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Portrayal of Schoolteachers Presented by Newspaper *Izvestia* in Late Soviet Union and Contemporary Russia

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Abstract

Public image of people of different jobs is constantly changing in the course of time. Newspapers have always played a crucial role in representation of teachers, but the role of mass media in this process these days is hard to overestimate. To trace the transformation of teacher representation in national newspapers the authors speed-read 760 issues of the Russian broadsheet *Izvestia* in three different years. As a result, a final sample of 205 articles containing the word “teacher” in their headlines was chosen. The current study applied qualitative media and content analysis. The data received were analyzed and calculated with the help of statistical method. The use of these research methods allowed the authors to classify topics communicated to the readers into several groups and count the percentage of teacher concerned articles from the total number of mentioning in a year. Despite the fact that the number of selected articles over three time periods increased greatly, this research demonstrates the deterioration of schoolteacher representation by the newspaper studied. The present findings may help solve the shortcomings of teacher portrayal in mass media coverage and propose media to highlight more positive and optimistic news to restore and boost the profession status.

Keywords: news media, media studies, newspaper representation, schoolteacher, school education.

1. Introduction

For a couple of decades, the world has been fascinated by the Boy Who Lived and Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry. Thousands of children, teenagers and even adults dreamed to enroll to Hogwarts. Such prominence captured the attention of scientists in the attempt to scrutinize skills, competences, and expertise of Hogwarts’ professors. Who were these teachers inspiring children to counteract evil forces, to share all joys and sorrows with their friends, to adhere to spiritual values? This question attracted attention of a number of scholars worldwide. Researchers strived to investigate and evaluate different aspects of the book series and movies. The results of the analyses turned out not to be optimistic. Thus, A. Đumljija (Đumljija, 2015) studied Hogwarts from several angles: the structure of the boarding school, educational principles, streaming students, as well as curriculum, etc. She paid particular attention to teachers’ evaluation classifying them into three categories: polarities (morally good or evil, wise or incompetent in their area of expertise, lenient or strict in terms), complexities (combination of incompatible or hardly compatible features), and paragons (an example of teaching and virtue, very amiable and trustworthy). The researcher claimed that Hogwarts teachers’ depiction was rather stereotypical and reflected the real education and teachers.

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Another contributor, R. Lukk (Lukk, 2018), resorted to the model created by J.A. Muchmore (Muchmore, 2012). The model includes identity themes that are based on the analysis of 44 literary works: (a) teacher as nurturer, (b) teacher as subversive, (c) teacher as conformist, (d) teacher as hero, (e) teacher as villain, (f) teacher as victim, (g) teacher as outsider, (h) teacher as immutable force, (i) teacher as eccentric, and (j) teacher as economic survivor (Muchmore, 2012: 8). Analysing *Harry Potter* series, R. Lukk complemented the model with two additional themes: a) teacher as objectionable and b) teacher as fraud (Lukk, 2018: 28). She concluded that the popularity of the book is conditioned by two factors. The first one is the use of quite stereotypical features of the characters, the second one is a novel combination of those stereotypes in each of the characters (Lukk, 2018: 31).

One more researcher, K.-L. Näär, evaluating the teacher-characters of the book noted that they are archetypes that readers project onto their own teachers (Näär, 2019) giving them either high praise and admiration (to good professors) or hatred (to evil ones). Having read the series several times the researcher noticed that some teachers appeared to be liars, abusers, and manipulators, and she set the goal to pinpoint the abusive and manipulative tendencies of some Hogwarts professors. According to K.-L. Näär (Näär, 2019), most of Hogwarts' teachers turned out not to be so positive and professional as the readers believed.

For instance, Professor Sybil Trelawney was mentally unbalanced, Professor Lockhart showed up as a selfish narcissist, Master Slughorn proved to be a master manipulator, etc. A kind and open-hearted Professor Hagrid didn't have appropriate education and had no ideas about making lesson plans. Even Headmaster Dumbledore being a good teacher was a mediocre school administrator. Almost all Hogwarts' teachers should not have been allowed to work with children. This very idea was also shared by G. Bassham who declared that there were too few qualified teachers in Hogwarts and students did not get comprehensive education (Bassham, 2010). Such conclusion relied on the analysis of Hogwarts education through the educational research of such prominent scientists as Plato, J. Locke, J.-J. Rousseau, I. Kant, J. Dewey, M. Adler, and others. Thus, it was proved that Hogwarts teachers are neither ideal nor flawless although they reproduce some stereotypical images of real teachers pertaining in the society. Subsequently, it led to another question and nowadays many researchers across the world have been discussing the interdependence between media, educational discourse and public opinion. What is pivotal? Do the media determine public opinion or, vice versa, the latter govern the media?

Some researchers claim that media play a significant role in shaping public opinion and can affect educational policy (Duanprakhon, 2012; Fenech, Wilkins, 2017; Gálik, 2020; Hyndman et al., 2020; Shine, O'Donoghue, 2013; Sokolova, 2014; Whitley et al., 2020). News media discuss the issues that are acute at the moment, widely debated and attract policymakers and public interest. Media also determine the extent to which a phenomenon is perceived as a public problem and how the society conceives the solutions offered by policymakers (Powers, Chapman, 2017).

