

The New Face of Media in Post-Soviet Countries: an Empirical Study of the Perception of Journalism Students Towards Media in Kyrgyzstan

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ABSTRACT

The Mass Media is the most important public organiser as well as a source of active power not only in democratic environments but also in countries going through the process of democratisation. The collapse of the USSR revealed that the media was used by the political structure in the Soviet bloc as a means of propaganda at the service of existing economic and social policy structures. After the independence of these states, mass media changed for the purpose of informing and forming societies within a democratic frame, and now have an influence on societies that think and criticize. In other words we see the mass media, which not only has an important role in the interactive structure of informing the society but also being directed by society. In the two years of independence through late 1993, Kyrgyzstan's newspapers enjoyed the most freedom compared to any of the Central Asian nations. Newspapers were able to discuss issues of public interest closely, in spite of the power of a state censorship committee which required submission of materials in advance of publication. But since 1993, the government has moved to impose greater control over access to news and its production resources. Besides the attempts of the government to impose control over the media, the Kyrgyz media have begun to face and suffer many economic and technical problems, i.e. insufficient technical supplies; financial and modernisation problems in accordance with the demands of time and audience; and adaptation into the new order arising in the country. In light of the above mentioned problems, it is important to survey the outlook of journalism students – the potential employees of Kyrgyz media – and their perception of the media.

This paper identifies and questions the points of view of students enrolled in Kyrgyzstan's Journalism Faculties/Departments about the role of media in the development of democracy and the process of democratisation in their country. The problems of the Kyrgyz media – after the collapse of the Soviet Union – will be identified and questioned. A field survey was done among the students of all eight Journalism Departments/Faculties in the country.

Keywords: Perception of democracy, Kyrgyz media, journalism departments/faculties in Kyrgyzstan

1. INTRODUCTION

In modern democratic societies, the media reflect views, opinions and perceptions and influence views, opinions and perceptions (Lull, 2000: 165). According to Barr, contemporary

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research has found that “media remain central to most people’s lives ... next to sleep and work; our next most time-consuming activity is attending to media” (Barr, 2000:16).

One leading British media researcher concludes: “Today, popular media are obviously primary channels for the dissemination of prevailing discourses. . . . Information and ideas from the media do not merely reflect the social world, then, but contribute to its shape. . . .” (Gauntlett, 2002: 98). On a less dramatic daily level, mass media help shape brands and reputations; inform (or misinform) consumers about products; raise issues in public debate; and influence governments to change policy, regulate or legislate in certain areas (Media Content Analysis). With these points in mind, this article will provide information about Kyrgyz media and how their audiences, in the process of democratisation, accepts them and their role.

2. BRIEF HISTORY OF KYRGYZ MEDIA

Before Kyrgyzstan gained its independence, the 1924 Soviet policy mandated that news published in the Kyrgyz press be sent from Moscow and translated into the local language. In 1924, a ‘publishing house group’ was formed in Bishkek and worked to transmit all the publications to academies, institutes, workers and to the people. This policy was accepted to improve mass communication and to increase newspaper circulation. For all intents and purposes, the published news was processed according to the general policies of the USSR and reflected the viewpoint of the USSR. In the political and management dimension, the media were reduced to a role as assistant of the Communist party and its instrument (Kulikova and Ibraeva, 2002: 85).

During the Soviet era, the main owners and founders of the media were the Communist party and state bodies. The media were therefore reduced to a role as assistant of the Communist party and its instruments.

The first signal of change in the relations between the government and media in the entire Soviet region was the conflict at the end of the 1980s between Mikhail Gorbachev, who was ruling the republic and the newspaper *Argumenty i Fauty* . The conflict was initiated by the newspaper staff’s desire to be rid of the government’s surveillance and take the management of the newspaper into their own hands. For the first time in the history of the Soviet Union, the government was unable to suppress media resistance and the newspaper staff managed to protect their interest. The newspaper practically opened an effective mechanism of protection – privatisation through a joint-stock company. It was the beginning of the divorce of the other local daily newspapers. During this time new newspapers were not published but the newspaper staff obtained some freedom and started to change the style and format of their articles. But even those changes were achieved with incredible difficulty and effort. The system resisted even the smallest challenge to totalitarianism. The transformation of the media landscape began under these circumstances (Kulikova and Ibraeva, 2002: 85).

3. HISTORY OF THE INDEPENDENT KYRGYZ MEDIA

After independence and in keeping with the conversion of the economic structure from a protected socialist economy to a free market, sharp changes in the state, society and the

Kyrgyz media began to experience a radical change as well. Since independence, the media and media workers have gained liberty to express their opinions freely.

A new phase began. The pendulum moved to the other side and the communist media outlets were practically ousted. For quite a long period of time, the atmosphere in most media outlets of the country was of a transitional character. On the wave of discrediting everything Soviet and communist, a campaign was launched for media self-identification. For the first time journalists had an opportunity to be directly involved in everything relating to the functioning of their media (Kulikova and Ibraeva, 2002: 23).

