Original Article

Communication between editors and reporters: Feedback and coaching in Estonian dailies' newsrooms

Signe Ivask
University of Tartu, Institute of Social Studies, ESTONIA

Abstract: The purpose of this study was to find out how much journalists receive and editors provide coaching and/or feedback and how. Empirical data were gathered by using a non-participant observation in a national daily newsroom and two participant observations in a national daily and in a local newspaper newsroom in Estonia – altogether 2 months and three days. The results showed that communication between experienced journalists and editors lacked constructive feedback and coaching. The editors tended to direct the work of a less experienced journalist; experienced journalists could work alone and decide independently how to solve situations within the news production process. All in all, not providing constructive feedback or coaching could have negative influences on journalists, especially when the working conditions are changing.

Keywords: journalist coaching; communication; content analysis; newsroom interactions; participant observation

Introduction

As many researchers have stated, journalism is "in a state of flux" (Preston, 2008; Spyridou et al., 2013; Hermida, 2010, etc). Occupational changes are occurring because of the crisis of media economics (Picard, 2006), convergence, new technologies, and media in the newsrooms (Bardoel & Deuze, 2001). These changes are also influencing "journalistic work process" (Picard, 2000: 100) and therefore the journalist as well.

Yet, norms and standards of the journalistic job (accuracy, objectivity, etc.) conflict with some of the new demands; for example, speedy reporting puts accuracy in danger (O'sullivan & Heinonen, 2008). Abandoning conventional norms and values of journalism has led to journalists describing their profession being precarious (Örnebring, 2018) and overall feeling dissatisfied with work (Reinardy, 2009).

Adapting is mostly left up to journalists, who might not understand the necessity of changes or could suffer from inadequate skills that are necessary for adapting (Spyridou et al., 2013). These problems have especially been connected to older, more experienced journalists,

who report feeling insecure at their job and unsuccessful in the job market (Davidson & Meyers, 2016; Ekdale et al., 2015; Clark & Fry, 2003). Job insecurity means that the employee does not feel confident about the future of their job (Cheng and Chan, 2008). Job security is supported by good organizational communication and high employee autonomy (Vander Elst, Baillien, Cuyper & de Witte, 2010).

Feeling insecure at a workplace could have a negative effect on the quality of work produced, creativity and courage to try out innovative ideas (Schreurs et al., 2012; Ekdale et al., 2015; Reich, 2013). This in turn means that adapting to the new demands is hindered. This instability and dissatisfaction with work could potentially have a couple of severe consequences – professional journalists resigning from the field, leaving the positions open for employees without an ethical compass, ability to sort out newsworthy topics, etc., and/or producing low quality content.

In the context of changes, new demands, and insecurity that occur in the profession and newsroom, this study aims to observe how much editors provide feedback and coaching, not only to younger, less experienced journalists, but to older, experienced journalists as well. As there is a lack of research about coaching and professional feedback inside of the newsroom, the theoretical part presents and analyzes coaching, different concepts of feedback, and the psychological reactions to them, as they help to explain the necessity of professional communication.

Coaching and feedback as resources

Feedback is a broad term. All in all, it could be said that feedback is "actions taken by (an) external agent(s) to provide information regarding some aspect(s) of one's task performance" (Kluger and DeNisi, 1996: 255). The information that is forwarded as feedback could be of different kind. Baron (1988) differentiated constructive and destructive feedback, saying that constructive feedback is a very detailed description of performance; it is also considerate of the external aspects that might have had influence on performance of the employee and values the effort the employee had put in. Destructive feedback, on the other hand, is carried out in an offensive tone and manner, does not take into account any external aspects, and primarily focuses on internal aspects. Comments made about the poor quality of performance are very general without any specific details (ibid). Due to the different content and aim of the feedback, the reaction of the employee differs as well.

While thought-through constructive feedback has the ability to direct the employees' capabilities and knowledge to where it is needed (Steelman & Rutkowski, 2004), destructive feedback could make the employee oppose changes, not agree with compromises, and could hinder self-development and efficiency (Baron, 1988; London, Larsen & Thisted, 1999). Constructive feedback makes the employee more efficient and thus more beneficial to the organization (Hattie & Timperley, 2007; Shute, 2008). Constructive feedback could help the journalist to find effective routines for producing quality content in the precarious settings, as in the converged newsrooms routines are yet to be developed (Ivask, 2019).