It should be noted that news media reports specify public beliefs and trigger public actions (Whitley et al., 2020) as they strive to emphasize what is important and what is not. Moreover, media affect the design, adoption, and implementation of the educational policy (Ulmer, 2016:44).

Researchers support the idea that the relationship between school and society is mediated by images and representations disseminated by media (Stack, 2006: 49). Media are considered to be the main source of information about "good" and "bad" schools. Broad audience as well as policymakers recourse to this source to get their understanding and evaluating of the educational system in general. For instance, a group of researchers focused on the representation of physical education (PE) profession and PE classes in popular movies and its perception by the audience (Hyndman et al., 2020). They investigated international media for a five-year period using Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software (CAQDAS). The outcomes demonstrated that the prevalent educational discourse was associated with a crisis and had negative or inadequate connotation. Thus, the researchers concluded that media shape PE knowledge that general public and authorities acquire.

According to Kachorsky et al. (Kachorsky et al., 2020), the democratic news media fulfil the following functions. Firstly, they inform citizens about current public affairs to enable them to participate in the democratic society. Secondly, media probe those with powers to protect people from the wrongdoing. Thirdly, they ensure a platform for debate to form public opinion. Finally, media represent the community views and their shared aims (Kachorsky et al., 2020). So, news

media should seek to provide coverage of actual and disputable issues. But researchers should understand how media construct and employ such coverage reaching the audiences.

Issues concerning school education and teachers regularly emerge in various media worldwide. Along with the development of modern technologies media messages become ubiquitous due to numerous devices, platforms, applications, etc. The reasons for news reports can be different whether they are standardized testing, assaults from both sides, innovative technologies, lack of expertise or others. Goals and target audiences of news reports can vary as well. Thus, we get the aim of the current research - to comprehend the representation of the teacher image by one of the widely spread periodicals in Russia in three different years. The objectives are: analysis of the research literature on the subject, quantitative and qualitative analyses of the newspaper teachers' representation and comparison of the obtained results with findings of previous studies.

Newspaper analysis was chosen relying on Fenech and Wilkins' arguments for the choice of print media (Fenech, Wilkins, 2019), although they applied these reasons for Australian newspapers. Firstly, in Australia a few years ago major daily newspapers still determined the media agenda. Secondly, Australian adults over 14 read national newspapers, in print or online, at least once a month. Thirdly, newspapers gave more detailed information and opinions in comparison with other media. Finally, the print format allowed a more profound analysis of text-based materials in contrast with video or audio formats (Fenech, Wilkins, 2019). We hypothesize these inferences can be disseminated to other countries.

2. Materials and methods

The current research was carried out relying on qualitative media analysis that includes providing an accessible comprehensive information base, a rationale for comparative research over time, listing shifts and trends, investigating denotative and connotative shifts, formulating meaningful patterns and themes (Altheide, 2000: 293). The ultimate component of the analysis, expanding patterns into other mass media, was beyond the scope of our research but it can be pursued in further research.

In the present research we followed the parameters approved by Russian scholars (Levitskaya, Seliverstova, 2019: 24). Namely, we studied historical context of the years when the chosen articles were published. As for social, cultural, ideological, and religious contexts, we should mention they were quite different in the mentioned periods. In 1980 it was a period of the Soviet Union with its planned economy, belief in the promising future, abandoned churches, social competition, etc. Year 2000 was the year when the country has already survived a few post-Soviet crises but still retained some features of the predecessor although the economical paradigm has changed, the Russian Orthodox Church regained a significant place in the society and the ideology was in the process of change. In 2020 likewise all the countries of the globe the country underwent pandemic COVID-19 transformations. We left behind the worldview of the characters of the 'school and student world' depicted in media texts as within the framework of our research only headlines were analysed.

The headline analysis was chosen as the headlines act as a forerunner to the news report, they attract readers' attention, provide a brief summary, and determine the way the newspaper appeals to its readership (Duanprakhon, 2012: 3). It is after skimming the headlines, the reader decides what to read or even without reading the article itself the person gets their individual overview of the current situation.

To determine the portrayal of teachers presented in newspapers we took the newspaper *Izvestia* as it is one of the most influential and widely spread dailies in the Russian Federation. The first issue was published in 1917 in St. Petersburg under the name of *Izvestia of Petrograd Council of Workers' Deputies*. Then it was renamed *Izvestia of the Council of People's Deputies*. In the USSR it used to be an official organ of the Supreme Soviet and advocated the government policy and political views. In 1991 the paper became autonomous. Nowadays it is a significant independent mass media covering domestic and international news in all life spheres. The newspaper's issues also include analytics and comments, overviews of business and economic problems, cultural and sports events. The newspaper comes out both in print and electronic versions during weekdays.

As mentioned above, the choice of dates was specified by three periods in the history of Russia: Soviet, post-Soviet and contemporary ones. According to newspaper's files in 1980 there

were 306, in 2000 – 246, and in 2020 – 208 issues of *Izvestia*. The study involved content analysis research method. We looked through all the issues and searched for mentioning of the word “teacher” or its derivatives and synonyms in any of the materials presented. Since in 1980 and 2000 there were no electronic versions of the paper, we read paper versions. The search of the same information in 2020 was made electronically on the website of *Izvestia*. After that we reviewed the articles found, analysed them and grouped into several categories according to the topics represented to the readers. Then we calculated the percentage of teacher concerned articles from the total number of mentioning in a year. The research done allowed formulating outcomes presented in *Results* section.

