

Foreword

The Role and Responsibility of the Radio Journalist

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At the DW-AKADEMIE, we think the media should be the *fourth power* in a country or nation. A power which checks and counterbalances the three state *powers* executive, legislature and judiciary. Consequently, journalists who work in radio or television, in online departments or in the printed press, first and foremost have an obligation to the public, to their audience. It is on its behalf and in its mandate that journalists do their daily work.

Journalists have to watch the activities of those in power closely and constantly. And they have to report to the public what they've observed and researched. If journalists discover wrongdoings, they have to publicize these transgressions and demand that they be set right. Journalists are a corrective power – and more.

Journalists have to inform, educate and entertain the public. Informing the audience without being boring means presenting information in a way that anyone can digest. And that automatically entails the danger of being shallow and superficial.

There are countless commercial radio and television stations all over the world – in all the countries where governments have legalized private radio and TV. If you look at the sheer number of commercial stations, there is surely no shortage. But if you take a closer look at the quality of their reporting, the picture dims. Many of these stations broadcast programmes that are only meant to entertain. They totally disregard the role of the media as a *fourth power* that serves the public.

In Germany, public service broadcasters have taken their mission to inform, control and entertain seriously ever since the founding of the Federal Republic of Germany

in 1949. In 1985, private radio and television were introduced in Germany to compete with the public service broadcasters. Many of the new private channels disappeared almost as fast as they arrived on the scene. And the ones that survived are stations which also see themselves as *advocates of the listeners*.

In a country where press freedom really exists – not just on paper - journalists can go about doing their job of reporting truthfully without fear. But in a large number of countries, radio and television are controlled by the state. The media in these countries are not politically independent. Ironically, most of these countries with state-censorship of the media nevertheless included a “freedom paragraph” in their constitutions.

Every year, a large number of journalists are killed in many countries while doing their job. At first sight, this seems to teach one clear lesson: If you want to survive and succeed in journalism, don't annoy those in power. Any journalist who has become an irritation runs the danger of being fired, demoted or worse yet: abducted, imprisoned or murdered.

The best safety shield that journalists can have is professional training. Only a journalist who knows how to process facts and information professionally has a chance of defending him- or herself if accused of false reporting. The journalistic craftsmanship must be flawless: thorough research, fair interviews, neutral and objective writing and accurate quotes. Unfortunately, there are no set rules or guidelines to tell journalists how far they can go with their reporting. That always depends on the situation and has to be judged individually.

As members of DW-AKADEMIE, we offer you our cooperation in making you even more professional and in fulfilling your role as a critical observer and advocate of the listener. We are willing to share our experience with you – experience, which we have gained in some forty years of developmental aid in the media sector. Your share in all of this, dear colleagues, is important. Through you, we have been able to connect with almost all countries of the world.

Connecting people is also one aim of this journalistic manual. It covers some of the most common forms of current affairs radio reporting, for example news, reports and interviews. Each chapter gives practical examples and hands-on advice.

We hope that this manual will help you in your daily work – long after the DW-RTC workshop you attended has ended. You can also find this manual on the DW-AKADEMIE website on the internet and download the individual chapters as pdf-files (www.dw-training.de).

We are well aware that nobody is perfect. And that is why we ask you to tell us whether you think this manual is useful and practical for you. What aspects of this manual did you like? Where do you think we should make changes? What additional chapters would you find interesting?

It is our goal to get better at what we are doing. But we can only reach that goal with your support.

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