Another way to distinguish feedback is by its content: positive versus negative. This approach mostly relies on employees' perception of feedback. Negative feedback is not considered as accurate and acceptable by the employee as is positive feedback because it might conflict with self-generated feedback, which in turn puts one's ego in danger of being affected (Fedor et al., 2001). Employees with high self-esteem might ignore the negative feedback provided by a source that they do not view as an expert or who does not place higher in the newsroom hierarchy; when negative feedback is provided by a source that is an expert or higher in the hierarchy, individuals with high self-esteem might look at the feedback as authoritative

and/or credible, and they see the necessity to put in a greater effort to behave accordingly (ibid). All in all, negative as well as destructive feedback could cause similar negative reactions in employees.

According to the Job Demand and Resource (JD-R) model, feedback is one of the resources at a workplace. Feedback, social support, and supervised coaching are needed for self-growth, self-efficacy, and feeling motivated at work (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). Both the Conservation of Resources model (COR) and JD-R emphasize on the necessity of social support that could have a positive effect in diminishing the probability of burnout (Halbesleben & Buckley, 2004), which is especially beneficial for journalists, whose work is considered to be very stressful (e.g. Reinardy, 2009, 2011; Simpson & Boggs 1999; Himmelstein & Faithorn, 2002).

Good performance feedback assures the employee that the company values them; it also leads to high motivation and job satisfaction (Maertz Jr & Griffeth, 2004; Hanisch & Hulin, 1990). If the employee has the feeling of not being valued by the company and the feedback provided is perceived as negative and destructive, the employee might leave the company (Chen & Spector, 1992; Fitness, 2000). Overall, these trends are already happening: journalists, who are dissatisfied with demands and resources of the job, leave or consider leaving the field (Ivask, 2017).

In order to analyze more thorough the communication that could provide professional help or feedback to the employee, another concept is being analyzed in this article – coaching. People often confuse coaching with mentoring or use these terms synonymously, but they are not the same. The difference is that coaching is used as a tool for helping to learn rather than teach or direct; it requires expertise in the techniques of coaching. Mentoring, on the other hand, emphasizes passing down knowledge and skills from one individual to another (Whitmore, 2010).

The difference between providing feedback and coaching is that providing feedback means forwarding information about the performance that was carried out in the past, whereas coaching is helping to evolve and reflect on the process of working in real time without giving "right answers" to the employees. Rather, coaching provides tools for the coachee to find the answers. And although both practices provide information about the performance, coaching has longitudinal effect on the employee.

According to Gallwey (2001), coaching helps individuals to understand their capabilities and leads to practicing the capabilities to the fullest; coaching helps to improve the work performance of an individual and is therefore beneficial for the company. It has positive effects on "performance and skills, well-being, coping, work attitudes, and goal-directed self-regulation" (Theeboom et al., 2014: 12).

Coaching could act as a resource for both the journalist and the editor. This kind of communication leads to partnership and both sides knowing what each other's expectations are. For example, without knowing the progress of writing or newsgathering, the editor does not have a full certainty whether he receives the story in time to be able to edit it. This leads to suffering from negative stress and time-pressure. The people who suffer the most from stress in a newsroom are desk personnel, because they are the last ones to receive the articles, often very close to the deadline, so they have limited time to edit it (Ternes et al., 2017). And as younger journalists are in the midst of developing their skills, routines, and time management (Ivask et al., 2017), editors as coaches could be at hand to improve the work environment and the capability to overcome difficulties.

Although feedback from the audience has offered more interest to researchers (e.g. Bruns, 2011), feedback and coaching provided inside of the newsroom by employees are scarcely covered by researchers. One small-scale research project carried out about coaching among journalism students provides results that the approach helped to improve their stories

(McKeen & Bleske, 1992). Clark and Fry (1992 & 2003) explain that coaching could help to improve journalists' skills so that the editor does not have to work on editing the news as much. Only editing the text and paying attention to mistakes could lead to the reporter wanting to oppose the editor; coaching could make the journalist and editor feel more like partners, not just like a supervisor and an employee (ibid).

