

Journalism Education in the USA and Georgia: A Comparative Perspective with Insights on U.S. Assistance

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Abstract: *The article examines the state of journalism education in the USA and Georgia, focusing on the role of U.S. support in advancing media education in Georgia following its independence. Employing a historical and comparative framework, it identifies key trends, challenges, and opportunities within both contexts, underscoring the transformative role of international collaboration. The study employs methods such as literature reviews and comparative analysis. The article seeks to highlight differences, challenges, and opportunities within the journalism education systems of both countries.*

Keywords: Comparative journalism education, media reforms, U.S. assistance, Georgian journalism, educational challenges

1. Introduction

The primary aim of this article is to reassess journalism education in both the USA and Georgia, while also highlighting the role of US assistance in enhancing journalism education in Georgia. In today's world, a solid education is fundamental for various professions, particularly in public communication. Journalism is characterized by its continuous evolution, requiring reporters to be adaptable. Professionals in this field must understand their rights, responsibilities, ethics, and specialized skills, enabling them to tackle emerging challenges and remain relevant. Journalists must possess a strong command of their native language, knowledge of international politics, and advanced research skills. They should master technical aspects like editing, photography, and audio recording while staying updated on new technologies and public information access. Understanding legislative regulations is essential for exercising freedom of speech while adhering to legal standards. Programs must integrate contemporary advancements with foundational skills like news writing and ethical standards, emphasizing accuracy and objectivity to foster credibility.

The U.S. has a rich history in journalism education, with significant investments in media training, making it a global leader. It has also assisted nations like Georgia in modernizing its journalism education post-Soviet Union. This study contributes to understanding the pivotal role of U.S. assistance in modernizing journalism education in Georgia, offering insights into global educational partnerships.

To achieve the objectives of the paper, methods such as literature review, comparative analysis, and an examination of historical background are employed, alongside a summary of current trends in journalistic education in Georgia and the USA. The article delves into existing academic literature on journalism education in the USA and Georgia. To facilitate comparative analysis, the paper explores the historical context, challenges, and contemporary trends of journalism education in these two nations.

2. Journalism Education in the USA

Overview of the History of American Journalistic Education

One of the significant factors contributing to the prominence of American journalism education is its historical legacy, as these institutions have a long-standing tradition of producing renowned journalists. An overview of past events enhances our understanding of the specificities of journalism education in the USA.

Journalism education in America developed gradually, becoming prominent by the late 19th and early 20th centuries. This development was a direct response to the increasing complexities and demands of the profession. Bruce E. Konkle (2013) discusses the historical development of journalism education in the United States, tracing its roots back to a time before formal education programs were established. He observes that while the history of mainstream journalism is extensively documented, the history of high school and collegiate journalism education is less clearly defined. Konkle references early proponents such as John Ward Fenno, who in 1789 advocated for professional training for newspaper editors, and Robert E. Lee, who, in 1869, devised a plan for a journalism course at Washington College. Although Lee's untimely death prevented the full realization of this initiative, his efforts underscored the potential for journalism to be recognized as an academic discipline (Konkle, 2013, pp. 3,4).

The demand for providing formal education in journalism increased at the beginning of the 20th century. Winfield (2008) underscores the importance of 1908 as a pivotal moment in developing mass media into a modern, professionalized field. This transformation was significantly shaped by the educational initiatives of late nineteenth-century state press associations and was further solidified by the advent of formal journalism education at universities. The founding of the Missouri School of Journalism at the University of Missouri in 1908 marked the beginning of a widespread institutionalization of journalism education. This establishment sparked a broader recognition of journalism not

just as a trade linked to American business interests, but as a profession carrying substantial social responsibilities within a democratic society. Over the next two decades, this groundbreaking initiative led to the creation of nearly two dozen distinct journalism programs across American universities, each aimed at promoting the field as an essential component of democratic function (Winfield, 2008, p. 1). Columbia University's Graduate School of Journalism, established in 1912, played a vital role in elevating journalism as a recognized profession. Influenced by newspaper editor Joseph Pulitzer, who predicted in 1904 that journalism schools would become a staple of higher education, Columbia's School of Journalism was created shortly after his vision (Winfield, 2008, pp. 6-7).