3. Discussion

An array of studies devoted to school, teacher and education representation in newspapers has been published in Australia, Britain, Canada, Germany, Thailand, the United States, and others. Researchers focused on various aspects of education and teachers’ coverage and portrayal in the media, namely, standardized testing (Shine, O’Donoghue, 2013), teacher characters as heroes or villains (Shine, O’Donoghue, 2013), the PISA results (Stack, 2006), etc. For instance, according to K. Shine and T. O’Donoghue (Shine, O’Donoghue, 2013), the West Australian newspapers portray school teachers as being against standardized testing and any accountability measures. The researchers highlight that although there are teachers doing a job perfectly, the majority claims the decline of educational standards owing to inadequate teaching. The most newspaper content conveys negative attitude to teachers’ practices with a few attempts to focus on teachers’ overload and work under pressure. As a consequence, teachers’ profession is presented as negative one. The fact to emphasize is that the negative information and opinion about teachers and teaching mostly come from union representatives, politicians, bureaucrats and academics, those almost neglecting any teachers’ achievements and rewards or advantages of being a teacher (Shine, O’Donoghue, 2013: 394). It is not surprising that teachers could become disappointed by such a negative focus of the media towards teachers and their work. The same researchers (Shine, O’Donoghue, 2013) find out that little is portrayed about the teaching profession itself that actually has become more complex, demanding and difficult. This fact is totally ignored by media.

Following the research (Shine, O’Donoghue, 2013), it can be noted that the attitude to teachers is not the same throughout the time. Thus, in the 1980s in Australia because of teaching strikes many teachers were claimed not to meet a fundamental professional requirement, namely, the devotion to community and service to it. In the 1990s in Britain high expectations were charged to teachers and those who did not keep up these moral norms were blamed. In cases of mistreatment, psychological or physical abuse, teachers were proclaimed as “demons, villains or deviants” (Hansen, 2009). Later on, British, American and Australian media depicted teachers as giving all their knowledge and efforts to children but not their own ones because of working hard, demonstrating their commitment to work and students and becoming exhausted.

The comparative analysis of four metropolitan daily Australian newspapers over a 10-year period was carried out by K. Shine (Shine, 2015: 501). The researcher identified 249 articles from metropolitan Australian newspapers covering teachers and teaching. Firstly, the scholar read all the articles for several times. Secondly, the articles were studied to find out actions and events to classify them later. Thirdly, continuous comparison allowed to identify several patterns and themes and their change over the time. Finally, key concepts and categories were revealed to develop understanding of newspapers’ portrayal of teachers (Shine, 2015: 504). Topics touched upon in the articles included teachers’ working conditions, stress, workload, payment and job security as well as difficult and abusive students. But the most prominent message was teachers’ dismissal or their wish to quit the profession. It concerned not only older teachers but those who were at the start of their career. The reason quoted by both inner and outer respondents was teacher dissatisfaction of low pay. The teachers interviewed were assured that media could shape public opinion concerning schools and teaching, thus, influencing their relationship with narrow and wider community, sometimes making them leave teaching profession. But they highlighted that the image of a teacher was mostly created by those who were not directly involved in teaching, and teachers were deprived of their voice. Such attitude influenced teachers’ enthusiasm and their readiness to continue their job (Shine, 2015: 510). Moreover, it could influence the enrollment to the teacher education programmes at the universities that was the case in Australia in the 2000s.

A few years later K. Shane pursued the research and delved into schoolteachers' perception of news coverage of education in Australia (Shine, 2018). The education coverage was found to be mainly negative and critical. Most of the Australian teachers interviewed concluded the predominant negativity in news coverage, although they admitted that sometimes some positive stories portraying schools and teachers appeared. They also believed that the public, especially, parents would be glad to read more positive news.

At the same time the researcher noted that the situation was different in big cities and small towns. So, newspapers in small towns more often wrote about positive contributions from schools and teachers. The possible explication could be the idea that local media had less material and they welcomed all kinds of news available and local schools and their members had higher chances to contribute to media coverage themselves. Further on, K. Shane mentioned the research carried out by different scientists in 1965, 2001 and 2016 and proved that in all the cases negative news "remained a key requirement in contemporary news selection" (Shine, 2018: 11).

According to the same research (Shine, 2018), schoolteachers' portrayal highlighted teachers to be accused of most shortcomings of the educational system, for example, of a decline in educational standards. They were also blamed for poor performance and inappropriate professional education and training. Teachers emphasized their news portrayal as low achievers academically and professionally and that any crime or misconduct of a teacher attracted enhanced attention of the media. The consequence was that such news led to generalisations affecting all representatives of the profession.