One of the biggest research projects that included questions about feedback was a MediaAct survey. The sample of the survey consisted of 1762 journalists from 12 European and two Arab countries. The results showed that journalists admitted to seldomly receiving feedback. To be more precise, the results indicated that Estonian journalists were the least critical towards each other's work (Lauk et al., 2014). The small size of Estonian journalists' community makes criticizing or giving feedback to a friend or an acquaintance difficult (ibid) because it could lead to a role conflict. As there is a lack of such research, this article aims to provide insights into professional feedback and coaching practices in newsrooms.

Method and sample

For this study, three observations were carried out to gather empirical data. Two of the observations took place in national dailies and one in a local daily newsroom in Estonia. As anonymity was promised to all of the newsrooms in the sample, specific details about them cannot be presented, because they would make the newsrooms identifiable. The circulation number of two dailies (a national and a local) is more than 12,000. A circulation number of the second national daily cannot be added because it would make it identifiable in Estonia. There are four national dailies (published in Estonian) in Estonia and four bigger local dailies (published in Estonian). There are newsrooms that have similar circulation number, publishing frequency, and number of employees in the sample.

These observations provided the researchers with the opportunity to observe the interactions happen in the newsrooms without the interpretation of the participants. Journalists and editors may not be able to recognize their behavior, or recall or analyze the content of the communication (e.g. whether it was constructive feedback or not). The strong side of observations is the collection of "clean" data; the weakness is that the researcher interprets the interactions (Mey et al., 2010; Given, 2008). Different kinds of observations were carried out in this study to provide versatile data (with and without intervention from the researcher).
During the non-participant observation, the researcher focused fully on observing the newsroom. In this case, she was able to videotape all of the days. In two other cases, the researchers worked side by side with the journalists and editors, they intervened and asked questions, and they experienced the interactions themselves. In these cases, the researchers were not able to videotape their observations and their field notes were not as detailed as during the non-participant observation, but their observation period was longer, thus providing more data to recognize some of the behavioral patterns. All of the participants were promised anonymity.

All of the observers used identical diary and observation systems, which were created together. It was agreed in our research group that if anything significant happens, the observer would mark down the exact time and description of the situation.

The non-participant observation

The non-participant observation was carried out in a national daily from Monday to Wednesday (8 to 10 February 2016). Six journalists (all female) and one editor (male) were observed. As

different newsrooms have their own systems and schedule, then during the observation in this national daily, only one editor was observed, because he was in charge of assembling the newspaper that week, so he supervised all of the journalists.

Observations lasted from 12 to 13 hours each day, starting when the first journalist or the editor came to work and ending when the last one left. Four of the journalists had less than five and two had more than five years of experience in journalism. On the week of the observation, one of the younger, less experienced journalists had just started working in the newsroom. The average age of observed journalists was 26 years old. The observed editor was a 37-year-old male who had more than five years of experience in the field. Two women and one man were absent during the observation (average age: 35 years).

Participant observations

Two participant observations were carried out in two different newsrooms: a national daily and a local daily. The observers, who had prior experience as journalists, worked with journalists and editors side by side, taking notice of what the others were doing and asking additional questions to clarify certain situations and motives of behavior. All of the data were gathered in written form (diaries and notebooks of the observers).

The observation in a local daily was carried out in January 2016 (see Table 1). Reporters and editors of local news and online newsroom were observed. Eight of the reporters had more than five years of experience and five had less. Among the thirteen journalists were two who worked only for online and eleven who worked mainly for the newspaper. At times, editors directed all of the journalists to create online-based content as well. The age span of the journalists was 22 to 61 years old and average age was 44 years old. All the observed editors were women; three of them had more than five years of experience and one less. Their age span was 33 to 56 years old, with an average age of 42.

Observation in a national daily was carried out from 1 to 28 August 2016 (see Table 1). Although the newsroom is designed as an open office, where all of the journalists of different beats work together, only journalists of Estonian news were observed. The newsroom had a separate online newsroom and online journalists, yet observed journalists had to create content for the online as well at times.

Seven journalists and five editors were observed in the newsroom. Three of the journalists had more than five years and four less than five years of experience in the field. Three of the editors were women and two were men. The average age of the observed editors was 31 (the age span was 25 to 44). Two editors had less than five years and three had more than five years of experience in the field.

Table 1: Sample and details of the observations in 2016. Source: Author.