By the mid-20th century, numerous schools had incorporated journalism into their curriculum, offering classes that included writing, foundational principles of journalism, and the ethical and legal considerations within the field. Konkle (2013) also highlights the expansion of journalism education into more formal programs across the United States. The journalism school at Louisiana State University, initiated with a single course in 1912-1913, rapidly evolved into a full-fledged journalism school that significantly contributed to the workforce by training thousands of journalists, primarily for the newspaper industry. This growth was mirrored by a rising interest in collegiate journalism programs nationwide, leading to the establishment of the Association of American Schools and Departments of Journalism in 1917. This era also saw the inception of the United Amateur Press Association of America, providing resources and support for high school and collegiate students interested in journalism. By 1930, the landscape of journalism education had grown to include nearly 300 courses, departments, or journalism schools across the country (Konkle, 2013, pp. 4-5).

An overview of journalism education in the USA includes a scholastic journalism history. According to historical sources, student journalism in the USA started in 1777. Konkle (2013) noted that many authors on student press history mention *The Student Gazette*, a handwritten newspaper from William Penn Charter School in Philadelphia, as the first known handwritten high school newspaper. However, this is contested by C.-J. B. Cruz in "Basic Campus Journalism" (1997, p. 1), who suggests that the first high school paper in the United States was published only in 1851 and argues that it was not until the early 1920s that student journalism became widely accepted in American high schools. Konkle suggests that Cruz may have excluded handwritten papers or only considered those with a continuous publication record (Konkle, 2013, p. 5).

Sullivan (2008) suggests that Students in American schools and colleges have long engaged in publishing newspapers, magazines, and yearbooks as a part of their educational activities, distinct from formal journalism training aimed at professional career preparation. The practice dates back to the American Revolution, with the William Penn Charter School in Philadelphia publishing the first known student newspaper in 1777. Twenty-five handwritten issues were published between 1777 and 1778, after which the publication stopped. The oldest continuing student publication at a secondary school is the *Literary Journal* of the Boston Latin School,

founded in 1829. Among colleges, The Dartmouth of Dartmouth College in New Hampshire, first published in 1799, claims to be the oldest college newspaper, while The Yale Daily News asserts its status as the oldest daily newspaper, having been independent since its establishment in 1878. By 1900, there were 276 student publications in thirty-seven states. The first high school journalism class started in Salina, Kansas, in 1912. By the early 21st century, the college student press included 3,163 print publications and over 1,000 student-operated radio and television stations. (Sullivan, 2008).

Sullivan (2008) further explains that student editors began meeting together after World War I to learn from each other and eventually formed several national organizations to support scholastic journalism such as the National Scholastic Press Association (1921), the Journalism Education Association (1924), the Columbia Scholastic Press Association (1925), and the Quill and Scroll Society (1926). These organizations offered conferences, contests, and various resources for student journalists and their advisors. In 1933, the National Scholastic Press Association expanded to include a college division, the Associated Collegiate Press, which catered to college student press. This eventually led to the formation of the College Media Advisers, Inc. in 1954, further supporting collegiate journalism. The author highlights that science formation and student journalism have always struggled to make their voices heard. During the Civil Rights movement, the Vietnam War protests, and the rise of student activism, student journalists broadened their coverage to include topics traditionally seen as beyond school concerns. This shift often led to conflicts with school administrators or other students who favored more conventional reporting. Such disputes sometimes escalated into censorship attempts, leading to legal battles. A landmark 1969 U.S. Supreme Court decision in *Tinker v. Des Moines School District* affirmed that students do not lose their constitutional rights in public schools. Additionally, separate legal precedents established the rights of college student journalists to a free press at public colleges. In response to ongoing legal challenges student journalists face, the Student Press Law Center (SPLC) was established in 1974 to defend their rights, similar to how the Reporters Committee for a Free Press supports professional journalists. However, the SPLC's efforts were complicated by the 1988 Supreme Court decision in *Hazelwood School District v. Kuhlmeier*, which allowed schools to limit students' free speech if the restrictions were "reasonably related to legitimate pedagogical concerns" (Day & Butler, 1989, p. 3). This decision was seen as a step back from the protections affirmed by *Tinker*, as it allowed for increased censorship of student journalists, often under the guise of improving the schools' public image (Sullivan, 2008, p. 510).

The 1940s witnessed the formation of the Hutchins Commission on Freedom of the Press in 1947, a pivotal development in journalism pedagogy. This commission underscored the imperative of responsible journalism, which subsequently prompted a curricular shift in journalism education toward a greater emphasis on ethical considerations (Blanchard, 1977). Also begin of the accreditation of journalism programs in the USA "For college journalism professors, 1947 meant the beginning of a long-sought

accreditation program, for which it needed the cooperation of media representatives”, notes Blanchard (1977, p. 31) the American Council on Education in Journalism (ACEJ) was established in 1945 to evaluate and accredit journalism programs in higher education institutions. In 1980, the name was changed to the Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communications (ACEJMC) (ACEJMC, n.d.).