One more deduction to focus on is superficial reporting of education. Quite often news is based on a single interview or conversation when a principal or someone involved in the school process narrates the circumstances. Such coverage does not reflect the realities of school life. Even when the stories are supported with facts and statistics, they do not obligatory reveal the reasons underlying the process. One of the teachers states: "They seem to think education is black or white. There is a multitude of issues that need to be dealt with sensitively from different angles. I don't see a lot of that in education journalism" (Shine, 2018: 16).

Interestingly, teachers are faulted for not explaining their roles properly (Shine, 2018: 16). This situation seems ambiguous. On the one hand, usually teachers are not actively interviewed. When the case is concerned, journalists interact with the school authorities or/and one or two teachers. In most cases media rely on official and influential stakeholders (on the local, regional and national levels) and sanctioned press-releases and all pieces of news are nothing but interaction of journalists and officials serving dominant interests (Stack, 2006: 51). That is why not all teachers have a chance to contribute to circumstances' explanations and coverage. On the other hand, the interviewees cannot always manage to explain all intricacies of the schooling.

The final remark of K. Shine's research concerns the lack of coverage about changes in teaching throughout the time (Shine, 2018: 17). News does not compare the increased teachers' workload or faster pace with the situation occurred ten, twenty or more years ago. All these details contribute to the inaccurate portrayal of school education and, consequently, to teachers' considering quitting the profession or applicant's entering the field.

A group of researchers studied how *Time* magazine covers communicated ideas concerning education throughout almost a century, from 1923 till 2019 (Kachorsky et al., 2020). The researchers did not examine the published articles, their aim was to explore the visual representation of education in the United States. They claim that in our digital age "the world told" has been replaced by "the world shown" where visuals and graphics prevail. Moreover, the world is not reflected as it is but as news makers consider it to be relying on their knowledge, experience, interests, context, resources and tools available.

Analyzing magazine's covers, the researchers resorted to an array of analyses, namely, compositional analysis, ideational analysis, interpersonal analysis, ideological analysis, intermodal analysis, and data analysis. The researchers found out that education media coverage does not exceed 3 % of the total US news coverage and this coverage turned out to be superficial, biased, uninformed, and, predominantly, negative. For instance, television broadcast news coverage of education is triggered by some accidents such as shooting at school, inappropriate relationship, teacher strikes, etc. Another finding showed that the distinction between education and schooling evident to scholars is very vague and uncertain for journalists and the audience. Summing up, the researchers identified five categories among which four are of interest to the present research: learning and schooling presented as having not changed over time; overgeneralized and metonymic

representations can stand for broad categories of education stakeholders; schools are presented as in need of fixing; and schools are perceived as sites for larger, sociopolitical debates (Kachorsky et al., 2020).

In June 2014 the US media published the court's decision on the Vergara v. California lawsuit which dealt with a child's right to education and instruction by an effective teacher. The suit was filed in May 2012. Powers and Chapman (Powers, Chapman, 2017) analyzed 42 print news media articles concerning that lawsuit published between 2012 to 2014. They concluded that journalists, spokespeople, philanthropists, education celebrities, and research firm representatives often relied their judgments on the idea of helpless public-school children taught by an inefficient teacher. Such teacher was depicted as a villain who resisted to educational reform and such portrayal predetermined the public opinion. The researchers claimed that similar cases are theatrical acts of the political spectacle which key elements include: a) the use of metaphorical language; b) the casting of political actors in character roles (e.g., heroes, villains, and victims); c) dramaturgy or the staging of events; d) efforts to create the illusion of rationality via the use of numerical data, opinion polls, and research to justify policy claims or decisions; and e) a disconnection between means and ends, or indicators that there is a mismatch between the goal of a policy proposal and the possible outcomes (Powers, Chapman, 2017: 168). Throughout the Vergara v. California coverage, the term "teacher" was used predominantly negatively. It was paired with such adjectives as "ineffective", "bad", "insufficient", and "lazy". Positive evaluation was less prevalent and there were few cases when the teacher was referred as "average," "probationary," "tenured," and "more and less effective". Thus, news media appealed to value added models for measuring teachers' performance as one of the debate provoking topic.

Similar claims appeared much earlier. So, in the United States *A Nation at Risk* report released in 1983 launched changes in contemporary American educational history that still echo throughout media and policy. The main aim was to attract paramount attention to the issues of qualifications and performance of education professionals as the system of education was considered to be in danger due to inappropriate teaching staff (Ulmer, 2016: 44). The analysis showed that media represented school teachers as caring but professionally ineffective, as those who needed reform but resisted to it at the same time. Teachers were depicted in the context of derision, deficit, disgust, and crisis. Such setting highlighted declining teacher quality and creates panic (Ulmer, 2016: 45).

In Canada the PISA results coverage was analysed by M. Stack (Stack, 2006) and he concluded that, firstly, headlines predetermined readers attitude to the issues. Secondly, portraying the PISA results journalists primarily and exclusively relied on government sources instead of professionally oriented institutions such as teachers' federations or associations. Thirdly, all students were treated as one group without paying attention to inequality among groups, such as aboriginal people and inclusive students. Fourthly, parents', students' and teachers' opinions were not taken into consideration. Therefore, the emphasis on the official data undermined the opportunity for wider discussion involving significance of test results for various groups, results' interpretation for further educational policy, emerging and persisting stereotypes in the society, etc. (Stack, 2006: 65).