	National daily 1 Non-participant observation	National daily 2 Participant observation	Local daily Participant observation	In total

Journalists observed	6	7	13	26
Editors observed	1	5	4	10
Gender of the journalists	Women: 6 Men: -	Women: 4 Men: 3	Women: 5 Men: 8	Women: 15 Men: 11
Gender of the editors	Women: - Men: 1	Women: 3 Men: 2	Women: 4 Men: -	Women: 7 Men: 3
Age of journalists (mean)	26	31	44	34
Age of editors (mean)	37	31	42	37
Observation period	8–10 February 2016 (3 days)	1–28 August 2016 (1 month)	3–30 January 2016 (1 month)	2 months and 3 days

In total, 26 journalists and ten editors were observed (see Table 1). There were more women participating in this study than men, which could be explained by the fact that there are more women (58.4%) working in journalism in Estonia than men (Worlds of Journalism, 2016).

I analyzed the data by directed content analysis (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005), focusing on the main research questions and codes by using MAxQDA 10. The author of the article analyzed and coded the data.

The main codes used in the analysis are as follows:

1. Editor communicating with a journalist about plans: editors asking about the plans of the journalist outside of the newsroom meeting.

2. Editor directing the work of a journalist (giving orders): situations and communication, in which the editor directs and interferes with the journalists' work without a detailed

explanation (e.g. editor changing the headings or leads; orders to phone a certain source etc).

3. Editors providing constructive feedback to journalists: communication initiated by the editors that consists of detailed information and constructive feedback about the work of a journalist (e.g. feedback consists of examples from the journalists' articles).

4. Coaching: situations with elements of coaching, such as two-way communication that aims at the journalist finding the solutions (e.g. editor asking how the journalist would solve the situation).

5. Editor forwarding destructive feedback to journalists: communication that could be considered feedback, but is of a destructive nature, meaning it does not provide information for journalists' professional development, is forwarded in an offensive manner, or is superficial (e.g. editor making a remark that a story was not good enough).

6. Journalist in need of help: situations where journalists are having problems with sources or with news production (e.g. journalists cannot reach the sources; journalists not having enough time to produce news content for the web or print).

7. Directing by the editor affecting journalists in a negative way: editors' directions and interference having negative implications for journalists (e.g. editing causing a factual error in the article).

8. Journalists being late for the morning meeting

9. Journalists not present in the newsroom

10. Journalists asking for feedback and information from editors: situations in which the journalists ask either about their article or work arrangement in the newsroom.

Results

The overview of used codes (see Table 2) shows that there is a lack of information exchange between the editors and journalists in the newsrooms that is directed at professional development of the journalist (e.g. coaching n=1, providing constructive feedback n=2, etc.). Editors tend to direct (n=177) the journalists by giving the solutions they think are suitable or by providing destructive feedback (n=41).

Some of the journalists are in need of help (n=59) and ask for feedback and information in the newsroom from editors to fulfill their tasks (n=34). Yet again, as analysis shows, the communication tends to be linear (from editor to journalist) and does not support the professional development of the journalist, rather solves the problems quickly. In the following chapters, I analyze these situations and indications more thoroughly.

Table 2: The overview of codes and analysis

1. Communication between journalists and editors

1.1 Editor communicating with a journalist about plans	26

1.2 Editor directing the work of a journalist (giving orders)	177
• Less experienced journalists	148
• Experienced journalists	29
1.3 Editors providing constructive feedback to journalists	2
• Less experienced	2
• Experienced	0
1.4 Coaching	1
1.5 Editor forwarding destructive feedback to journalists	41
• Less experienced journalists	39
• Experienced journalists	2

2. Journalists in the newsroom

2.1 Journalist in need of help	59
2.2 Directing by the editor affecting journalists in a negative way	62
2.3 Journalists being late for the morning meeting	6
• Less experienced journalists	2
• Experienced journalists	4
2.4 Journalists not present in the newsroom	9
• Less experienced journalists	2
• Experienced journalists	7
2.5 Journalists asking for feedback and information from editors	34
• Less experienced journalists	27
• Experienced journalists	7

I divided news production for the newspaper into two phases: 1) newsroom meeting and 2) newsgathering and writing phase, during which the editors' impact on the production enhances. Additionally, I added a subchapter talking about multitasking and time pressure in the newsroom, as it affects journalists in both phases. During the newsroom meeting, journalists and editors are together in a room collectively, but during the newsgathering phase, journalists are usually alone behind a desk, in a calling booth, or at the editors' desks.

