It’s Time For a European CPD Network For Journalists

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i. Abstract

Continuing professional development has not been an issue in the journalism business. Keeping up with the latest trends have been journalist-individuals’ own matters and responsibility. CPD has simply not been anything necessary or interesting to journalists or publishers.

Now the news industry is facing its first paradigm shift. The industry is turning onto digital media surfaces, and the news business desperately needs new business models. This situation urgently calls for CPD for journalists. In the high-stress world of journalism – now also needing to change – the newsrooms have problems understanding that they need CPD, as well as where to find good CPD solutions that would not drain the daily newsroom resources too much.

Journalism schools could play a leading role in creating good CPD platforms for journalists. The Tutka cross media education environment (www.tutka.pro), at the Turku University of Applied Sciences, could function as one European journalistic CPD milieu.

In this paper the Degree Program in Journalism at The Turku University of Applied Sciences invite members of the Carpe network to start up a network for providing quality CPD solutions for journalists.

1. When everything changes - except the way journalists think lifelong learning

The journalism industry in the Western world is not only facing its biggest change since it was born. It is erupting into the digital world with its multichannel ways of distributing journalistic work and products. The change is driven by two groups of actors; the advertisers, who want to be where the potential customers are, i.e. online, mobile, in social media, and in any combination of these. The advertising barometer by the Association of Finnish Advertisers is predicting the biggest drop in advertising volume ever for print media in Finland. The advertisers’ money seems to be going to digital media (The Association of Finnish Advertisers). The same trend can be seen throughout Europe and Northern America. The second group is the news consumers, who seem to be turning away from conventional print and broadcasting, and seem to be adapting to mobile platforms and on-demand news consumption.
The journalism industry is facing a total rethinking of its business models. The American media thinker Jeff Jarvis puts it as: “Journalism is no longer in the communication business, but in the relationship business” (Jarvis 2011).

Jarvis suggests a total reinvention of the news business. Journalism should start working like Google does, which would mean managing scarcity, not abundance. The news media should be joining the open source gift economy instead of thinking that it knows everything better than the consumer. Mass communication no longer exists; the mass market is dead, long live the mass of niches, Jarvis says.

Paolo Mancini points out the role of journalism in the democratic society. He states that there is no time for fatalism now, but for a renewed commitment to journalism and its role in democracy – from journalists themselves, and from media managers and policy-makers, all of whom can learn from professional, commercial, and policy developments beyond their own countries. (Mancini 2004).

Journalism schools and journalist educators have started asking themselves where their position is in the huge business transition. At the 3rd World Education Congress in July 2013 in Mechelen, Belgium, one track was dedicated to the theme if journalist educators should be steerers or followers in the industrial change. The outcome was weak. Anyway, it did not seem very important among the educators to start thinking how they, i.e. we, should change in order to be able to more efficiently serve a totally changing industry.

I participated in this track, and I felt the same confusion as many of my colleagues. Can educators steer an industrial change? If so, then how? News business is hard and severe business, i.e. maximizing the profit for its owners. How can the educators steer anything, while the owners are sketching the road maps? Should not the business set up the road sign before we, the educators, start to educate journalists for the new industry? These and many more questions were asked in the discussion. We did not come up with that many good answers.

Many colleagues also pointed out that we are now discussing the huge change in the journalism industry, and asking ourselves what we can do for them. What we journalist educators do not ask ourselves is how we should be changing in order to be able to serve the tomorrow’s journalist industry good professionals.
In Mechelen we did not end up very far from what Jerome Aumenten stated in Nieman Reports, already in 2007: The task faced by journalism and communication schools and departments in upgrading their curricula is akin to training pilots to fly experimental planes that are only partially operational for an aviation industry being totally transformed.

He claims that the journalist educators seem to be lost; some are headed toward wholesale revision of their course offerings; others are choosing to retrofit their existing courses to accommodate the interactive, multimedia world. A go-slower, gradual revision approach might work best for some programs, or it might simply be dictated by the lack of a budget to do much more. But all agree that new course work is required, so students have a comprehensive, hands-on experience working simultaneously in doing stories for print, broadcast and the web. These skills – taught until recently as separate majors – must be converged in the curricula as they are now being used in newsrooms.