Education, schooling and teachers' portrayal over a 20-year period was analysed in the West Australian newspapers and later on these representations were compared with those found in research literature, news media and other sources (Thomas, 2015). Namely, five sustained aspects were paid special attention to: unit curriculum, industrial dispute, the introduction of standardised testing, teacher shortage and outcomes-based education (Thomas, 2015: 525). The findings were in line with other researches – teachers were portrayed predominantly negatively, resisting to any changes in the educational system, being very conservative, and being one of the main reasons for decreasing educational standards. Although, the research highlighted a few sympathetic news reports depicting teachers as important, dedicated and hardworking, even overworking but having little influence in the society. Unfortunately, those representations could not be recognized as reliable as no details and explanations were provided in the media.

Abtahi and Barwell (Abtahi, Barwell, 2020) studied news reports on mathematics education. The portrayal covered such topics as methods of teaching mathematics, the content of the subject, results of pupils' mathematical performance, etc. The findings were quite opposing. From one point of view, a new method of teaching, discovery learning, was found to be confusing for students and parents. From another point of view, return to basic teaching methods meant nothing but the

learning of basic facts and the use of standardized methods. So, progressive positions collided with conservative ones that led to “math wars” (Abtahi, Barwell, 2020). Moreover, the situation was complemented by PISA results giving arguments for the opponents. Actors involved in the debate embraced governments, ministries and ministers, teachers, parents, students, researchers, university professors, etc. Teachers and students turned out to be subjects to the powers of others as they were acted upon by the money invested in them, imposed curricula, insufficient training at the university, etc. And again, in most cases, teachers were portrayed as non-knowledgeable, unprepared, and ill-equipped.

According to Levitskaya and Seliverstova (Levitskaya, Seliverstova, 2019), German media texts disclosed teachers’ role as being a victim resulting from sexism, homophobia, disrespect and aggression from some of the students. That is why some Federal Lands in Germany published special recommendations for teachers concerning harassment of teachers on the Internet. Meanwhile, German researchers created the “good teacher” model in accordance with which a “good teacher”: seeks to create strong working relationships with their students; knows how to use didactic and methodological tools; combines deep scientific knowledge and a high level of competence in the subject taught; tries to develop democratic culture in the educational process; combines theory and practice in the classroom and exhibits “pedagogical tact” in the understanding of J. F. Herbart; realises that some tasks may contain contradictions and tries to balance them; respects pupils and demands respect for themselves and for each other; enjoys working in a team and feels like a member of the professional community; upgrades qualifications and is willing to develop their own skills; develops political professional understanding (Levitskaya, Seliverstova, 2019: 24). But studies proved that the prestige of the teaching profession in Germany is constantly decreasing and the image of a teacher confronting permanent demands from students, parents and society is persisting.

Russian researcher Sokolova (Sokolova, 2014) studied media portrayal of a school teacher in a national provincial newspaper for over 10 years. The stereotypical portrait represented a female teacher over 40 with a certain level of expertise. That female teacher was keen on her profession and was happy at work and in the family. News reports described professional achievements of a teacher highlighting experienced teachers and ignoring novices. The theme of school and teachers was paid rare attention – one news report every one to two months in a weekly newspaper. The range of topics embraced preparation for the beginning of the academic year (usually the last week in August), school meals (throughout the year), teachers-veterans (before the Victory Day and The Day of Elderly), and the portrait of a school director (once a year). The researcher concluded that such news reports were informative but not analytical, incorporated conventional characteristics and headlines. She also claimed that current news accounts in the provincial newspaper seemed to be positive as they were in the Soviet epoch, they recurred to some stereotypes hiding real problems and disputable issues in professional and personal spheres.

4. Results

During the current research we skimmed 760 issues of the newspaper *Izvestia* within the time frame and settled on a final sampling of 205 articles and news reports mentioning the word “teacher” including its derivatives and synonyms. The number of selected articles over three time periods differs greatly (Figure 1).

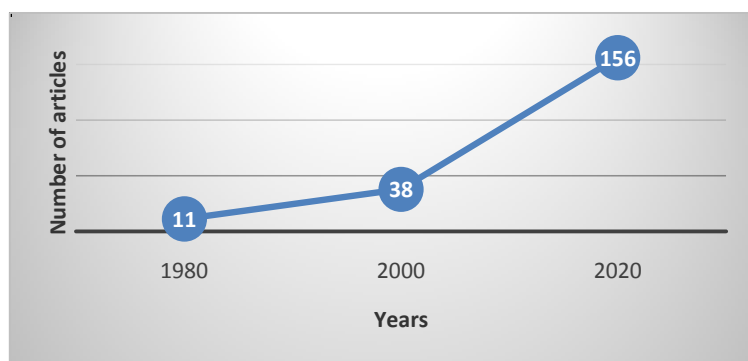


Fig. 1. The number of articles concerning teachers in *Izvestia*

The line graph shows the changing trend in the number of articles concerning teachers. Starting with 11 in 1980, there was more than three times rise in 2000 followed by a dramatic increase in 2020.