Newsroom meeting

Workdays in the newsroom start at different times for different journalists, but in these observations, all journalists had to be present at the time of the newsroom meeting in the morning, which took place around 10 A.M. This is where every journalist presents the story or news he or she is working on and gets feedback as to whether or not the editor sees the necessity of writing about the topic or what should be taken as a focus of the story.

Some of the tendencies during these meetings indicated that editors showed different attitudes towards journalists with different experience. The analysis showed that six cases occurred during the observed period in which journalists were late to the morning meeting (two less experienced and four experienced). One significant event took place one morning in a

national daily, where an experienced journalist was late for the newsroom meeting. The supervising editor did not pay attention to this and continued on with the meeting. A couple of journalists, who were sitting behind the table, looked at each other in dismay after this incident. When the researcher asked afterwards about their reaction, then they explained that they were bothered by the lack of information, why their colleague was late, was he engaged with work in the morning or was there another explanation to it and if the supervising editor knew about it. All in all, the analysis shows that no visible negative reactions followed up to the late arrival of the journalist.

Two situations also occurred in which a less experienced journalist was late for the meeting. In both of the cases, the journalists received criticism from the supervising editor in front of their colleagues, reminding the less experienced journalist to be on time for the meeting. The difference in behavior towards these situations could lie in supervising editor assuming that the norms and rules of the newsroom are clear for the experienced journalist, who was late, but is still knowledgeable about them, yet, these rules and norms of the newsroom might not yet be clear for the young, less experienced journalist, and the editor might thought it was necessary to remind them. Another explanation could be that the experienced journalist had let the editor know that he would be late, so it did not come as a surprise.

There were nine cases of journalists not working in the newsroom – in all of the cases, journalists informed the supervising editor the day before or in the morning. They phoned each other or used Facebook/messenger.

Some of the situations, in which the editor forwarded destructive feedback to journalists (n=41), occurred during the morning meetings, where the supervising editors expressed quite a critical attitude towards topics and news suggested by the less experienced journalists. Criticism was passed on in a higher pitched voice, using negative connotations and adjectives, which are indicators of destructive feedback. Additionally, there was a lack of explanation as to why the editors declined or disliked the news and topics offered to them. For example, one editor just said: "This story could and should wait." After this, she carried on with the meeting. During these meetings, the editor started to direct the work of a less experienced journalist. For example, some of the less experienced journalists had to abandon the ideas that they had or instead of writing thorough news on the topic they suggested, the editor asked the young journalist to write a small bulletin for the web. One of the less experienced journalists admitted after another one of this kind of an incident: "[It] seems like the editor does not trust me enough to let me write a bigger news." This was one of the 62 negative reactions to an editor directing or interfering with the work of a journalist.

In some cases, when the experienced journalists did not have a topic to write on, they did not receive a negative reaction from the editor. At times, they both made fun of it saying it is a "dry season," which means that there is not anything newsworthy happening. Editors usually asked couple of additional questions about the topic the older journalist had suggested and moved on after that, no further in-depth discussion followed – which also means there was a lack of constructive feedback.

Newsgathering and writing phase

Both of the experienced and less experienced journalists and editors started to communicate more when the journalist was working on an article that was supposed to be published in the next day's newspaper, meaning it had to be ready on the present day at a deadline. The communication consisted of either the editor asking about the journalists plans (n=8), the editor directing (giving orders) (n=177), or journalists asking for feedback and information from the editors (n=34).

If there were no articles in the newsgathering or writing phase, then the journalists and editors usually did not communicate with each other, or when they did, the communication tended to be informal, focusing more on non-work-related topics.

Out of 177 cases, where the editor directed the work or a journalist, 148 were connected with less experienced journalists and 29 with experienced journalists. This result could be explained by several factors. Firstly, older and more experienced journalists tended to work on newsgathering and writing on their own in the newsroom, very rarely consulting with the editor. In case of any problems with the sources or with the news, they approached the editor and passed on the information (e.g. they were not able to write the news for the next day). Their communication was quite short and concrete, and very rarely did further discussion follow. The experienced journalists approached the editor mostly in the early hours of afternoon, rarely in the evening.