But now, economic limitations and problems in the country and in the media have replaced the pressure of USSR policies on Kyrgyz media. Media are not used as the tool of Soviet propaganda any more but government attempts to control media, the lack of finance and the economic problems that are everywhere and in every area of the country prohibit the use of technological services and access to information sources.

Kulikova and Ibraeva, funded by the Swiss government and in association with CIMERA¹, have conducted the only detailed research about the current situation of mass media in Kyrgyzstan from the points of view of different media holders, journalists, and editors. Their study outlines the Kyrgyz media problems as follows:

1. Degree of government control over media
2. Absence of a tradition of professional freedom for journalists
3. Communication gap between official and unofficial channels of information
4. Absence of orientation towards commercial journalism
5. Resource poverty of journalism and institutionalisation
6. Absence of analytical systems in the society and state

According to Freedom House, which has been publishing annual reports on the status of freedom since 1972, evaluating each country on two dimensions (political rights and civil freedoms), Kyrgyzstan was considered to be the “island of democracy” in Central Asia (www.freedomhouse.org).

The 10 years of existence of the mass media system in independent Kyrgyzstan was marked by frequent changes in the relationship between the media and the central power: the period of love and mutual adoration was replaced by a period of coolness and even opposition. In the end, realising the uselessness of open repressive actions and measures against media and the danger of such actions in terms of undermining an already shaken and fading image of a democratic state, the government decided that it was much easier to control the media by subordinating it “from inside”, with the help of the economic mechanism of ownership. Understanding the importance of mass media not only as the “carrier of messages for the masses” but also as a potentially profit-making business and having taken a number of actions and steps for redistribution of ownership of the major media for its own benefit, the government now possesses effective economic instruments for controlling the flow of information (Kulikova and Ibraeva, 2002: 36).

¹ CIMERA is a Geneva-based, private, non-profit organisation founded in 2001 and specialises in political governance in these fields: Inclusion of Minorities, Women Participation, Language Policy and Education, Media and Access to Information, Migration and Trafficking, and Conflict Transformation.

The government and its institutions have managed to limit the media claims for power with the help of various forms of political and economic harassment such as searches and arrests for carrying out professional activities, imposition of fines and numerous financial inspections as well as suspension of printing. Attacks on journalists were also a means of suppression. Between 2007 and 2008, 14 journalists were attacked and even killed. The journalists who managed to survive soon left the country. At the beginning of 2009, two journalists, one in Osh (a city in the south of the country) and the other in Bishkek were murdered (interview with journalist Bakýt Orunbekov, 18 March 2009). This is a big threat to media, journalists and the freedom of expression.

Another important intimidation used by the ‘power holders’ is the tax and financial inspections on media. Advertising, sales and subscriptions are the main limited sources of the media but are insufficient when compared to expenses like production costs, salaries, trips, and payment for information sources (major information sources: local news agencies such as Kabar, Aki-Press, IWPR and international information agencies such as Interfax, TASS, Associated Press, and Reuters).

Corruption is a major problem in the country. Corruption is everywhere, even in the media. This problem has emerged as a solution for media outlets. For example, media have begun to ask for money from businesses, when they send press releases for publication.

Another striking problem identified by Kyrgyz journalists and media managers is the distribution of media products. “The monopoly of the state distribution system, Soyuzpechat (Kyrgyzbasmasoz) is falling apart, and distribution of newspapers is undertaken by unemployed citizens” (Kulikova and Ibraeva, 2002: 105). While this is a new employment opportunity, it is only effective in the capital city.

While publishing technologies around the world have been improving, print technology in Kyrgyzstan still remains as it was during the Soviet period. Print technology in the country – both in the capital city and the regions – is not only old but still remains mainly in the hands of the state as well. “The limited private printing companies in the country do not have special equipment for producing multiple copies of newspapers. Besides, the capacities of all existing polygraph companies are very limited. A more modern and high quality printing equipment are for the most part unaffordable. Neither are they rational for use since the costs of such high-quality production will be prohibitively high for newspaper readers.” According to the research of Kulikova & Ibraeva, the editors and journalists identified printing services as among the most important problems faced by media (2002: 103 – 104).

Since independence, the mass media of Kyrgyzstan has been regulated by Constitutional Law (the right to freedom of media, freedom of expression), Labour Law (The Law of Protection of Journalism Functions, 5 December 1997), Mass Communication Law, KTR Law (Kyrgyz National Television), The Principles of Broadcasting, The Ethic Codes of Journalists (12 August, 2007). The media law, adopted in 1992, was updated in the following years.