Further analysis made it possible to group all the materials into seven most often occurred categories: 1. Salary. 2. Housing. 3. Prestige and role in society. 4. Skill contests, incentives. 5. Offences and crimes against teachers. 6. Offences and crimes committed by teachers. 7. News from other countries

However, the situation with the pandemic forced us to add in 2020 one more category titled COVID-19 as *Izvestia* could not but wrote about it.

Let us consider the results of each period in more detail. In 1980 we noted only 11 mentioning, eight of which were referred to Prestige and role in society and three ones to the News from foreign countries. The national articles covered such news as creation of mass pedagogical universal education for parents as one of the effective forms and methods of pedagogical education; congratulations with the beginning of the school year; a story about a family of teachers working in a village; some ideas about teachers' training in universities and institutes; and considerations about the essence of teacher's job. Interestingly, all the articles created an image of a good, skilled and inspired teacher with an active life position. Foreign news turned out to be not so positive as domestic ones. The piece of news from France described a teachers' strike against job cuts in educational institutions as the government wanted to save money. A reporter from Kabul, Afghanistan, wrote about the first All-Afghan Congress of Teachers. This news being quite optimistic in general recollected a fact of murdering a teacher in this country a year ago and two facts of printing photos in *New York Times* and *New York Post* with the captures "Shooting of teachers", "Afghan rebels hunt for teachers". The main idea concentrated there was that Afghan teachers were ready to fight for the better future of their country together with the government. As for the third foreign news, it was quite neutral telling about the first graduation of teachers from a state pedagogical college in Kampuchea (now Cambodia).

In 2000 we found 38 articles about teachers which covered all the categories (Figure 2). The most discussed issue was salaries since Russia experienced hard times due to the economic situation. Teachers as well as people of other professions did not get their salaries and had to make some money on the side. They could not bear the lack of money, food and goods in the shops anymore and organized strikes during which they did not conduct lessons. The next most debated problem was Prestige and role including some articles dedicated to the professional holiday with the congratulation of teachers and considerations about educational system. Two articles discussed advantages and disadvantages of classical national education, centered on the teacher compared to the American one, where in the center was a student. Others two were devoted to the memory of a German teacher who helped people during the Great Patriotic war and to the situation when students had achieved a draft deferment for their favourite teacher. Naturally, there were also two negative news about the staff reduction due to a decrease in the birth rate, and about the failure of teachers' dreams. Articles about skill contests and incentives were the third in number and told about prize money for the best representatives of the profession. Five news from other countries informed about a teachers' strike for higher salary in Ecuador, young Germans not willing to work as teachers, North Korean communists interested in studying English to communicate with the outside world, and training of Estonian and Ukrainian teachers. In 2000 we also came across three cases of crimes against teachers: one case of kidnapping, a case of harassment of a talented teacher introducing innovative methods of education, and an authorities' reaction to the publication of a chapter from the Weiner story. In the latter case the authors discussed the reasons and consequences of a real incident when bullies had beaten a teacher. But since that article came out just before the professional holiday the authorities considered it as an insult to all teachers. Two cases about crimes committed by teachers comprised an episode about Physical education teacher accused of lewd acts towards children and a teacher beating a student.

Our search in 2020 revealed 156 mentioning (Figure 3). On the top there were articles concerning Skill contests and incentives. Among contests there was "Teacher of the Future", a team competition to find people who apply unusual and modern approaches in their work and "Teacher of the Future. Students", aiming to discover talented and ambitious youth willing to devote their lives to education. "Zemsky Teacher" and "Teacher for Russia" programmes attracted teachers to faraway towns and villages in Russia, and those who agreed to participate in them received cash grants.

The authorities also provided teachers with tablets, equipment for distance learning and launched an all-Russian educational platform to solve the most pressing requests of teachers, schoolchildren and parents. Then there came News from other countries, 21 pieces of which were related to the unprecedented case of murdering a teacher in France. The third most popular item was COVID-19 with the statistics of sick teachers, vaccination and problems of distant learning forced due to the pandemic.

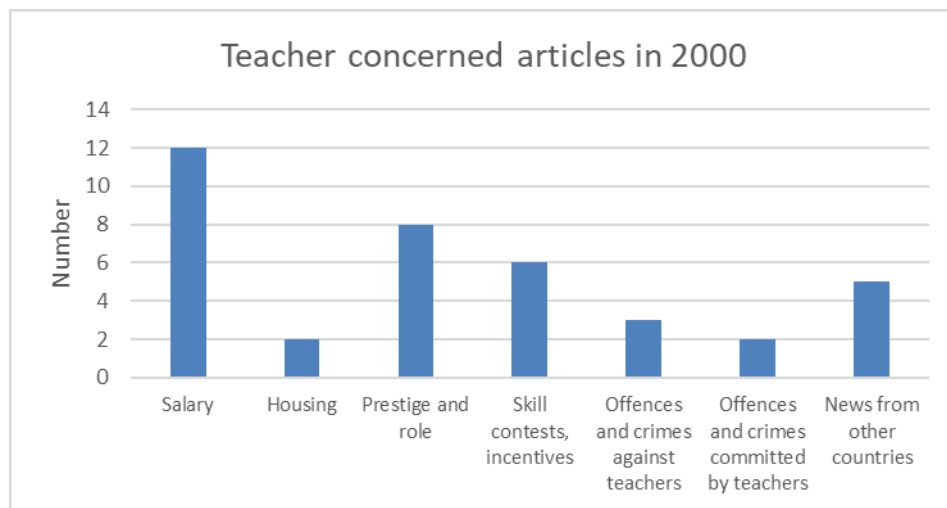


Fig. 2. Newspaper topics concerning teachers (the year 2000)