With the advent of new technologies, journalism education has evolved to encompass multimedia skills training, including video, audio, and web content production. The introduction of radio and television in the early to mid-20th century opened new avenues for journalism education, enhancing visual storytelling capabilities. In the 1980s and 1990s, the emergence of the internet and digital journalism significantly transformed journalism education. Programs began incorporating courses on digital journalism, multimedia, and online content creation to adapt to rapidly changing technology. In recent decades, the focus has shifted towards media literacy and addressing "fake news," as the rise of social media has underscored the necessity for robust media literacy education within journalism programs.

3. Problems and Challenges

American scholars discuss several significant challenges facing journalism education in the context of constant social, economic, and technological changes. In the article "The Sociology of the Professions and the Problem of Journalism Education," C.W. Anderson (2014) argues that the decline of traditional newspaper business models, driven by diminishing advertising revenue and the emergence of digital media, has significantly impacted journalism. This economic challenge is further exacerbated by technological disruptions that have democratized news production and dissemination, ultimately undermining conventional journalistic roles. Journalism has struggled to establish itself as a recognized profession comparable to law or medicine, lacking a defined jurisdiction or exclusive area of expertise. As a result, journalists and journalism educators face an identity crisis, attempting to adapt to rapidly evolving industry demands without a clear professional framework. "For an educational system whose primary function has been to pump graduates into more or less secure, stable employment, this crisis in journalism has obviously caused a crisis in pedagogical rhetoric, and increasingly in the practices of j-schools themselves. J-school was once controversial on an intellectual and philosophical level; now, given the decline of the industry, it is even more vulnerable from an economic standpoint," notes Anderson (p. 65). Another issue is the gap between what journalism schools are teaching and the realities of the journalism job market. Many graduates find themselves inadequately prepared for the evolving media landscape, which increasingly emphasizes digital and multimedia skills over traditional reporting techniques. The ongoing crisis in journalism necessitates innovative educational models that integrate traditional journalism training with the demands of a digital and multimedia environment. The author argues that journalism schools must reconsider their curricula to better equip students for the modern media landscape. Anderson (2014) explores potential solutions, one of which is the concept of "teaching hospitals." This idea suggests that journalism

schools should serve as environments where students learn through hands-on experience, producing real news as a fundamental part of their education. Others advocate for a curriculum that focuses on developing entrepreneurial skills, enabling students to navigate the inherent uncertainties of the media industry, prepare for potential job instability, and ultimately pursue their own careers. However, the author concludes that these approaches come with their own set of questionable compromises and do not fully address the longstanding and ongoing issues impacting journalistic professionalism (Anderson, 2014). Downie and Schudson (2009) propose that Universities ought to be centers of innovation in news reporting and distribution for the digital age: "Universities are among the nation's largest nonprofit institutions, and they should play significant roles in the reconstruction of American journalism" (Downie & Schudson, 2009, p. 90).

Mulcahy (2019) emphasizes the need for journalism educators to prepare students for the gig economy, which now represents 30-40% of the U.S. workforce, including roles like consultants and freelancers. She argues that universities should adapt their curricula to reflect these changes, as many still focus on traditional full-time employment. Mulcahy notes that just as companies like Google increasingly rely on independent contractors, universities do the same, as professors also engage in consulting and other supplemental gigs. To better prepare students, she suggests three key measures: teaching skills for independent work, expanding career services to include gig opportunities, and adopting practices from schools like the University of Texas at Austin and Wellesley College that have begun integrating gig economy education (Mulcahy, 2019).

Furthermore, Journalism educators face the challenge of teaching students to navigate misinformation and fake news. This involves equipping them with skills for critically evaluating sources, verifying information, and maintaining high journalistic standards amid prevalent falsehoods. The evolving media landscape, driven by digital technologies, underscores the need for media education and literacy in American journalism programs. Researchers highlight the importance of cultivating media literacy early, given the significant time individuals spend online, to prepare them for real-world challenges. Kubey and Baker (1999) argue that schools have failed to adapt despite over forty years of engagement with electronic mass media. While Americans spend three to four hours daily watching television, education still focuses on traditional forms of expression like poetry and novels. The authors emphasize the need for the educational system to recognize the importance of teaching with modern media to prepare students for life beyond school (Kubey, 1999).