Today, many newspapers are published weekly or bi-weekly, except *Vecherny Bishkek*, the country’s only daily newspaper, which is published 5 times a week in the Russian language. While the circulation of *Vecherny Bishkek* on weekdays is around 10,000, on Fridays, it is around 80,000. The capital city is also the media capital. There are remarkable

regional printing and electronic (audiovisual) media as well, but they have important technical and economic problems. The newspapers are mainly published in Kyrgyz or in Russian, besides some reports in ethnic minority languages, bi-lingual (Kyrgyz and Russian), and in English. Media owners are state structures, joint-stock companies, private individuals, and non-profit organisations.

4. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

There is only one detailed report that has been produced to figure out the problems of Kyrgyz media and Kyrgyz media workers. But even that document concerns only the media workers' outlook, not that of the journalism students who are potential Kyrgyz media personnel. The present study aims to point out the role of the Kyrgyz media in Kyrgyz democracy, its role in democratic processes, press freedom, and the problems of media from the point of view of journalism students. The research also aims to identify what the potential journalists think are the major problems of the media. This study considers responses from eight journalism faculties/departments in the capital city of Bishkek. They are:

1. AUCA – The Central Asian American University, Journalism and Mass Communication Department
2. BGU – Bishkek Humanitarian University, Journalism Faculty
3. Kyrgyz National University, Journalism Faculty
4. Arabaev State University, Journalism Faculty
5. Kyrgyz Technical University, Economic Journalism Department
6. Kyrgyz Kuwait University, Journalism Faculty
7. Kyrgyz – Slavian (Russian) University, International Journalism Department
8. KTMU – Kyrgyz–Turkish Manas University, Communication Faculty, Journalism Department

5. JOURNALISM FACULTIES/DEPARTMENTS OF UNIVERSITIES IN BISHKEK

In Kyrgyzstan there are ten Journalism faculties/departments; eight are located in the capital city of Bishkek, and two are in Osh, the south of the country. Every faculty/department has its own student profile and population. Kyrgyz National University is one of the oldest universities in Kyrgyzstan and has the largest student population. The Journalism Faculty had been the oldest and the only journalism faculty of Kyrgyzstan (since the time of the Soviet Union – 1956) until the Journalism and Mass Communication programme of AUCA began in 1995. Bishkek Humanitarian University is another of the oldest and largest universities in the country. The lessons in AUCA are in English while instruction at KTMU is in Turkish and Kyrgyz languages. The Slavian University teaches in Russian. Lessons are taught in Arabic and Kyrgyz languages at Kuwait University. The National University also instructs in Russian and Kyrgyz languages. The mode of instruction in BGU, Technical University and Arabaev Universities is mainly in Kyrgyz.

5.1 Kyrgyz National University, Journalism Faculty

The Journalism Faculty of the University accepted its first class in 1956. Until 1995 it was the only journalism faculty in the country. Today, the faculty has three specialist programmes: Journalism, Advertisement and Public Relations. In the first two years, the students receive general education and after the third year, they begin to study the courses based on their specialist programmes. The languages of the faculty are Kyrgyz and Russian. The journalism programme also offers postgraduate education.

The education system of the university and the journalism faculty has been standardised based on the standards of the Ministry of Education. Today, the university is adapting itself to the Bologna system. Most of the students are promoted according to a credit system.

The university has exchange agreements with many foreign universities. According to these agreements, the students can continue their education abroad, and the university accepts students from Russia, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, China, Turkey, Korea, Iran, India, Pakistan, etc.

5.2 Bishkek Humanitarian University Journalism Faculty (BGU)

Bishkek Social Sciences University (BGU-Bishkek Humanitarian University) was founded as the Russian Language and Literature Frunze State Pedagogical Institute in 1979. In 1992, the name of the university changed to Social Sciences and Languages Institute before becoming Bishkek Social Sciences (Humanitarian) University in 1994. Courses are taught in 14 languages at the university. Students have the opportunity to learn European and Eastern languages. The BGU Journalism faculty was opened in 1999 and today offers courses in journalism, public relations, history and librarianship specialties. The courses are taught in Kyrgyz and Russian.

5.3 Arabaev State University, Journalism Faculty

The University was established in 1949 as the Women's Pedagogical School. In October 1950, the school's statute was changed and became known as the Women's Teaching Institute. In 1994, the Institute underwent a name change to I. Arabaev Pedagogical University and finally in 2005, it became the Kyrgyz National University. There are 16 Bachelor of Arts programmes, 50 specialist education programmes, 12 Master programmes, and 38 Ph.D programmes. The School of Public Relations opened in 2007. Some of the lecturers of the university have been educated in Russia.

5.4 Kyrgyz Technical University, Economical Journalism Department

The department was opened in 1998. The department offers its courses in Kyrgyz and the Russian languages.

5.5 Kyrgyz – Kuwait University (Mahmut Kashgar Eastern University), Journalism Department

The university was established in 1999. The mode of of instruction in the department is in Kyrgyz and Arabic.