Let me conclude. The journalism industry is changing because both the money and the consumers are turning away from conventional media, and adapting to digital and mobile news platforms. Whether or not print media is dying, or the time for its death, is irrelevant here. The ongoing change, creating new journalist jobs that today’s journalist are not educated to perform, is the issue. Every media business, that wants to stay alive in the Western world, has already implemented myriads of developing projects. Many newspaper businesses have started to realize that they made a mistake in thinking that managing the New News Age is another day at the office, while it de facto is a whole new product, built on whole new business models and whole new consumer behaviors. And of course: carried out by whole new professionals.

At the Turku University of Applied Sciences we feel that the news businesses have been fairly unwilling to ask themselves how continuing professional development among their journalist could fire up the metamorphosis. The reason seems to be the everyday pace in the industry: somebody has to come up with tomorrow’s news, while the news companies are adapting to falling advertising income by sacking journalists. And then, of course, the money issue: Print papers are still good, although declining, business. You cannot jump head first from that into digital waters without being sure the advertisers’ money follows you.

And we, the journalist educators, should not be pointing finger at anybody. We have not exactly been the fastest changers either. We are traditional academics. We are slow. We are thinking inside the curriculum box.
I suggest that the changing news business calls for changed ways of educating journalist professionals, and for a new attitude towards journalist CPD. The industrial change is accelerating, and it is trying to manage with the professionals it has got at the moment. I suggest that the best way of serving the changing news business is to introduce continuing professional development for journalists in the industry.

I build my suggestion on two arguments: First, the speed of the change in the news business calls for very fast educational solutions. The fastest educational solution is to coach pros in the business to better suited pros for the New News World. We have not got time to start from scratch, if we, the journalism educators, still want to be helpful to the journalism industry – which is our mandate – in its change. By starting up a European network for journalism CPD, we could be even faster and more efficient. In the era of communication sharing, we should be able to share best CPD practices through our European CPD network.

If we are successful here, the next step would be to spread our best practices into curricula at journalism schools. The Carpe network is a good place to start.

2. How could it be done – choosing a starting point

At the Turku University of Applied Sciences the journalism students spend a lot of time studying in the The Tutka newsroom. The Tutka (Tutka is Finnish for “radar”) is a multimedia journalistic news journal, and a journalistic learning environment based on innovation pedagogy. You will find The Tutka at www.tutka.pro. The video poster for The Tutka is found at https://vimeo.com/65894194.

The Tutka is:

- an authentic newsroom, in which the students can grow to cross media journalists by producing online multimedia journalism before a real audience of approximately 14000 consumers a month
- offering a non-stop CPD milieu for professional journalists
- an innovation driven think tank of critical an innovative thinking among teachers, students and CPD journalists.
In The Tutka newsroom the students learn everything from the basic skills of the journalistic production process to more advanced multimedia journalistic experimenting. The Tutka courses also coach the students’ journalistic way of thinking as well as teaches them how to handle video, audio, text and still pictures, and any combination these in a multimedia journalistic context.

When the students leave The Tutka learning environment for their internships or summer jobs, they are often asked to be consultants on how the media could develop its digital and multimedia content and news presentation.

During The Tutka courses the students produce news, reports, documentaries, and columns before a real audience. They get feedback from the lecturers, the audience, and from professional journalists. From time to time we bring in professionals to get to know the Tutka environment and to spur the students by giving them feedback.

When The Tutka lecturers discuss current matters in the industry together with the visiting pros, the professionals almost always say that The Tutka environment would be an excellent milieu for their own organization for testing multimedia journalistic solutions or to learn, for example, how to handle videos and audio in a multimedia journalistic way.

We get exceptional good feedback from the Finnish news industry on the high standard of our trainees and graduates. The media companies are especially pleased with the fact that The Tutka learning environment teaches every student to handle all the ways of journalistic expression you need in a multimedia context, i.e. text, still pictures, video and audio, and any combination of these. We are being told by the professional over and over again that one reason why the digital journalistic product is more or less “print online” is that the professionals come from an age where the photographers produce still pictures and videos, the radio journalists the audio, and the print journalist the text, and the TV journalists the TV content.

Since journalism is a process of refining information, multimedia journalism can be made only if all the journalistic ways of expression is molded together with the journalistic thinking in the same brains of the journalist.