In conclusion, American academic society proves its resilience by swiftly identifying, analyzing, and resolving critical issues despite obstacles. This proactive approach showcases a strong commitment to professional development and effective problem-solving. Tackling these challenges demands collaboration among journalism educators, industry experts, and policymakers.

Achievements and Modern Tendencies in American Journalism Education

Numerous factors contribute to the success of journalism education in the USA: Journalism programs typically offer a diverse range of courses that cover various aspects of journalism, such as investigative reporting, broadcast journalism, multimedia journalism, and data journalism. Another crucial factor is the emphasis on hands-on experience. Many schools prioritize practical training through internships, student-run media outlets, and hands-on projects, enabling students to hone their skills in real-world settings. They often feature faculty members who are experienced journalists and industry leaders, providing students with invaluable real-world insights and connections. Additionally, the success of their alumni in journalism further enhances these schools' reputation, attracting new students and fostering a strong professional network.

According to Forbes Advisor, journalists are essential for keeping the public informed by analyzing and reporting on local, national, and global news. They conduct investigations and create reports for various media, including newspapers, magazines, and online platforms. Journalists pitch story ideas, interview sources, and often edit their work, particularly in multimedia roles. While specific news organizations employ most, some work as independent freelancers, contributing to multiple outlets (Seiter, n.d.). Forbes highlights that earning a bachelor's degree in journalism equips students with essential research, writing, and editing skills for effective communication. It trains them to craft informative and engaging stories, serving as a solid foundation for a career in journalism. This degree enhances critical thinking and investigative abilities, preparing graduates for roles in news reporting, broadcasting, media production, advertising, and public relations. Graduates often find opportunities in newspapers, online publications, and news organizations, typically requiring 120 credits to complete the degree (Grey, *Everything You Need To Know About Bachelor's Degrees In Journalism*, 2024). Discussing master's programs in journalism, Forbes Advisor highlights their value for journalists aiming to advance their careers or professionals transitioning into journalism. A master's degree enhances reporting skills through specialized training in areas like broadcast journalism, investigative reporting, and digital journalism. Typically, these programs require 33 to 50 credits and about two years of full-time study, although some can be completed in a year or less. Specializations include Arts and Culture, Business and Economics, Digital Journalism, and Global Journalism, each focusing on different aspects of reporting. Common courses cover Data Journalism, Reporting the News, Investigative Reporting, and Law and Ethics in American Journalism, emphasizing skills like data analysis and ethical reporting practices (Grey, *Master's Programs In Journalism: Here's What You Should Know*, 2024).

Nowadays, various universities across the United States offer journalism programs at both undergraduate and graduate levels. The exact number of journalism schools can fluctuate due to the opening of new institutions and the change in existing ones. As previously mentioned, the Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communications (ACEJMC) is the agency tasked with

evaluating professional journalism programs at colleges and universities. This organization is recognized by the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) for its role in accrediting professional journalism and mass communications programs in higher education institutions. According to ACEJMC's website, currently 120 schools are accredited by the organization (Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communications, n.d.).

U.S. journalism schools are renowned worldwide, with many universities consistently ranking among the top globally. According to College Factual, a degree in communication and journalism is more sought after than many other fields, ranking #11 out of 38 in terms of popularity nationally. Consequently, numerous colleges offer this degree, challenging the selection process. For its 2025 ranking, College Factual evaluated 596 institutions across the United States to identify the best options for students pursuing degrees in communication and journalism (College Factual, 2025). According to their evaluation, the top schools in the USA in communication and journalism are: 1. Northwestern University, Evanston, IL. it ranks #5 out of 2,152 schools nationwide. 2. Cornell University, Ithaca, NY. 3. University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Chapel Hill, NC. 4. University of Michigan - Ann Arbor. Ann Arbor, MI 5. University of Southern California. Los Angeles, CA (College Factual, 2025). According to various journalism college rankings, the top-rated journalism schools in the United States are: 1. Columbia University, New York, NY; 2. Northwestern University, Evanston, IL; 3. University of Southern California, Los Angeles, CA; 4. University of Missouri, Columbia, MO; 5. University of Georgia, Athens, GA (University Hunter, n.d.).