5.6 Kyrgyz – Slavian University, International Journalism Department

Kyrgyz - Slavian University (Russian University) Journalism department began in 1998. The department's curriculum is based on the Russian and Kyrgyz education standards. The department's curriculum concerns television journalism, radio journalism, international journalism, mass communication technologies, journalism sociology, journalism psychology and advertisement.

5.7 AUCA – The Central Asian American University, Journalism and Mass Communication Department

The Journalism and Mass Communication programme began in 1995. Between 2000 and 2002, AUCA made some changes to its programme. Since 2003 public relations education has also been available. The language of the department and the university is English.

5.8 KTMU – Kyrgyz-Turkish Manas University, Faculty of Communication

The university was founded in accordance with an agreement signed on September 30, 1995 between the government of the Turkish Republic and that of the Kyrgyz Republic. The Faculty of Communication was opened in the 1999 – 2000 academic year. The faculty has three departments: Journalism, Public Relations and Advertisement, and Radio, TV and Cinema. The faculty registers citizens of Kyrgyzstan and the Republic of Turkey, and the youth from other Turkic and relative communities. Both Kyrgyz and Turkish are the languages of instruction at the university; students who are accepted into the department have to learn these languages in the first year of study. Besides, during the education process, the students learn advanced Russian and English as elective courses.

6. METHODOLOGY

We initiated our investigation with the students of the Communication Faculty of Kyrgyz – Turkish Manas University. The results were presented in an international symposium and published. To ensure the reliability of the research, a 'control group' was established with the participation of students from outside the Communication Faculty (specifically from the Economics and Administrative Sciences Faculty and the Faculty of Science and Letters at the same university).

The same research method and questionnaire was applied to 495 journalism faculties/ departments' students in Bishkek. A purposive sampling method was used.

The first 6 questions served to determine the demographic characteristics of the students such as gender, faculty, semester, nationality, and regions.

The next 22 items such as 'All citizens in Kyrgyzstan have equal access to government services like education, health', 'In Kyrgyzstan, the education system is fair', 'In Kyrgyzstan journalists can report independently and spontaneously about every subject they want', 'In Kyrgyzstan, media criticize the government easily', 'Media in Kyrgyzstan are reliable', and so on were directed at getting the points of view of students about democracy in Kyrgyzstan and the role of Kyrgyz media in the development of democracy in their country. The responses were scaled on a 1 to 5 Likert scale with:

1. = Strongly disagree

- 2. = Disagree
- 3. = Undecided
- 4. = Agree
- 5. = Strongly agree

The data was processed using frequency analysis, cross tabs, and one-way ANOVA. The questions for analysis were:

1. What is the perception of democracy in Kyrgyzstan among the journalism students?
2. Is there a significant relationship between the faculty and the perception of democracy in Kyrgyzstan?
3. Is there a significant relationship between the respondent's nationality and the perception of democracy in Kyrgyzstan?
4. What is the perception of the Kyrgyzstan media's reliability when controlled for a respondent's area of study?
5. Do journalists in Kyrgyzstan report independently and spontaneously on every subject they wish?
6. Do the media in Kyrgyzstan easily criticize the government?

7. FINDINGS

The reliability analysis for the study:

Number of cases	467
Number of items	22
Alpha	.8368

7.1 Characteristics of Respondents

7.1.1 Distribution of Respondents by Gender:

There was a preponderance of female students with 70.1 % being female (347 students) and 29.9 % being male (148 students).

Table 1. Percentage of distribution of the respondents by faculty

	Frequency	%
Kyrgyz-Turkish Univ. (KTMU)	214	43.2
American Univ. (AUCA)	18	3.6
Humanitarian Univ (BGU)	73	14.7
National University	70	14.1
Russian (Slavian) University	47	9.5
Technical University	42	8.5
Arabaev University	13	2.6
Kyrgyz-Kuwait University	18	3.6
Total	495	100.0

7.1.2 Age

The students were aged between 17 and 28 with 320 students (64, 6%) being between the ages of 17 and 20, while 165 students (33, 3%) were between 21 and 24, and 2% between 25 – 28 ages.

7.1.3 Grades (Semesters)

First grade students constituted 179 students (36.2%), second grade 100 students (20, 2%) third grade being 118 (23.8%) and last grade (4th year) students constituting 97 students (19. 6%) . One response was missing.

7.1.4 Ethnicity

The majority(62. 0 %; 307 students) of the respondents were Kyrgyz students while 6. 1 % were Turkish (30 students), and 18. 4 % (91 students) were Russian. Other nationalities constituted 13. 5 % of the respondents (67 students). The rest consisted of Uzbek, Kazakh, Uyгур, German, Tajik, Tatar, Mongol, Altai, Azeri, Korean, Chechen etc.

7.2 Region

There are 7 regions in Kyrgyzstan. The capital city Bishkek is in the Chu region. Approximately half of the respondents (242 students) were from Chu. The rest of the students were from the other regions of Kyrgyzstan.