So why does not the news industry in the Turku region grab the chance and throw in some of their pros into The Tutka and update them to multimedia journalists? Probably due to two reasons: The
news industry is not familiar with further educating journalists and CPD, since keeping up to date with skills and knowledge for good stories has been the responsibility of the journalist individual. Secondly, as the business cut the number of journalists in the newsrooms, CPD loses the race to tomorrows’ news. Or as William Peter Hamilton, the fourth editor of the Wall Street Journal, once put it: ”A newspaper is a private enterprise owing nothing whatever to the public, which grants it no franchise. It is therefore affected with no public interest. It is emphatically the property of the owner, who is selling and manufacturing a product at his own risk”.

But at some point the journalism industry has to wake up to the fact that the New News World needs new journalists. Let us show them that we are god and ready to face that CPD challenge.

3. An example of a journalist in a CPD process

Let me look at only one CPD definition. The following commonly used definition of CPD was developed as far back as 1986 by the Construction Industry Council (UK). However, Friedman et al. (2000) found that it was still the most commonly cited definition of CPD among UK professional bodies in 1999.

The systematic maintenance, improvement and broadening of knowledge and skills, and the development of personal qualities necessary for execution of professional and technical duties throughout the individual’s working life.

Within this definition, multiple purposes of CPD can be observed:
• CPD is concerned with maintaining knowledge and skills. More recently, this would be summarized as maintaining one’s competence or competencies; in other words, CPD is about keeping up-to-date.
• CPD improves and broadens knowledge and skills; that is, CPD is intended to support future professional development.
• CPD develops personal qualities necessary to execute professional and technical duties; such personal qualities as may be needed to achieve the above two purposes.

This could be a very good start for CPD for journalists. A journalistic CPD method could, for example, look like this:
1. **Reflection**: “Even though the basic way of journalistic thinking is the same in the New News Age, I don’t cope with the digital demands. I cannot produce good multimedia journalism. My superior wants me to join CPD.”

2. **Goals**: “I need to learn some basic coding, and multimedia expression skills; audio, video, still pictures, graphics, and any combination of these.”

3. **Development Plan**: “My plan for achieving these skills is to get good CPD education in any of the journalism Schools in the European CPD network for journalists. They all have good learning environments, and I might be able to contribute with something to the students, as well.”

4. **Implementation**: “I educate myself. I reflect on what I’ve learnt, and how it may improve my professional work as a multimedia journalist.”

5. **Professional Development Record**: “I keep record on what I’ve learnt, and its effects on my work performances. Pluses and minuses. And examples.”

6. **Reflection and Re-Starting**: “I analyze the pluses and minuses together with my superior. What could be done better? How can I now find a new CPD path, and through that improve our multimedia journalistic products? How can my experience be used in order to shape our new business models? Time for a new CPD round from this perspective.”

The Tutka learning environment, described above, is only one of a number of qualitative journalistic learning environments in Europe. All good educational practices aiming for the New News World are probably good CPD milieus for journalists. One of the first things every tomorrow’s journalist has to understand is the internet – both as a publishing medium, and as a source of news. The internet native generation is only beginning to enter the newsrooms, but being an internet native proves nothing. It is being a journalist mastering the internet, and all the journalistic skills needed in the multimedia world, that makes the difference. In this context some minor European cultural differences do not hinder a European cooperation around CPD for journalists. The journalist educators together with European CPD professionals have got a golden opportunity to contribute to the New News World. If we believe that the journalists’ skills will be the central component for the news industry of the future, we should start creating a CPD network for journalist right away. Thousands of journalists in Europe are in desperate need of learning the multiple skill handicrafts the business seems to be requiring today only.
What we need now is experience and data on journalist CPD making a difference for the news business in Europe. We need it fast in order to show the publishers that CPD is one of the key factor for future success in the industry.

I hope that we could start building a European CPD network for journalist. This network needs CPS professionals as well as journalist educator professional. The network also needs to be in continuous contact with the news business in Europe.

We probably cannot change the fact that the journalism industry is very journalist individual driven, since you can be the best news journalist without any academic grades. But we can build a network that can show the news business that we will speed up the change, and quality, in the multimedia journalistic business. This, again, must have a positive impact on any news organizations’ business performance.
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The Tutka learning environment www.tutka.pro

Tutka video poster in English https://vimeo.com/65894194