One key factor in the effectiveness of American journalism education is its focus on hands-on experience and partnerships with media organizations. By integrating theoretical principles with practical skills, journalism schools benefit from their proximity to local media outlets. This relationship allows universities to respond to job market demands and helps media organizations align curricula with employer expectations. Aspiring journalists gain valuable experience, making them better prepared for the field, while local media benefit from a pool of qualified candidates. Additionally, experienced journalists often serve as lecturers, creating a mutually beneficial environment for both newcomers and seasoned professionals. American authors discuss this practice. According to Leonard Downie, Jr. and Michael Schudson in "The Reconstruction of American Journalism" (2009), an increasing number of universities across the USA were utilizing the work of their journalism students to cover local states, cities, and neighborhoods. These students produced reports within their journalism classes and university-affiliated news services, guided by professional journalists who were part of the university faculty. Their work was published on university-operated local news websites and other local media outlets, some of which purchase the student-produced content to enhance their reporting. For instance, in southern Florida, prominent newspapers like the Miami Herald, the Palm Beach Post, and the South Florida SunSentinel have incorporated reports from students at Florida International University into their coverage. Downie and Schudson cite the words of Eric

Newton, vice president of the Knight Foundation's journalism program: "Many journalism teachers believe you teach journalism with live ammunition that results in real journalism that has real use for their communities" (Downie & Schudson, 2009, p. 59). Since the opening of its journalism school in 1908, the University of Missouri has uniquely operated the Columbia Missourian, a local daily newspaper staffed by both professional editors and journalism students. Although it ran at a loss and required significant financial support from the university, Dean Mills, the dean of the journalism school, viewed the newspaper as a valuable asset. Other universities had also managed local news websites with similar initiatives. Columbia University's Graduate School of Journalism in New York has student reports published in outlets like the New York Times and aired on NPR. At UC Berkeley, journalism students contributed to community news sites in San Francisco. Arizona State University's Walter Cronkite School operated the Cronkite News Service to provide coverage of Arizona through student journalists. (Downie & Schudson, 2009). These initiatives not only enhanced practical journalism education but also made significant contributions to the media landscape through collaborations with major news outlets. The examples provided by Downie and Schudson may not accurately reflect the present context, as many changes have occurred since the discussion on "The Reconstruction of American Journalism." However, these examples underscore how prestigious American universities have consistently prioritized integrating practical experience within their journalism education programs. Today, the emphasis on hands-on experience in journalism curricula remains relevant. Examining the websites of leading American journalism schools, such as the College of Journalism and Communications at the University of Florida, Medill at Northwestern University, Columbia Journalism School, The Missouri School of Journalism, and Columbia University's Graduate School of Journalism, reveals a consistent emphasis on the importance of hands-on experience for aspiring professionals, alongside theoretical coursework.

Journalism educators must prepare students to handle complex ethical dilemmas, such as conflicts of interest and privacy issues. American journalism programs integrate practical training with a robust theoretical framework, essential for equipping future journalists to navigate an ever-evolving media landscape while upholding ethical standards adeptly (Columbia Journalism School, n.d., UC Berkeley School of Journalism, n.d.). The University of Florida's College of Journalism emphasizes ethical principles and responsible communication in the digital age (College of Journalism and Communications at the University of Florida, n.d.). Similarly, the Craig Newmark Graduate School of Journalism at CUNY requires students to adhere to a Code of Ethics outlining unacceptable behaviors, including fabrication, plagiarism, and conflicts of interest. Students must avoid unlawful activities and accepting gifts. Violating this code can result in disciplinary actions (Craig Newmark Graduate School of Journalism, n.d.).

Another contributing factor to the success of American journalism education is the active involvement of journalism schools in research and scholarship. These programs provide international reporting opportunities, global communication

courses, and partnerships with media organizations. Columbia Journalism School, an Ivy League institution, attracts students from nearly 50 countries, with alumni making significant contributions to renowned news organizations worldwide (Columbia Journalism School, n.d.). The Missouri School of Journalism also emphasizes international openings (Missouri School of Journalism, n.d.). American institutions increasingly incorporate media literacy into journalism curricula to equip students with critical skills for navigating today's media landscape. While the emphasis on media education varies, it is recognized as essential for aspiring journalists. Some programs offer specialized courses, while others integrate media literacy into broader curricula. Ultimately, these skills—focused on analyzing accuracy, credibility, and bias—are vital tools in combatting the spread of fake news (Boston University College of Communication, 2024).

4. Journalism education in Georgia and U.S. Assistance

Georgian Journalism Education – Past and Present

Journalism education in Georgia does not have as rich a history as in the USA. Formal journalism education in Georgia began in the 1950s. In 1949, Tbilisi State University (TSU) initiated its first specialized area for journalism studies under the guidance of then-rector Niko Ketskhoveli. By 1953, TSU officially established its Department of Journalism, significantly advancing formal journalism education in the nation. In 1979, this department was upgraded to the status of a faculty. Since 2005, it has operated within the Faculty of Social and Political Sciences as a separate department (Tbilisi State University, n.d., Vekua, 2017). "Challenges of Media Education Standards in Georgia" highlights that social sciences particularly journalism were heavily influenced by Soviet ideology and faced significant pressure from the state (Vekua, 2017).