Table 2 shows the frequency test of questions 22, 23, and 24. Of the 495 students, 213 disagreed that media in Kyrgyzstan criticize the government easily. Only 89 students agreed that media in Kyrgyzstan criticize the government easily.

Table 3 presents the Anova results of the same questions (Q22, Q23, Q24). As seen in Table 3, a significant difference was not observed between these three items and faculty, but it can be said that there is tendency between faculty and the item ‘In Kyrgyzstan,

Table 2. Frequency test of responses on statements Q22, Q23, and Q24

	In Kyrgyzstan journalists can report independently and spontaneously about every subject they want (Q22)		In Kyrgyzstan media criticize the government easily (Q23)		Media in Kyrgyzstan are reliable (Q24)	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Strongly disagree	104	21.0	124	25.1	74	14.9
Disagree	224	45.3	213	43.0	234	47.3
Undecided	42	8.5	54	10.9	133	26.9
Agree	102	20.6	89	18.0	47	9.5
Strongly agree	21	4.2	13	2.6	4	0.8
Total	493	99.6	493	99.6	492	99.4
Missing responses	2	0.4	2	0.4	3	0.6
Total	495	100.0	495	100.0	495	100.0

Table 3. Anova results of responses on statements Q22, Q23, and Q24

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
In Kyrgyzstan journalists can report independently and spontaneously about every subject they want (Q22)	Between Groups	26.268	7	3.753	2.882	.006
	Within Groups	631.488	485	1,302		
	Group Total	657.757	492			
In Kyrgyzstan media criticize the government easily (Q23)	Between Groups	15.820	7	2.260	1.854	.075
	Within Groups	591.348	485	1.219		
	Group Total	607.168	492			
Media in Kyrgyzstan are reliable (Q24)	Between Group	11.848	7	1.693	2.252	.029
	Within Groups	363.817	484	.752		
	Group Total	375.665	491			
TOTAL	Between Groups	4044.464	7	577.781	5.362	.000
	Within Groups	49461.913	459	107.760		
	Group Total	53506.377	466			

journalists can report independently and spontaneously about every subject they want' ($p = .006$) at the level $p < .005$.

Based on Table 4 which shows the cross-tabulations (faculty and the Kyrgyzstan media's reliability), 234 students of 495 (47, 3%) disagree that media in Kyrgyzstan are reliable. According to gender and faculty cross-tabulations, 175 female and 59 male share this idea. Of the 133 respondents who were undecided if media in Kyrgyzstan are reliable, 88 were female while 45 were male.

According to analysis of variance, there was no significant difference between grades and the perception of democracy, except for item 16 ($p = .001 < .005$); which was 'In Kyrgyzstan, everyone can establish an organisation freely and can join the decision making process in politics through these organisations'. Table 5 presents descriptive indicators and Anova results of grades. While the first year students have a lower mean than the last grade students (Mean: 2.66), they begin to be more acceptable during their last grades (Mean: 3.11).

Based on the variance analysis, there is a meaningful difference between the faculty and the perception of democracy (Tables 6 and 7) in the items, 'In Kyrgyzstan, the education system is fair', 'In Kyrgyzstan everyone has recourse to the law', 'In Kyrgyzstan, everyone

Table 4. Cross-tabulation of faculty and the statement ‘Media in Kyrgyzstan are reliable’ (Q24)

	Missing response	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly agree	Total
Kyrgyz-Turkish Univ. (KTMU)	3	36	103	56	16		214
American Univ. (AUCA)		1	11	5	1		18
Humanitarian Univ (BGU)		6	30	25	10	2	73
National Uni.		11	34	20	4	1	70
Russian (Slavian) Univ.		9	22	13	3		47
Technical Univ.		7	22	6	6	1	42
Arabaev Univ.		1	7	5			13
Kyrgyz-Kuwait Univ.		3	5	3	7		18
Total	3	74	234	133	47	4	495

Table 5. Descriptive statistics and Anova results on question ‘In Kyrgyzstan, everyone can establish an organisation freely and can join the decision making process in politics through these organizations’ based on student grades

Class	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Anova Results	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound	F	Sig.
1.00	179	2.6648	1.0219	7.638E-02	2.5141	2.8155	11.915	.001
4.00	96	3.1146	1.0450	.1067	2.028	3.3263		
Total	275	2.8218	1.0503	6.334E-02	2.6971	2.9465		

can establish an organisation freely and can join the decision making process in politics through these organisations’, ‘In Kyrgyzstan, everyone pays his/her own taxes exactly and on time’, ‘In Kyrgyzstan, the education programme is unique and decided by the government’, ‘In Kyrgyzstan, women are as active in politics as men’, ‘In Kyrgyzstan, there is no difficulty of being elected to any rank in the government’, ‘In Kyrgyzsta, journalists can report independently and spontaneously about every subject they want’, and ‘In Kyrgyzstan, whoever breaks the law is judged in court’. The statement, ‘The education system in Kyrgyzstan is fair’ had almost a close mean (2. 00 and 2. 06) between American