The number of articles about Prestige and role equaled 22. The paper wrote about a flash mob of gratitude to teachers, the authorities' congratulations on the Day of Knowledge and professional holiday, praised the work of teachers, schoolchildren and parents during the pandemic. Together with this an article based on the survey of the analytical center claimed that almost a quarter of Russians (23 %) believed that modern teachers lacked professionalism, patience, politeness and sociability. Its respondents also considered the level of digital literacy of students higher than of their teachers.

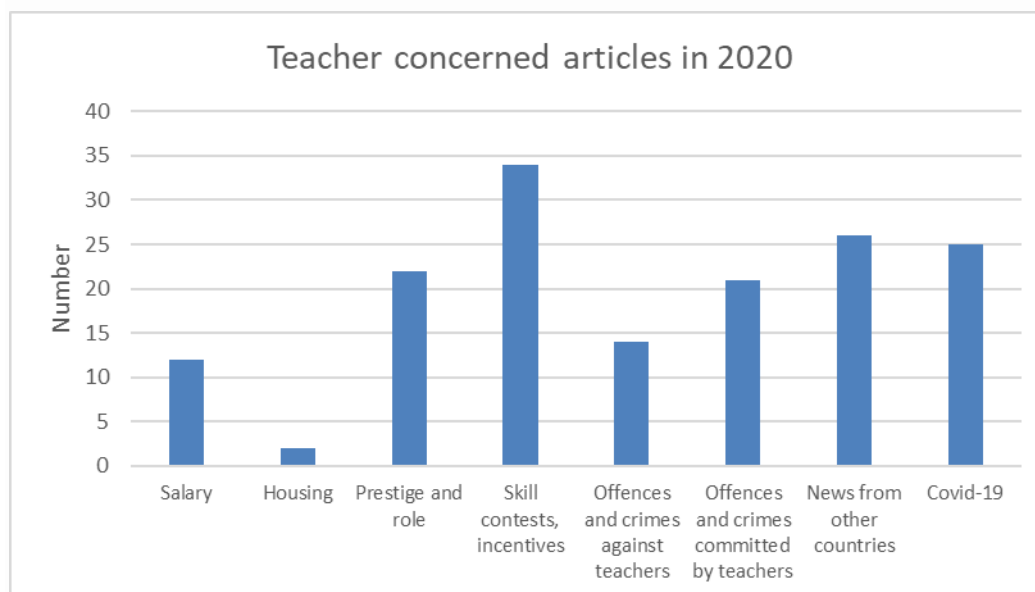


Fig. 3. Newspaper topics concerning teachers (the year 2020)

Experts interviewed by *Izvestia* noted that many teachers did not strive for self-development but preferred to teach their subject according to the old scheme. In addition, they often failed to build a dialogue with either parents or students. Offences committed by teachers totaled 21. Among

them we could read about a teacher who came drunk to the lesson, some examples of cruel treatment of children, a teacher suspected of having an intimate relationship with a student, a teacher who masturbated in front of the students, a director appropriated the salary of another teacher, and a teacher lowered the grade because of the personal opinion of the student. Then there came Offences and crimes against teachers with 14 cases involving money thefts, students' threats to teachers due to low grades, and condolences over the murder of a French teacher. Salary was mentioned in 12 news with the information about the average salary, an idea to change the system of remuneration, raising the salaries, and introduction of a special bonus for classroom guidance. The least mentioned category was Housing with two positive events informing about building accommodation for teachers.

While comparing the total results we excluded the category COVID-19 as it existed only in 2020. To find out the frequency of the topics highlighted each year we calculated the percentage of teacher concerned articles from the total number of mentioning in a year (Figure 4).