Vekua notes that following the collapse of the Soviet Union, the media and journalism studies, along with the entire educational system, faced significant challenges. University curriculums did not align with contemporary European standards, technology and facilities were outdated, and study materials were scarce and predominantly influenced by Russian academic styles. Curriculums were overloaded with theoretical disciplines, and media students had limited internship opportunities, mainly available at a few newspapers or the state TV and radio broadcaster. Additionally, the decline in school education quality meant that many students arrived at universities poorly prepared for higher education, forcing professors to adjust their lecture content to cover basic concepts that should have been taught at school, thereby hindering the educational process. Another issue impacting journalistic education at that time was the imbalance between theoretical knowledge and practical experience across all educational levels. Theory dominated, causing university education to become disconnected from market demands (Vekua, 2017).

The 21st century brought transformative changes to journalism, reshaping methodologies and practices. Significant reforms in Georgian higher education commenced after orienting on European Integration, with a key milestone

being the country's entry into the Bologna Process at the Bergen Summit in 2005 (Ministry of Education, Science And Youth of Georgia, n.d.). "Sharing the Bologna Process standards influenced nearly all components of the study process, including teaching methodology. The previous tendency was changed by a new basic principle: innovative methodology focuses on student-oriented teaching," notes Vekua (2017, p. 140).

Vekua (2017) discusses four models of journalism programs: The first model of journalism education encompasses all three levels (BA, MA, and PhD) with a curriculum focused on journalism disciplines. The second model integrates journalism as part of a broader field of study, such as humanities or social sciences, allowing students to major in a specific field with a minor in journalism. This approach is common among universities adopting the Bologna process. The third model offers predominantly master's programs in journalism, catering to individuals from various professional backgrounds who wish to enter the journalism field or apply their skills differently. The fourth and rarest model involves the author's schools, which do not grant formal qualifications but are associated with a prominent individual or renowned media organization recognized for expertise in journalism.

Nowadays, Georgia offers a variety of high-quality journalism and media programs across several institutions. The Georgia Ministry of Science and Education has officially accredited 56 universities and teaching universities across the country (Ministry of Education, Science And Youth of Georgia, n.d.). Tbilisi State University, the oldest in the country, provides undergraduate to doctoral programs in journalism. The Caucasus School of Journalism and Media Management emphasizes practical training in journalism and media management. The University of Georgia and Caucasus University also offer programs in journalism, media management, and public relations. Other universities, including Tavartkiladze Teaching University, Georgia David Aghmashenebeli University, and Ilia State University, provide similar offerings in journalism and mass communication (Mikashavidze, n.d.).

Beyond Tbilisi, there are regional higher educational institutions, offering journalism programs. The journalism program at Akaki Tsereteli State University (ATSU) in the Imereti region, established in 1991, is notable for its focus on enhancing regional journalism. Since 2012, the department has offered a bachelor's program in Social Sciences with modules in Mass Communications (Journalism), International Relations, and Public Relations. The university also offers Master's programs in Journalism and Public Governance (Akaki Tsereteli State University, n.d.). Batumi Shota Rustaveli State University (BSU) in Adjara provides bachelor's and master's programs in journalism, each tailored with distinct focuses. The bachelor's program establishes a strong foundation in journalism principles, whereas the master's program emphasizes digital media and innovation, covering advanced topics like digital media management, innovative content creation, and contemporary distribution technologies within the mass communication framework (Batumi Shota Rustaveli State University, n.d.). The Batumi Teaching University of Arts in Adjara offers a bachelor's degree in TV-Radio Journalism, aimed at training specialists

in mass communication and media studies. This program focuses on national and regional communication needs, providing students with the skills to become modern, analytical journalists ready for the evolving job market (Batumi Teaching University of Arts, n.d.). Gori State University in the Shida Kartli region offers a bachelor's degree in journalism through its Bachelor of Social Sciences program. According to the university's website, the curriculum covers key areas like television, radio, photojournalism, and print media, aiming to produce skilled professionals with a strong sense of civic responsibility (Gori State University, n.d.). Universities and NGOs provide targeted training initiatives and advanced professional development courses for media practitioners, beyond traditional academic curricula.