Table 6. Descriptive statistics on statement ‘In Kyrgyzstan, the education system is fair’ (Q9) based on faculties

	N	Mean	Std. deviation	Std. error	95% – Confidence interval for mean		Min.	Max.
					Lower bound	Upper bound		
KTMU	187	54.5348	10.1151	.7397	53.0755	55.9940	30.00	88.00
AUCA	17	51.6471	11.2302	2.7237	45.8730	57.4211	29.00	69.00
BGU	73	60.6438	10.9613	1.2829	58.0864	63.2013	35.00	83.00
NATIONAL	70	54.7429	11.0121	1.3162	52.1171	57.3686	30.00	81.00
RUSSIAN	47	50.1915	10.4271	1.5209	47.1300	53.2530	30.00	78.00
TECHNICAL	42	53.2381	9.9187	1.5305	50.1472	56.3290	37.00	71.00
ARABAEV	13	59.0000	5.9582	1.6525	55.3995	62.6005	48.00	67.00
KUWAIT	18	56.8333	10.6674	2.5143	51.5285	62.1381	35.00	78.00
Total	467	55.0749	10.7154	.4959	54.1006	56.0493	29.00	88.00

University and Russian University, $p < .005$ ($.002 < .005$), showing the tendency that it is not fair. Besides, according to the total data, there is a meaningful difference ($p = .000 < .005$) among the faculties. While the means of American University and Slavian (Russian) University show a close tendency, Kyrgyz - Turkish University and National University have approximately the same means (54.53 and 54.74). Students of BGU and Arabaev University show a strong tendency towards the statement that the education system in Kyrgyzstan is fair. The significance of the scale is given in Table 6.

According to the one way Anova (Tables 8 and 9), it is seen that except the statements ‘All citizens in Kyrgyzstan have equal access to government services like education, health’ and ‘In Kyrgyzstan, journalists can easily criticize the practices of the state expansions’, the total and the other all items have a meaningful difference between ethnicity and the perception of democracy in Kyrgyzstan. While the Turks (mean: 2.00) and Russians (2.13) negatively polarise their evaluations, the Kyrgyz (mean: 2.50) and the other ethnicities’ (mainly the ex-Soviet Union countries) (2.59) evaluations are relatively positive in the item ‘In Kyrgyzstan journalists can report independently and spontaneously about every subject they want’ ($F(3-489) = .006$).

7.3 Important Problems of Media

The same research has engaged the idea of the problems of media as assessed by the students (Table 10). Based on the first 3 choices of the respondents, the most important problem of Kyrgyz media mentioned is the lack of qualified journalists (56.6%). It is followed by low salaries (52.7%) and clash of interests (38.6%).

Table 7. Anova results on some statements based on faculties

		Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	Sig.
In Kyrgyzstan, the education system is fair	Between Groups	31.075	7	4.439	3.332	.002
	Within Groups	647.565	486	1.332		
	Total	678.640	493			
In Kyrgyzstan, people in public management do not use power in solving problems	Between Groups	14.701	7	2.100	2.541	.014
	Within Groups	400.006	484	.826		
	Total	414.707	491			
In Kyrgyzstan, everyone is judged fairly	Between Groups	28.241	7	4.034	2.464	.017
	Within Groups	797.375	487	1.637		
	Total	825.616	494			
In Kyrgyzstan everyone has recourse to the law	Between Groups	53,434	7	7.633	6.531	.000
	Within Groups	566,846	485	1.169		
	Total	620,280	492			
In Kyrgyzstan, everyone can establish an organization freely and can join the decision making process in politics through these organisations	Between Groups	22.081	7	3.154	3.144	.003
	Within Groups	485.594	484	1.003		
	Total	507.675	491			
In Kyrgyzstan, everyone pays his/her own taxes exactly and on time	Between Groups	68.708	7	9.815	13.246	.000
	Within Groups	359.397	485	.741		
	Total	428.105	492			
In Kyrgyzstan, the education programme is unique and decided by the government	Between Groups	17.055	7	2.436	3.196	.003
	Within Groups	367.413	482	.762		
	Total	384.467	489			
In Kyrgyzstan, women are as active in politics as men	Between Groups	28.834	7	4.119	2.915	.005
	Within Groups	686.763	486	1.413		
	Total	715.597	493			
In Kyrgyzstan, there is no difficulty to be elected for any rank in the government	Between Groups	23.256	7	3,322	3,372	.002
	Within Groups	476.907	484	.985		
	Total	500.163	491			
In Kyrgyzstan, journalists can report independently spontaneously about every subject they want	Between Groups	26.268	7	3.753	2.882	.006
	Within Groups	631.488	485	1.302		
	Total	657.757	492			

Table 7. Continued

Table 7. (continued)