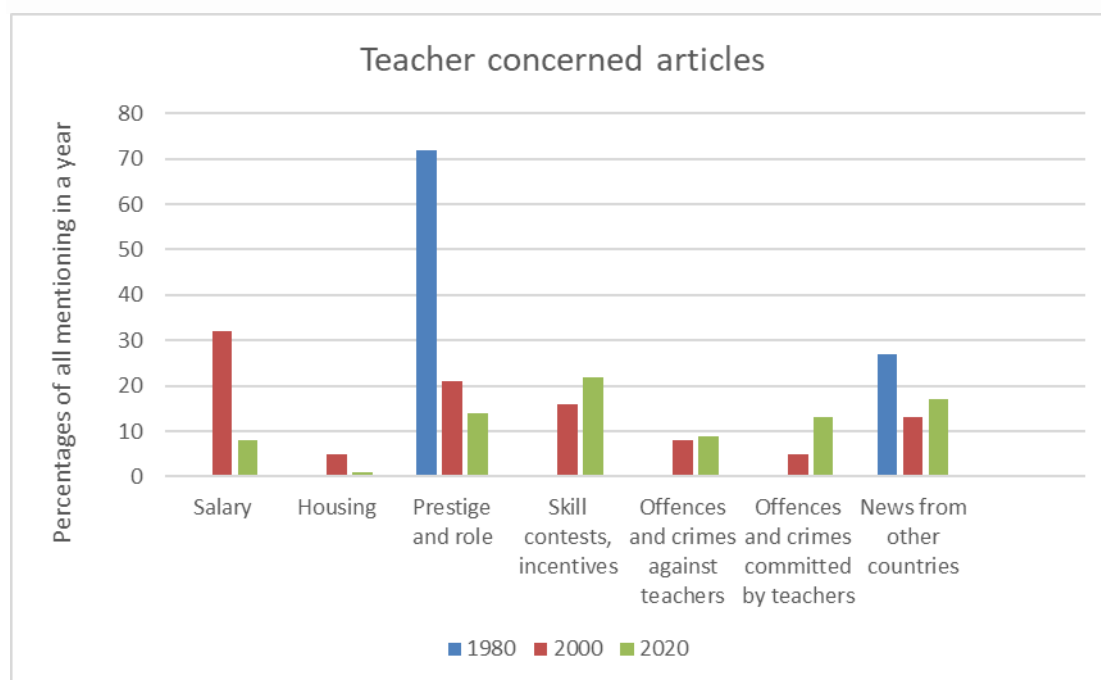


Fig. 4. Aggregate newspaper topics concerning teachers (1980 – 2000 – 2020)

According to the chart, there is four times decline of Salary and five times drop of Housing mentioning between 2000 and 2020. This is explained by the improvement of the economic situation in the country and the solving of major problems in these areas. Mentioning of Contests and incentives in the same periods increased from 16 up to 22 per cent. Talking about Crimes and offences we can see little difference between those committed against but sharp surge from five up to 13 per cent committed by teachers. Interestingly, in spite of the fact that the world communication nowadays has become borderless and it is possible to learn the news in almost every part of the planet in seconds, the percentage of News from other countries in 1980 is the highest with 27 compared with only 17 in 2020. The most striking result from the data is the dramatic dip of Prestige and role mentioning from 72 in 1980 to 14 per cent in 2020.

5. Conclusion

To sum up, we have comprehended the portrayal of schoolteachers by one of the most widely spread periodical in Russia in three different years. The evidence from this study demonstrates the transformation of the teacher representation by this newspaper in Russia. In 1980, in line with the government policy of that time, the teacher was not only a guide in the world of knowledge, but also a spiritual mentor of young people and a passionate advocate of communist ideals. The mission of the teacher was presented as responsible and multifaceted, respected and loved by people. Unfortunately, by 2000 the former prestige had been lost because of numerous housing problems and money troubles. Teachers were unable to earn enough money to keep their families

and instead of preparing for classes had to find other ways to survive. All these dealt a blow to teacher's prestige.

The most important change in teacher's image in 2020 was that they stopped being the only source of knowledge owing to the rapid increase of technologies. Students could find the necessary information and even get education via Internet and other sources. Moreover, often, teachers were not so good at using modern gadgets and applications as their trainees. Disappointingly, according to analytical center Avito Rabota, education continued to be one of the lowest-paid areas. Even though the government considered the work of Russian teachers vital to society, there were apparently not enough efforts to raise teachers' prestige in media.

The findings of this research concur well with other scholars' results, stating the predominating negative mass media attitude to schoolteachers. Newspapers provide information about practices at school, teachers' and students' activities but despite the possibility to reflect some positive and affirmative reports, media often plunge into negative, critical and oppressive discourse (Baroutsis, 2016). Such accounts portray schools as damaged and in a state of crisis that result in distrust from a part of students, parents, and society in general. Subsequently, societal distrust leads to more intensive scrutiny, enhanced accountability, increased workload, psychological and social tension. Meanwhile, we understand that some of the consequences may be ambiguous. For instance, enhanced accountability can make teachers' work more transparent and evident but at the same time it requires a huge amount of time and efforts diverting educators' endeavour from inspiring teaching process to administrative bureaucratic duties. And what is more dramatic, such accountability is aimed more at punishing or dismissing "bad" teachers instead of improving their practices (Baroutsis, 2016). Thus, media are considered to be a "watchdog" with a positive intent that happens to have detrimental effect sometimes.

Taken together, our findings suggest that there is still a lot to be done to improve the situation. Some solutions have already been suggested. For instance, researchers (Goldstein cited in Ulmer, 2016: 49; Thomas, 2015: 527) recommend educational researchers, firstly, to become more visible on the public arena and to make salient counterexamples and alternatives to widespread portrayal of schoolteachers. Secondly, they invite educators and the general audience to reveal the ways media use to frame education debates and shape public discourse. One more example is the suggestion for teachers to more actively speak up about complexities and challenges of the teaching profession to get wider coverage and better understanding of the peculiarities of their work from the part of the general public. We also believe that policymakers should encourage journalists to pay greater attention to the job of teachers to overcome ubiquitous stereotypes and enhance prestige of the profession.

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