

Wild! Young! Journalistic!

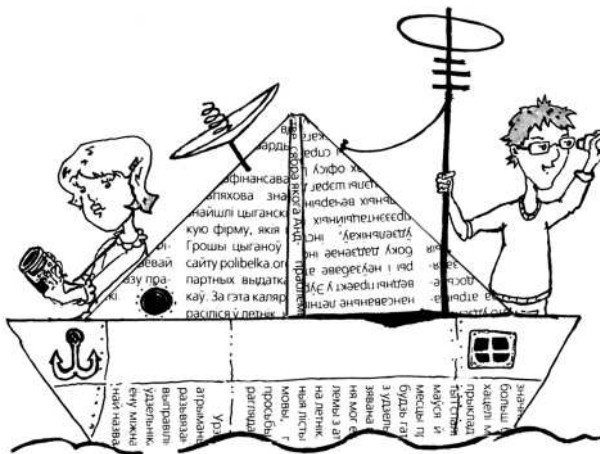
Basing on the experience gained while implementing a long-term educational project "Young Journalists School"*



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"We cannot exceed what we are ... but what we are is much bigger than we think"



The Youth Journalism Festival "Your Style" has passed; it was arranged in association with the Public Association 'Belarusian Association of Journalists' to the 10th anniversary of our organization. The program offered many interesting and unusual events: presentation of web-resources and youth publications, workshops, contests and awards, YJSchool-leaving party, school-leavers' meetings, presentation "Catalogue of the Best School-leavers and Lectures", performances, show 'Venetian Memories' and of course much emotion.

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Each time when we "release" a class we feel happy and sad at the same time. We are happy because we have managed to finish, to learn much and to experience together. We are sad because we have to say "good bye" to a nice team and friendly surrounding which shaped while studying.

The 10th anniversary of the project "Young Journalists School" is a good reason to think about what we managed to do for this time. Purposely I do not want to focus on typical problems which each public organization faces in our country. As it is said, "there are few reasons to feel happy" but there is a desire... to be happy. This time I am happy for me personally and my organization which has managed to maintain its reputation for long time.

The 10th anniversary. 200 school-leavers. Over 1000 publications. About 20 educational newspapers, about 20 mature lecturers. What stands behind these figures? The statistics is relative. All numbers should be

treated in comparison or in the ration to others. But what could be they are compared to? This project is one among few in Belarus...

About Project's Background and People Who Implemented It

The project "Young Journalists School" is being implemented by one of the oldest public associations in Belarus "The Center for Information Support to Civic Initiatives «The Third sector»", grounded by Hrodno civic activists and journalists in 1997.

The organization works for the benefit of various groups' civic activity development by implementing information, education and outreach programs.

* Руднік Л. Шалёныя! Маладыя! Жжжжурналістыя! З уласнага досведу рэалізацыі доўгатэрмінвага навучальнага праекта "Школа маладога журналіста" // Адукатар №2 (12), 2007. — С. 31-34.



"YJS is what recalls pleasant memories and nostalgia. The project helped me find a lodgment in profession and understand it is MINE."

(A. Gushtyn — "YJS-9").

We have started this project in March 1997 in association with the "Youth Press-Club" and newspaper "Pahonia" ("Chase").

I can speak a lot about people engaged in the project — they have different jobs (journalists, philologists, historians, psychologists, lawyers), they differ in their views, life style, but what unites them is fresh thinking, democracy values and active citizenship.

Those who work for "YJS" can be divided into three types: trainers, experts and organizers.

The trainer's role (not necessarily a journalist) supposes first of all ability to organize educational process: to get a lesson ready, to set trustful surrounding in a group, to help an expert to set a discussion and group work, and to summarize results.

The experts (in our situation they were journalists and editors-in-chief of some city mass-media) are responsible for content (understanding terminology, main rules and schemes, comments to tasks, which students make at classes, valuable advising, etc.).

The ideal situation is when expert and trainer work in pair while preparing for the classes and making evaluation.

The organizer's objectives (project's curator) are to ensure all necessary terms for trainers' and experts' work, keep his/her finger on the pulse of group's life, organize monitoring of publications, be in contact with editorial staff, and carry out other responsibilities on organizing educational process.

More Than Just a School of Journalism

The initial idea of the project was a training of salaried correspondents and freelancers to work for mass-media and issues of public associations and initiatives. But we understood soon that journalism is not just a profession. Journalism is a position and great school for civic education which trains active citizens. Citizens who are efficient and useful in their community, able to interact and communicate, make decisions, critically analyze information, solve conflicts and anticipate a situation. Thus, another project objective is development of civic engagement of the youth, increasing its engagement in civic life.



YJS is a project aimed at the adult who share the responsibility for education success.

YJS is a project which cannot be implemented without partnership with editorial staff of mass-media, journalists and civic activists.

YJS is a noncommercial project which supposes free-of-charge education.

YJS is a project which stimulates Belarusian identity. The majority of classes at School are conducted in Belarusian.

For those who are 16 or older ...

