed by the Ministry of Education or the State Council.

At present, journalism and communication education organizations are established according to the second-tier disciplinary concentrations listed in the above Table 1. Three major journalism education organizations have been established so far: they are the China Association of Journalism and Communication Education (CAJCE), the Journalism Discipline Supervisory Committee (JDSC) under the Ministry of Education and the Journalism and Communication Discipline Appraisal Group (JCDAG) under the State Council.

China Association of Journalism and Communication Education (CAJCE), set up on November 2, 1984, is more like the counterpart of AEJMC in the U.S., even though CAJCE is still under the loose supervision of the Ministry of Education. CAJCE elects its own president and vice presidents every four years from its members, including institutional and individual members who pay an annual fee for formal membership. As of May 2009, the number of CAJCE institutional members has amounted to 119, most of them are universities (102) as well as some national and local publishing houses.

These 102 universities with journalism programs can roughly fall into nine categories by their nature: comprehensive universities, normal universities as well as universities focusing on studies on minorities, natural sciences, foreign languages, sports, law, finance and arts.⁵

As a relatively loose organization, CAJCE only discusses issues related with journalism education at the undergraduate level at its annual conference, which usually turns out to be a networking platform and a big gathering in a hosting university, rather than at a hotel venue as it is for AEJMC.⁶

The secretariat of CAJCE goes into the university where the president comes from. As the present CAJCE president is Prof. RAO Gang from Renmin University, the CAJCE secretariat is also located at the Journalism School of Renmin University in Beijing. Since it is small with one or two members, the secretariat only publishes an annual brochure that records CAJCE activities in the previous year. So far, CAJCE does not even release a website.

CAJCE has five divisions on journalism, advertising, editing and publishing, communication and radio & TV broadcasting. As a rule, each of these divisions is based at one individual university which is academically strong in one of the five areas, rather than the direct operations of CAJCE.⁷ Each division convenes its own annual conference every year.

In parallel with CAJCE, a semi-official organization is known as the Journalism Discipline Supervisory Committee (JDSC) under the Ministry of Education. The Committee, set up in 1996, is a semi-official body that aims to supervise undergraduate journalism education in China by proposing general guidelines, drafting standards for curricula and textbooks and teaching styles (L.R. Li, personal communication, December 15, 2009). The Committee has 40 members who serve on a five-year term and are usually journalism professors and maybe also CAJCE members. They are appointed by the Ministry of Education after nominations from their own respective universities. The one-person secretariat also goes into the university where the committee chairman is based and organizes its annual meeting and administers other related academic activities.

The Journalism & Communication Discipline Appraisal Group (JCDAG) under the State Council is a group of five members who are appointed by the State Council and have the right to vote and approve the establishment of graduate programs (particularly doctoral programs) among journalism and communication schools in China. So far, the group has approved 21 doctoral programs of journalism and communication in 15 universities and research institutes.⁸ The five members of the appraisal group are usually regarded as renowned journalism professors in China,

who enjoy high prestige in their academic research in journalism and communication areas (B.Tong, personal communication, March 28, 2009).

Challenges of Journalism and Communication Education in China

Despite all the developments, journalism and communication education in China is facing challenges in the new century. The biggest challenges may come from new media environment as an external factor and its own administrative system as an internal factor.

New Media Environment

According to the 25th China Statistical Report on Internet Development,⁹ as of December 30, 2009, the number of internet users in China has amounted to 384 million, with a 29% penetration rate among its huge population, while the number of mobile phone users has reached 233 million, with a 60% penetration rate among internet users. This has ranked China as one of the top internet-rich countries.

Since internet is commonly known as the fourth media, the new media has dramatically transformed the landscape of the journalism and communication education in China in the past decade, which is increasingly merging with non-journalistic contents like animation, cinematography and cultural entertainments and new communication forms such as BBS, blogs and twitters.