Despite development efforts, Georgian universities are less prominent in global rankings compared to U.S. institutions. For instance, in the 2024 Quacquarelli Symonds (QS) World University Rankings, Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University is ranked between 801 and 850, and Georgian Technical University ranks above 1401 (QS Top Universities, n.d.). The 2024 Times Higher Education World University Rankings places Ilia State University between 1201 and 1500, with Georgian Technical University and Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University ranking above 1501 (Times Higher Education, 2024). U.S. News & World Report 2022-2023 ranks Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University 776th globally, while the 2023 Round University Ranking (RUR) positions Ilia State University at 935th and Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University at 959th (U.S. News & World Report, n.d.).

Vekua (2017), highlights challenges and recommendations for improving journalism education in Georgia. Key challenges include unprepared high school graduates entering universities and the need for Tbilisi State University's "Mass Communication" doctoral program to enhance its appeal and serve as a model for other institutions. Additionally, universities need to update their websites for better program clarity, clearly outline research components, and separate study modules for better understanding. There is also a call for Bachelor's and Master's programs to focus more on photojournalism and documentary skills, along with a significant improvement in the study of new media. Vekua's recommendations for curriculum reform include a stronger focus on new and digital media, a balanced integration of theoretical and practical disciplines to enhance professional skills, and giving students greater academic freedom to design their curricula. Moreover, promoting interdisciplinary education can help students specialize and excel in covering various societal events as future journalists (Vekua, 2017).

US assistance to Georgia – Improving Journalistic Education

The relationship between the U.S. and Georgia is strong and diverse, focusing on supporting Georgia's Euro-Atlantic integration since its independence. The U.S. has provided significant assistance in economic development, education, strengthening democracy, defense crucial for Georgia's transition from the Soviet era. This ongoing cooperation is vital for Georgian democracy, especially given the challenging regional environment. For more than thirty years,

the United States has actively supported the media in Georgia. A key part of this support has focused on education, helping to train a new generation of talented journalists and media workers. The U.S. has provided funding to improve equipment, boost programs at universities, and create new, important educational centers. Georgian journalists have gained the skills needed for effective reporting, investigative journalism, ethically addressing sensitive topics and vulnerable groups. Educational scholarships and initiatives have further fostered understanding and connections between the two nations.

One of the early examples of supporting journalistic education in Georgia was creating an American-style journalism school with the assistance of the American people – meaning the Caucasus School of Journalism and Media Management (CSJMM) at the Georgian Institute of Public Affairs (GIPA) in 2001. This innovative initiative emerged through collaboration among the U.S. Information Agency, the Georgian Government, and the U.S. National Academy of Public Administration (NAPA). Funding for this initiative came from a coalition that included the U.S. Information Agency, the Georgian Government, Budapest Public Service, and the Eurasia Foundation in Washington, D.C. Additionally, a representative from the Fulbright Program played a vital role in the project's leadership (Georgian Institute of Public Affairs, n.d.). Since 2002, with U.S. Government support, students from Armenia and Azerbaijan have participated annually in an English language journalism program, including graduates from Abkhazia, Tskhinvali, and Nagorno Karabakh (GIPA, n.d.). In the beginning, the master's program was led by professors from top universities in the United States. They not only provided textbooks and teaching but also helped train Georgian faculty through workshops and by managing the program. As time went on, these American teachers began to take a step back, enabling skilled Georgian professors to take on leadership roles in the program. The launch of an English-language program and management by Western professionals marked significant progress in education in a country damaged by conflicts and struggling poverty. Ian C. Kelly, the U.S. Ambassador to Georgia from 2015 to 2018, draw attention to GIPA's impact, stating: "I think, it's really the best investment that we've made in this country" (Kelly, 2017).

The Multimedia Education Center (MEC) is another initiative supported by the United States with the purpose of supporting media education in Georgia. Established in 2012 by The International Research and Exchange Board (IREX) with the backing of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) under the G-MEDIA program, the MEC aims to enhance journalism education and professional development. The main goal is to encourage creativity and new ideas in journalism education while maintaining high-quality training for both students and professionals. The MEC offers the latest multimedia tools and facilities to support journalism students and media workers, helping to create a modern learning space that adapts to the fast-changing media world. MEC also offers resources for training sessions, workshops, and conferences run by non-profit organizations. It collaborates with GIPA's Caucasus School of Journalism and Media Management, enabling students to engage in

activities like filming, editing, and live broadcasts (Multimedia Education Center, n.d.).

Main providers of American aid on media programs in Georgia are the U.S. Embassy in Georgia and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), with their partners. Since 1992, USAID has been instrumental in shaping Georgia's development path, significantly influencing the nation's efforts to strengthen democratic governance, enhance national security, and promote economic growth (USAID, n.d.). The International Research and Exchange Board (IREX) plays an important role in supporting independent media and improving access to quality education and information throughout Georgia (International Research and Exchange Board, n.d.).