20–25 people aged from 16 to 25 from Hrodno become students of the YJS each year. Such age requirements we set when announce next entrance to the program. Of course, there are exceptions but usually students and schoolchildren of leaving forms (10–11) make basis of



"YJS suddenly opened me doors to interesting and creative activity. Meetings, various events, people and VIPs, travels around Belarus and abroad gave me many story-lines and characters. These are the most interesting years of my life, lived fascinating and emotional owing to profession of journalist."

(T. Zaleskaya — "YJS-2").





each class.

Announcement for new entrance to the School we usually make in September by placing advertisements in local mass-media, educational establishments, by e-mailing Civic Life Chronicles of Hrodno region. We do not need to deny such an information channel as vulgarly-called "OWS" ("one woman said") which is getting more and more popular (!) under ideologically-controlled press and impeded access to the majority of mass-media.

The School entrance lasts 3 through 4 weeks, during this period applicants are to fill-in application forms and enlist to interview.

It happened so that 100 people competed for 25 places and thus a schedule of interviews was rather tense.

Several journalists — future lecturers of the School, coordinators of educational and organizational part of the project are usually invited for interviews. Each member of the "panel" has a table with criteria according with which a candidate is evaluated: publications in school newspapers or mass-media, motivations to participate in the project, understanding of civic life, awareness of mass-media market and communication skills.

The main aim of the interview is providing assistance in revealing potential of each candidate, identification his/her abilities in informal surrounding (it is difficult to do it basing just on a questionnaire). This aim is also pursued by giving creative tasks to many students at interview (those who have published materials are released from this task).

Creative tasks are usually of two kinds: continue a message or make a brief interview in a pair. A summarized mark on interview and creative task results is a passing grade to participate in the project.

We used to make two kinds of lists: main and reserve. It happens often that a person due to various reasons can-



"The School has opened up a whole new world to me, gave me many new friends and teachers in life and keeps on granting young Hrodno generation with knowledge and warmth."

(S. Kuznaitsov — "YJS-3").

not proceed studying and then we involve "reservists".

At the first schools we made testing for vocational aptitude (it was possible to get such service at the City Vocational Guidance Center, but later on we became sure that results of this testing is far not objective: "the best" according to the test results happened not able to write even an article and talented journalists come out of "the worst".

There are many well known names in the city and Belarussian journalism among our school graduates — Pavel Mazheika, Inga Astrausova, Alena Sinevich, Julia Darashkevich, Dzenis Kurchevski, Tatsiana Zalevskaya, Volha Venskaya, Alena Stasjukevich, Zmitser Yagorau, Maryia Sadowskaya, Ales Zaleuski, Volha Buevich, Alena Pronskaya, Siargei Biaganski, Valeri Ruselik and others.

The Concept in Brief

Study program of the "Young Journalist School" is made by the following parts: introduction, communication and journalism basics legal and ethic aspects of journalism.

At introduction classes we make acquaintance to each other, talk about what journalism is and what journalists' functions are, which role mass-media means have in society.

A special section is dedicated to communication and in particular to listening skills, in available form to present information and specify the sense of the information obtained, understand the reasons for communication barriers, etc.

At the basics for journalism classes we are introduced to the main journalism genre, learn how to make introductions and headings for the texts. There are also more specific classes, for example, informing about civic and political life, business and economic news or cultural events, eco-journalism, etc.

An integrated element of this program part is apprenticeship in local mass-media (usually for two weeks) and publication of educational newspapers (usually we establish two editing offices; each of them publishes 2-3 issues of its newspaper).

The next part of classes is dedicated to legal and ethic aspects of journalist work. At these classes we speak about rights and responsibilities of journalists, about traps which can catch inexperienced journalists.

Much attention is paid to discussing journalist ethics

(we have also developed own code of conduct for students of YJS). This program block of YJS is very important – from the very beginning our young journalists start writing messages, associate with editorial staffs and our objective is to warn them against possible mistakes and unpleasant situations coming out of ignorance of legislation regulating journalists work and defined norms of ethics.

Learn Differently

Study process at "Young Journalists School" strongly differs from traditional forms education at secondary and high schools. Study process supposes interactive methods and principals of adult education. We rely on a fact that we are dealing with people motivated to learn, ready to be active in learning new, in mastering new skills. We take an individual approach to each student, as each student works at his/her own pace. The learning process is based at a scheme "from simple (cognitive) to complex" and at principals of multisensority, interactions and stimulating feedback.

By drafting study technique for each class we proceed from learning by doing principle. According to David Kolb every person has his or her own individual



"YJS is much more than just experience in journalism for me. There I got friends with whom I still keep in touch, learned pro-active living attitude. This is invaluable experience, I thank fortune for that."

(L. Asakovich — "YJS-3").

way to learn. Somebody, for example, learn better by experimenting, somebody prefers quiet reading books or watching other people. Because of it at our classes we are likely to create opportunities for getting exact experience (for example – taking interview) and for observing and reflecting (onlooking the interview) and for abstract conceptualization (what was done good; what needs improving; what shall I do in this situation) and for making experiments with information got. The students should leave the classes enriched with knowledge and this makes a basis of the methods which we use at classes for young journalists.