Not surprisingly, new media convergence trends have posed increasing challenges to the academic divisions of five traditional concentrations of the journalism and communication education at the undergraduate level and the two concentrations at the graduate level, as listed in Table 1. So far, these concentrations still have not included new media contents in their teaching targets among journalism programs in China, letting alone designing specific courses on new media contents and technology for journalism students,¹⁰ who are usually technology-sensitive and have demonstrated immerse interest in new media. What is more important, journalism students have found these skills more useful and helpful in finding jobs upon

graduation.

Rapid changes of new media environment not only require readjustment of journalism program structures, but also demand faster updates of textbooks and classroom contents among journalism professors themselves. This has raised fundamental questions for journalism educators in China: what is really the concept of journalism and communication education in the new media environment? Should it include new media which is now widely accepted among students? If yes, how can new media be merged into the five concentrations of journalism education at the undergraduate level and the two concentrations at the graduate level? Or should a new concentration be proposed?

Professional organizations like the Journalism Discipline Supervisory Committee (JDSC) are already releasing reports to address the issue and make suggestions as to how to solve the problem.

But it seems that these questions are easy to raise but difficult to solve in a centralized educational system in China where all the changes occur in a top-to-down pattern and sometimes can be very slow, quite contrary to the nation's economic growth.

Administrative System

If new media environment is an external factor, then administrative system is an internal factor that poses more serious challenges to journalism and communication education in China.

Structurally, the administrative system of a university in China is ranked just like a government office. University presidents and deans are not only regarded as academics, but also are placed in a bureaucratic hierarchy. For instance, a president enjoys the same rank as a government bureau director while a dean is similar to a government division head. Besides, a Chinese university runs a parallel party system, which matches a president with a party secretary at a university level. A journalism college is run both by a dean and a party secretary at a college level.

This kind of administrative education system in China has far-reaching effects on its journalism and communication education in terms of recruitment of faculty members, student enrollment, curricula designs and academic promotions, to mention a few.

With the sudden influx of journalism programs (both undergraduate programs, graduate and doctoral programs) in Chinese universities in the past two decades, most journalism schools are in urgent need of qualified journalism professors and working media professionals. In fact, most programs that have been set up in recent years still lack qualified faculty members to maintain their basic operations (L.R. Li, personal communication, April 8, 2009). Journalism deans or department heads are always concerned to find faculty members to teach required courses on news writing and editing and on journalism and communication theories, because most faculty members in journalism programs may have come from other disciplines such as Chinese language and history and maybe with no journalistic backgrounds at all.

To make it worse, as the administrative system operates, journalism deans in China have no final say to employ qualified faculty members, or to fire unqualified ones, or to accommodate more adjunct scholars or working journalists from new media.¹¹ As a result, all journalism faculty members, once employed, have in fact become tenured professors who may become less motivated¹² and cannot be hired even when they are found not qualified.

So far, enrollment number of journalism students both at the undergraduate and graduate levels has been determined (in fact allocated) by the Ministry of Education for all journalism schools in China.¹³ This means that enrollment number of a journalism school may not well match the needs of a local job market. In the past two decades, the booming number of journalism programs in China, however, has resulted in a sharp increase of journalism students, but only a small percentage of them can be recruited by media organizations in China, leading to a surplus of journalism graduates. According to a 2005 report by CAJCE, the total number of journalism undergraduate students amounted to about 130,000 in journalism programs in Chinese universities each year, which means 32,500 students are graduating each

year (He, 2006). However, media organizations in China¹⁴ are recruiting less and less journalism students from journalism programs. It is estimated that only one third journalism students can now find jobs in media organizations, while others have to find jobs in media-related companies like PR and advertising companies or even non-media companies (Liu, 2001). One of the reasons why Chinese media organizations have been recruiting less journalism students is that they want interdisciplinary students, namely non-journalistic students from such areas as computer, law, economics, arts and sports. This has made job competition more intensive than ever for journalism students.

However, due to the current administrative system, journalism students in China may find it difficult to learn interdisciplinary skills or knowledge from a journalism curriculum. For instance, most courses for undergraduate students are now courses related with traditional journalism with only few courses from other disciplines like computer science, history, law, economics and finance.