In Kyrgyzstan, journalists can easily criticize the practices of the state expansions	Between Groups	15.820	7	2.260	1.854	.075
	Within Groups	591.348	485	1.219		
	Total	607.168	492			
Media in Kyrgyzstan are reliable	Between Groups	11.848	7	1.693	2.252	.029
	Within Groups	363.817	484	.752		
	Total	375.665	491			
In Kyrgyzstan, whoever breaks the law is judged in court	Between Groups	18.438	7	2.634	2.750	.008
	Within Groups	466.378	487	.958		
	Total	484.816	494			
In Kyrgyzstan, media can easily express their opinions about political mistakes or negativity	Between Groups	18.820	7	2.689	2.527	.015
	Within Groups	518.081	487	1.064		
	Total	536.901	494			
In Kyrgyzstan, media are strictly free	Between Groups	14.277	7	2.040	2.342	.023
	Within Groups	424.160	487	.871		
	Total	438.436	494			
TOTAL	Between Groups	4044.464	7	577.781	5.362	.000
	Within Groups	49461.913	459	107.760		
	Total	53506.377	466			

8. RESULTS

Based on the data received:

- Respondents believe in the importance and independence of media for democracies. But unfortunately, the same respondents also declare that journalists in Kyrgyzstan are not independent and do not criticize the government easily.
- Just over 62% of the total respondents (308 students) think the Kyrgyz media is reliable (people trust the media in Kyrgyzstan), while 10.3% (51 students) think otherwise. But according to one way Anova test, at level .005, there is no significant difference between the reliability of Kyrgyzstan media and faculty ($p = .029$). But we can say that there is tendency between them.
 - Including strongly disagree and disagree responses, while 337 students (68.1%) believe that media in Kyrgyzstan criticize the government easily; 102 students (20, 6%) agree and strongly agree with the statement.
 - Some 66.3% of the total respondents strongly disagree and disagree that journalists in Kyrgyzstan report independently and spontaneously about every subject they want, while 24.8% agree and strongly agree. While Turks and Russians negatively polarise their evaluations, Kyrgyz and other ethnicities' (mainly the ex-Soviet Union countries) evaluations are relatively positive.

Table 8. One-way Anova results on some statements based on ethnicity

		Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	Sig.
In Kyrgyzstan, people in public management do not use power in solving problems	Between Groups	19.727	3	6.576	8.124	.000
	Within Groups	394.980	488	.809		
	Total	414.707	491			
In Kyrgyzstan, everyone is judged fairly	Between Groups	30.122	3	10.041	6.197	.000
	Within Groups	795.494	491	1.620		
	Total	825.616	494			
In Kyrgyzstan, the sentences are strictly executed	Between Groups	15.388	3	5.129	6.357	.000
	Within Groups	395.367	490	.807		
	Total	410.755	493			
In Kyrgyzstan, everyone has recourse to the law	Between Groups	45.744	3	15.248	12.978	.000
	Within Groups	574.536	489	1.175		
	Total	620.280	492			
In Kyrgyzstan, everyone pays his/her own taxes exactly and on time	Between Groups	18.219	3	6.073	7.245	.000
	Within Groups	409.886	489	.838		
	Total	428.105	492			
In Kyrgyzstan, the education programme is unique and decided by the government	Between Groups	16.031	3	5.344	7.049	.000
	Within Groups	368.436	486	.758		
	Total	384.467	489			
In Kyrgyzstan, women are as active in politics as men	Between Groups	15.032	3	5.011	3.505	.015
	Within Groups	700.565	490	1.430		
	Total	715.597	493			
In Kyrgyzstan, there is no difficulty to be elected for any rank in the government	Between Groups	19.847	3	6.616	6,721	,000
	Within Groups	480.316	488	.984		
	Total	500.163	491			
In Kyrgyzstan, journalists can report independently and spontaneously about every subject they want	Between Groups	16.720	3	5.573	4.251	.006
	Within Groups	641.037	489	1.311		
	Total	657.757	492			
TOTAL	Between Groups	3811.775	3	1270.592	11.838	.000
	Within Groups	49694.602	463	107.332		
	Total	53506.377	466			

Table 9. Descriptive statistics on statement 'In Kyrgyzstan journalist can report independently and spontaneously about every subject they want' (Q22), based on ethnicity

	N	Mean	Std.	Std. deviation	95% Error interval for mean		Min. confidence	Max.
					Lower bound	Upper bound		
					TURKS	25		
KYRGYZ	290	57.0655	10.5650	.6204	55.8444	58.2866	29.00	83.00
RUSSIAN	90	50.4000	9.1674	.9663	48.4799	52.3201	30.00	72.00
OTHERS	62	54.6613	10.5581	1.3409	51.9800	57.3425	35.00	88.00
TOTAL	467	55.0749	10.7154	.4959	54.1006	56.0493	29.00	88.00

