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**The concept of culture in the institutional approach to journalism**

The article raises the issue of specifying the concept of culture when employing an institutional analytical approach to the sphere of journalism. The article further proposes an interpretation of this concept that reveals the fundamental purpose of journalism as a cultural institution.

Keywords: journalism, culture, institutional approach.

Contemporary scholarship underscores the promising nature of the institutional approach in the study of journalism [2]. This method is not particularly new; however, it has not quite exhausted its usefulness.

Today, journalism’s institutional nature is often viewed in the context of modern politics. However, such a lopsided view fails to fully reflect social reality. Therefore, a further expansion of the concept of journalism as a cultural institution is warranted [3]. This task, first and foremost, requires solving the methodological issue of specifying the term “culture” in a way that would correspond to an institutional analysis of journalism.

Culture is often understood as artistic creation in the context of journalism. This can be demonstrated through the mass media content of any “Culture” column or segment. In many cases, such an understanding of culture is traceable in scholarly works. Subsequently, journalism’s role in the cultural realm is reduced to serving informational needs of culture and leisure. Albeit relevant, this role, however, is neither exclusive nor primary for journalism.

Scholars have also discussed journalism’s role as an agent of cultural socialization. Thus, the following facets of journalism have been given particular attention: its educational function, dissemination of knowledge through mass media, popularization of science, introduction of local and global cultural heritage, broadcasting of moral and ethical principles, journalistic analysis of sociocultural issues, and other functions. These issues often fall under the “Society” segment in current mass media, while simultaneously serving the definition of culture as a repository of both material and spiritual achievements of mankind.

The abovementioned has significant social implications and warrants a close look at journalism. Yet, this angle does not succeed in uncovering the essence of journalism as a cultural institution that encompasses organization of society’s spiritual life. In order to fully understand this aspect of journalism, one has to interpret culture as a value system that defines modes of thought and behavior.

Such a meaning-uncovering (“smyslopolagayushchaya”) interpretation of journalism [4; 1] allows us to identify the true purpose of journalism as a cultural institution which is not confined to disseminating information about the activities of cultural institutions or addressing issues of cultural life. Rather, it entails ensuring a smooth functioning of cultural mechanisms, continuous actualization of societal primary value systems, forming and organizing the conception of the world (*Weltbild*), and preserving collective memory.

In other words, journalism as a cultural institution is involved in reproduction and maintenance of a given society’s mentality, as well as in forming individuals’ sociocultural identity.

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