As a result, employment pressure has resulted in a decline in professionalism among journalism students, who have become more superficial and even lacking social responsibility, as they have to survive in market competition (L.R. Li, personal communication, April 8, 2009). And this in turn may have very negative impact on journalism programs in the future.

Since the enrollment of journalism students are determined by state planning, it can inevitably affect curricula designs in most journalism schools, especially those newly established and usually small journalism programs. They often offer journalism courses based on what their faculty members can offer, though they are supposed to offer courses according to standards as stipulated by the Ministry of Education or to adjust curricula according to the needs of job markets. Except for a few well-established journalism programs in comprehensive universities, most journalism programs in China are not able to offer enough selective courses on interdisciplinary knowledge and skills for journalism students to choose from, so as to expand their scope of knowledge and skills to survive in competitive job markets.

Meanwhile, journalism programs in China do have some courses on social sciences like Marxism (now commonly known as “political courses” in China) that aim to expand the scope knowledge among students and are required for all journalism students in China. These courses could be helpful to them if they are conducted in an interesting and lively way. However, on most occasions, these “political courses” cannot find enough qualified professors who are able to lecture in a lively way, simply because they are not academic enough and may be too political in nature. As a result, they become a kind of compulsory routines for both professors (most may not be qualified) and students who still have to make do with these courses even though they may not enjoy these courses. Many journalism educators may consider it a waste of time and energy, even though they can’t do much to alter the situation at present.

The Chinese administrative education system also has its impact on research performances among journalism faculty members, which is most characterized in the process of academic promotions to professorship and associate professorship. At present, Chinese academic promotions tend to play up the quantity of publications (papers and books) rather than the quality of their teaching and research among journalism faculty members. While the quality of publications is now gradually attracting more attention, actual academic promotion process still prefers a long list of publications, that in reality encourages a practice of sponsored books and even academic papers among journalism faculty members. The practice has led to many repetitive researches on journalism and communication and even cases of plagiarism. This has made many journalism educators in China worried about the research quality of journalism and communication.

From above discussions, it seems that the challenges of journalism and communication in China are more internal than external. While the scope of journalism education has reached an unprecedented level in the past three decades, it is high time that Chinese journalism educators seriously address these challenges.

A Chinese Model

Journalism and communication education was “imported” into China from the U.S. and the Soviet practices. Ever since then, journalism and communication education in China started to borrow practices from the two models and to explore a new model in the context of a Chinese environment, though still faced with challenges.

Despite the influences from the nation’s rigid centralized systems, journalism educators are making efforts to match their teaching and research with the needs of social developments in the past three decades. Even though their efforts are not as satisfactory as expected due to various factors, their exploratory process is still under the way. It can be estimated that journalism and communication education will undergo dramatic changes in the near future.

Frequent contacts and exchanges with journalism colleagues from other countries have helped journalism educators in China better understand their differences (in fact gaps) from their foreign colleagues in terms of teaching and research quality as well as administrative education system.

While they consider it important to learn from their foreign colleagues, journalism educators in China also find it necessary to continue their exploration for a model of journalism and communication education that is neither American nor Russian. Rather it should be a Chinese model that can fit into the Chinese social and media environments, which may lead to the creation of different teaching and research traditions for journalism and communication education, unique but appropriate to China.

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¹ Both St. John University and Yenching University are no longer in existence in China now, but they can be regarded as the predecessors for the journalism schools of Fudan University, Beijing University and Renmin University after 1949 because their faculty members joined the new journalism schools in these universities.