Table 10. The most important problems of Kyrgyz media

	I		II		III		IV	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
1 st choice	143	28.9	87	17.6	97	19.6	51	10.3
2 nd choice	78	15.8	93	18.8	50	10.1	62	12.5
3 rd choice	59	11.9	81	16.4	44	8.9	75	15.2
Total	280	56.6	261	52.7	191	38.6	188	38.0
Missing System	215	43.4	234	47.3	304	61.4	307	62.0
Total	495	100.0	495	100.0	495	100.0	495	100.0

I Lack of qualified journalists

II Low salaries

III Clash of interests

IV Management problems

- According to the respondents, the most important problem of media is mentioned as the lack of qualified journalists (56, 6%). This view is followed by low salaries (52, 7%), conflict of interests (38, 6%) and management problems (38%).
- In total, there is a significant relation between the faculty and the perception of democracy in Kyrgyzstan ($p = .000 < .005$).
- There is a significant relationship between ethnicity ($p = .000$) and respondents' perception of democracy in Kyrgyzstan while there is no significant relation between grades (semesters) and perception of democracy in Kyrgyzstan.

9. CONCLUSION

According to the research carried out by Kulikova and Ibraeva (The Situation of Mass Media in Kyrgyzstan, 2002), the main problems of Kyrgyz media are emphasised as:

- Degree of government control over media
- Absence of tradition of professional freedom for journalists
- Communication gap between official and unofficial channels of information
- Absence of orientation towards commercial journalism
- Resource poverty of journalism and institutionalisation
- Absence of analytical systems in the society and state

According to the field survey, the outlook of journalism students – the potential employees of Kyrgyz media – the main problem of Kyrgyz media has been mentioned as the lack of qualified journalists (56.6%). It is followed by low salaries (52.7%), clash of interests (38.6%) and management problems (38%).

There is a significant relationship between faculties, ethnicities and their perception of democracy in Kyrgyzstan but no definite relationship could be found between gender, grades, and the perception of democracy. Considering ethnicity, students from the ex-Soviet Union countries are more agreeable while students from the Turkish University (KTMU) and Russian University are more critical. Besides, the American University and Russian University students are more critical, while the students at BGU, Arabaev, KTMU and National University, have close means in their evaluation of democracy in Kyrgyzstan and the role of media in a democracy.

In terms of perception of democracy and the role of media, students of KTMU and the Russian University are more critical than the students of Kyrgyz National University and BGU. Also, there is no definite relationship between gender and perception of the Kyrgyz media's reliability.

For the future of media and democracy in Kyrgyzstan, it is important to see and consider the points of view of the journalism students. In general, according to the data, it is meaningful that the journalism students criticize the current media and its role in the democracy of Kyrgyzstan. But above all these issues, the question is: 'how will these young people be affected and react in future when they find themselves in administrative positions in the media?'

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Interview with journalist Bakýt Orunbekov on 18.03.2009.

www.freedomhouse.org (http://www.cimera.org/en/about/ind_about.htm)

Appendix 1: Questionnaire

Q1. Age

Q2. Sex

Q3. University/Faculty/Department

Q4. Class

Q5. Nationality

Q6. Region 1. Osh 2. Talas 3. Batken 4. Chui 5. Jalal Abad 6. Issyk Kul
7. Naryn

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
Q7. All citizens in Kyrgyzstan have equal access to government services like education and health.					
Q8. In Kyrgyzstan, everyone has right to express independently his/her idea about the politics.					
Q9. In Kyrgyzstan, the education system is fair.					
Q10. In Kyrgyzstan, people in public management do not use power in solving problems.					
Q11. In Kyrgyzstan, everyone is judged fairly.					
Q12. In Kyrgyzstan, everyone trusts court decisions.					
Q13. In Kyrgyzstan, the sentences are strictly executed.					

continued on next page

Appendix 1. Continued

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
Q14. In Kyrgyzstan, everyone has recourse to the law.					
Q15. In Kyrgyzstan, politicians consult NGOs.					
Q16. In Kyrgyzstan, everyone can establish an organisation freely and can join the decision making process in politics through these organisations.					
Q17. In Kyrgyzstan, there is no obstacle to free speech.					
Q18. In Kyrgyzstan, everyone pays his/her own taxes exactly and on time.					
Q19. In Kyrgyzstan, the education programme is unique and decided by the government.					
Q20. In Kyrgyzstan, woman are as active in politics as men.					
Q21. In Kyrgyzstan, there is no difficulty to be elected for any rank in the government.					
Q22. In Kyrgyzstan, journalists can report independently and spontaneously about every subject they want.					
Q23. In Kyrgyzstan, media criticize the government easily.					
Q24. Media in Kyrgyzstan are reliable.					

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
Q25. In Kyrgyzstan, whoever breaks the law is judged in court.					
Q26. In Kyrgyzstan, media can easily express their opinions about political mistakes or negativity.					
Q27. There is no corruption in Kyrgyzstan.					
Q28. In Kyrgyzstan, media are strictly free.					