Interactive methods suppose common learning (learning in cooperation): both participants and trainers are active agents of learning process. The aim of classes is not just getting knowledge and skills but changing/improving behavioral models. Gaining new experience, observing own reactions and behavior of other participants of study process, a person changes his/her behavioral model and consciously master it.

Interactive methods let to involve not just person's consciousness but also his or her feelings and emotions,

that in its turn lets to improve quality of mastering information. We stimulate our participants to be active in different ways: make discussions, offer and discuss life situations; much time is given to group work.

Interactive methods are also valuable because they develop communicative skills. In contrast to traditional for the majority of educational establishments one-way communication where a role of teacher supposes giving information and role of students is passive reception, at YJS we cultivate a diversified communication. Trainer's role is for setting discussions, stimulating critical thinking, encourage students to sound their positions. All participants of the study process are interacting with each other, exchange information, solve problems together, simulate real life situations and evaluate colleagues' and own activity.

Usual study program at YJS lasts 6–7 months. Classes take place twice a week in the evening and last 2 hours each. We have another experience and envisaged classes in different way (for example, first group has studied 3 months and in 2003/2004 two deep 5-day training courses and practical classes in between replaced everyday classes) but experience showed that healthy babies are born at the end of 7th month of pregnancy. Oops, of course, journalist's ☺

Each lesson requires careful preparation: starting from aiming and setting tasks, drafting content, choosing methods, framework terms and through hand-outs and envisaging other resources.

The first that our students need to learn is to learn to read, to analyze what is read and of course to write. Students draft materials for mass-media and this is an essential condition for participation in the project (for a year we





have about 100 printed materials). Occasionally young journalists face a problem to find a subject and in this situation "The Hot Pan" which we use at the end of the classes comes to rescue. It is a kind of "brain storming" when students, trainers and experts sound the possible subjects together, name various events and facts, which could be a strong information basis for journalist materials.

Study at YJS exceeds the time frames of the classes. Great attention is given to individual work – consultations, recommendations to written materials. Such consultations let students to master the secrets of journalism art, to feel more confident at this stage when they do not have strong contacts with journalists and editors, do not have a clear idea about publications specific. There are a lot of questions and problems especially at the first stage. And success of learning depends on how comfortable the atmosphere, interesting lecturers and respectful culture is.

Every student should have at least 5 publications issued while studying to get a certificate. As a rule, more than 2/3 of students succeed to do it.

What makes us possible to say – does our project succeed or not? The indicators which we target evaluating each group results are as follows: a number of publications, relevancy for the project (participation in issuing education newspapers, participation in civic initiatives and organizations) and also their employment at mass-media editorial staff, engagement in activity of various NGOs. Each third alumnus is linked to journalism or civic activity.

It is nice if while project implementation besides methodical basis, good team (often ready to work on volunteer basis) and other needed resources there are "tidbits" typical just for you. By each group efforts we had different ones every time – celebrations, parties and other common events which allow to feel the taste of non-formal education.

We finish as a rule with a gala Reception where we hand over the certificates and thank our lecturers.

Hope for future cooperation. There is YJS-11 ahead!

Translated by Victoria Dronova

short information

"Young Journalist School"

- The program of public association "Civic Initiatives Information Support Center "The Third Sector". It has been implemented since 1997. It supposes training for salaried and freelance correspondents for mass-media and Hrodno NGOs' publication, stirring social commitment of the youth.
- The program is implemented as every-year 7-month projects under the common title "Young Journalist School". The students (young people of 16 to 25 of age) take a course "Journalism Basics" have trial periods at Hrodno mass-media, publish own education newspapers. Since March 2007 the weekly Internet-newspaper and Internet-radio "Your Style" (www.t-styl.info) have been started within the project frames.
- Two sub-projects "Youth Information Agency" and "Trouble Addresses" were implemented within the project frames. The subproject "Youth Information Agency" has been implemented since 1998 and supposed that School's students make journalistic materials on city and country life. Every year about 100 publications elaborated by YJS's students which are published in Hrodno all-Belarusian mass-media.
- The sub-project "Trouble Addresses" was implemented in 1998-1999 and was aimed at drawing attention to people in crisis and their problems.
- The students of "Young Journalist School-3" and "Young Journalist School-4" visited orphan asylums, hospitals, specialized establishments and public organizations engaged in helping people in trouble. The project outcomes were dozens of publications in city mass-media dedicated to people in troubles.
- Young Journalist School-8 implemented in 2003/2004 was aimed at training correspondents for local mass-media and press-secretaries for Hrodno NGOs. Young people from Hrodno, Smargon, Lida and Slonim participated in the project.
- Since 1997 about 200 people have participated in the project "Young Journalist School". Almost each third alumnus of "Young Journalist School" up to now works for mass-media or NGOs in Belarus or abroad.
- The Youth Journalism Festival "Your Style" took place in May 2007 in Hrodno in honor of the 10th anniversary of the School. It was organized in association with the public association "Belarusian Association of Journalists". About 100 people participated.