² Two universities in Beijing were China Communication University and Beijing Foreign Studies University; two in Shanghai were Fudan University and Shanghai International Studies University; one in Guangdong was Jinan University. At the time, international journalism programs were initiated as double-bachelor-degree programs, in which students received bachelor degree as English majors first before their BA degree in international journalism after three years of extensive western-style journalistic training. Most English-language journalistic training was offered by journalism professors and media practitioners (known as foreign experts) from the United States, Great Britain and Australia, who were either funded by such non-profit organizations as the Fulbright Foundation and the Ford Foundation or employed by Chinese universities. China's English-language media institutions such as Xinhua News Agency, CCTV, *China Daily* and Radio China International also sent reporters and editors to these campuses, to recruit more qualified staff members. International journalism programs were started with the financial assistance from such organizations as Xinhua News Agency and the Ministry of Radio, TV and Film at the beginning. Later when media organizations withdrew financial support, some universities ceased international journalism programs. But some like Shanghai

International Studies University and Jinan University kept their programs and even expanded into MA programs in recent years. However, in the past five years, more universities like Tsinghua University, Fudan University, China Communication University, Guangdong University of Finance and Foreign Studies, Xiamen University and Shantou University have resumed international journalism programs. The establishment of these programs has been regarded as recognition of bilingual journalism education in China.

³ International journalism programs have trained reporters and editors not only for English-language media such as *China Daily*, *Shanghai Daily*, *Guangzhou Morning Post*, and CCTV-9 and China Radio International, but also for Chinese-language media organizations that dispatch parachute reporters who are able to handle reporting and interviewing (mostly in English) for major events abroad.

⁴ The report has been prepared by JDSC in 2009. The Committee consists of 40, normally professors from established journalism schools and serves as a semi-official journalism education organization under the Ministry of Education. The current director is Prof. Li Liangrong from Fudan University.

⁵ These nine categories of universities are strong in the listed areas of disciplines. They normally develop out of an institute based on the single discipline or discipline category and then gradually expand into journalism and communication education.

⁶ It has been a tradition in the past two decades that the annual conferences of China Association of Journalism & Communication Education are hosted by one of institutional members (university) that makes its application in the previous annual conference and gets the approval. Usually a hosting university is responsible for organizing the 2-3 days annual conference, followed by a short tour to nearby scenic spots.

⁷ The five CAJCE divisions are respectively based in Renmin University, Xiamen University, Sichuan University, Fudan University and China Communication University that are better acknowledged for their research and teaching in journalism, advertising, editing and publishing, communication and radio and TV broadcasting.

⁸ The 15 universities with one or two doctoral programs are China Renmin University, Fudan University, Wuhan University, Tsinghua University, Beijing University, China Communication University, Central China University of Technology, China Academy of Social Sciences, Sichuan University, Jinan University, Nanjing Normal University, Nanjing Political Sciences Institute, Shanghai University, Zhejiang University and Xiamen University.

⁹ The 25th Report was released on January 15, 2010 by China Internet Network Information Center (CNNIC).

¹⁰ Some journalism schools with computer background are already experimenting with such courses, but obviously have not won the official recognition from professional organizations as listed above. In fact, since 2007, the Ministry of Education is already advocating more recruitment of graduate students and undergraduate students who are more professionally oriented.

¹¹ In China, the employment of a faculty member mainly depends on the HR department of a university that decides the salary system. Journalism deans are usually asked to evaluate the quality of an incoming faculty member upon recruitment, but a journalism dean has little right to hire faculty members with poor performances once they are employed. Of course, it also means that it is difficult for faculty members to move among different universities.

¹² Chinese journalism deans do have the right to adjust some minor policies which can stimulate the performances of journalism faculty members, but they will not affect the employment status quo of a faculty member in a college.

¹³ In theory, the Ministry of Education takes into consideration such factors as job markets and popularity of a specific program among students in particular area, but most of the time, the actual enrollment number as allocated by the Ministry of Education still cannot accurately reflect the needs of job markets, thus leading to a surplus of journalism graduates in the past decade. Besides, in China, undergraduate students should take a national entrance exam before their admission into Chinese journalism schools while graduate and doctoral students sit for entrance exams administered by respective universities.

¹⁴ According to the China Media Industry Development Report (2006-2007), China has a total number of 1,938 newspapers, 296 TV stations and 9,468 journals.