Throughout the years, several programs were carried out by the U.S. Embassy's Public Diplomacy Section (PDS) in Georgia to strengthen media education and advance the qualifications of media and academic personnel. PDS's Georgian Media Education Program (MEP) has facilitated training, seminars, exchange opportunities, and professional tours for Georgian journalists and academic personnel. "Strengthening Journalism Education in Georgia" under MEP was dedicated to enhancing the professional development of media educators by incorporating best practices derived from U.S. journalism education. It fostered collaborative efforts between Georgian and American journalism schools, aimed at exposing participants to the latest trends in journalism, multimedia, and media literacy. According to the U.S. Embassy in Tbilisi, this initiative empowered educators to teach these vital subjects effectively. Furthermore, the program promoted an exchange of visits between partners in Georgia and the U.S., facilitating mutual learning and professional growth. According to the official website of the Embassy, by 2022, the program had successfully trained three cohorts, totaling approximately 40 journalism educators who remain active through an alumni association. Ultimately, the program aimed to strengthen the capacity of Georgian media educators, enhance journalism education within the country and equip educators with effective strategies to teach media literacy, enabling students to assess media content critically (U.S. Embassy in Tbilisi, Georgia, 2022).

In October 2021, the US Embassy's Public Diplomacy Office commissioned the Policy and Management Consulting Research Center (PMC-RC) to evaluate World Chicago's 2022 Georgia Media Education Program. According to the research, this program trained 12 participants from 11 Georgian universities, aiming to enhance journalism programs, introduce new courses, and foster continuous improvement (PMC Research Center, 2023). The evaluation found that MEP 2022 successfully achieved its three intended outcomes. First, all six (out of 12) universities that initially planned to develop new programs had successfully launched them by Spring 2023. Secondly, all 12 participating universities updated their curricula, meeting World Chicago's implicit target. Thirdly, a MEP Alumni Association was legally established and had already conducted its first round of collaborative mini grants. The program's training effectiveness was assessed using Kirkpatrick's Model, receiving high marks across various aspects such as Contextual Relevance, Participant Selection, and Learning,

among others, with overall training receiving an average satisfaction rating of 9.7 from participants. Thus, MEP 2022 was evaluated as highly successful in achieving its goals and was well-received by participants (PMC Research Center, 2023).

5. Conclusion

Historical overview of journalism education in the USA and Georgia highlighted the following picture: Journalism education in the United States has a long and rich history, tracing back to the late 19th and early 20th centuries, marked by establishing formal programs like the Missouri School of Journalism in 1908. These programs were often developed in response to the growing complexities of the media landscape and have been integral in nationally and globally shaping the field. American journalism schools are recognized for their comprehensive curriculum combining practical skills with a strong theoretical foundation. The emphasis on hands-on experience through internships and student-run media, coupled with access to seasoned professionals, prepares students effectively for the media industry. Journalism education in Georgia began more recently, with significant developments starting in the 1950s. Formal education was notably enhanced after independence from the Soviet Union, with efforts to modernize and align with Western standards.

Regarding challenges: in America, challenges include adapting to economic pressures, technological advancements, and changing media consumption habits. These factors necessitate continual updates to educational practices to remain relevant in a dynamic global media environment. In Georgia, post-Soviet educational reforms were needed to update outdated curricula and facilities. Challenges included integrating more practical experience into the programs, aligning them with market demands, and improving the general preparedness of students entering university. Despite many problems, Georgia has made significant progress in aligning with Western educational standards, mainly thanks to Euro-Atlantic integration and the Bologna Process. The United States supported this effort through capacity-building initiatives and exchange programs for journalists. However, Georgian universities need to improve their scores in global university rankings.

U.S. Assistance role: The United States has played a crucial role in developing Georgian journalism education by funding programs. With support from U.S. partnerships, Georgian journalism education has seen significant improvements, including introducing new programs and curricula designed to meet contemporary needs.

Future research should investigate the endured effects of modern tendencies on journalism education and analyze its effects on the progression of democratic governance.

In conclusion, while both countries have developed unique strengths in journalism education, they face challenges that require ongoing adaptation and innovation. The historical depth and resource availability in the U.S. provide a robust model that has partially guided the evolution of Georgian journalism education. Meanwhile, Georgia continues to leverage international support to accelerate its development

and integration into the global journalistic educational standards.

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