Secondly, there were a few cases when the editor approached the experienced journalist to talk about some other topics they had found and thought could be suitable for the journalist to work on next. The editors very rarely approached the journalists to discuss the articles that were in the works. In one of the newsrooms, when the editor approached the experienced journalist and asked what he was doing, the experienced journalist gave a short and concrete overview, after which the editor left.

Thirdly, one reason for rarely talking to editors was the fact that older experienced journalists worked usually on investigative or analytical news, so they had more time to write their stories. These stories tend to be more on the feature side, so they are not as timely as news. This means that the journalists did not need advice that fast and could spend more time in thinking about the issues that they may have faced.

During the observations, the editors did not give any kind of constructive feedback to the experienced journalists about their work (n=0). There was a situation in which an experienced journalist went up to the editor to check up on his article and the editor said: "Everything is fine." It is notable that the editor did not use an adjective that expresses the highest quality of the article, but instead the average, nor did he provide detailed information about the article.

There was more frequent communication between less experienced journalists and editors; the initiator of the communication was usually the editor. Therefore, it could be said that the less experience the journalist had in the field and in the newsroom, the more the editor paid attention to the journalist on a daily basis. There was an indication of coaching (n=1) when an editor wanted to get an overview of what the less experienced journalist had written so far, so the journalist had to send in her draft of her article. After sending in the article to the editor a follow-up discussion followed: the editor sat down with the journalist and explained what he had changed in the story and why.

Yet, other times the editors, after receiving news from the less experienced journalists, gave orders to the authors to re-write and send in the news again, forwarding destructive feedback in this manner (n=41). During these cases, the editor did not give any clear instructions or guidelines on how to re-write the news either.

There were exceptions of less experienced journalists talking to the editor first. For example, in one case, the journalist wrote many articles in advance, because she had to leave for a conference for couple of days. When they communicated with each other, the journalist did not receive feedback or advice on the articles, and the editor mostly asked about the plans of the journalist (n=26).

During these observed situations, another difference occurred between less experienced and experienced journalists. The experienced journalists were not afraid to admit that they did not have any topics or news to write on or that they were not be able to write the news they had promised during the morning meeting.

In one case, when an experienced journalist did not publish anything for a week, she explained that she could not find anything newsworthy to write about. During the week, she was asking for feedback from editors about her ideas (n=7). There was a situation when the editor refused to talk to the journalist because he was working on other journalists' stories. This indicated that the journalist was not a priority at the given moment. But the journalist was not pressured to produce as well, which could be an indicator of autonomy.

The analysis of the codes (see Table 2) indicates that experienced journalists have more independence compared to less experienced journalists. For example, less experienced journalists have more encounters (n=148) with the editor directing their work or work process than their experienced colleagues (n=29). All in all, the experienced journalists experiences in the newsroom indicate lack of professional two-way communication between them and editors, which could be an indicator for autonomy, but also encapsulation.

Less experienced journalists, on the other hand, did not want to admit to the editor that they were not able to contact the source or the news was on the verge of not meeting the deadline – generally, that they were in in need of help (n=59). When the editor finally came up to the journalist and asked how the newsgathering was going, then the journalist had to admit the problems he or she was having. When the editor found out about the situation, one solution was that he told the less experienced journalist to write the news without the source or focus on a different aspect and find another expert. The other solution was that the supervising editor insisted that the journalist "put some more effort" into trying to write the news and reaching the source. Again, no guidelines were provided to the journalist. In both cases the editor directed the work of a journalist (n=177).

There were conflicts between less experienced journalists and editors because the editor did not know how long it would take for the journalist to send in the article and this led to asking aggressively when the journalist would finish it. Editors asked about the journalists' plans (n=26), but the less experienced journalist was not capable of precisely evaluating the time necessary, which led to problems. During the observations, no conflicts or aggressive speaking between editors and experienced journalists were witnessed.

Experienced journalists left the newsroom as soon as they finished writing their article, because the editors would call them if there were any problems. Less experienced journalists were asked to stay in the newsrooms while their articles were edited, so that problems could be solved as soon as they arose.

Multitasking and time pressure

One difference between experienced and less experienced journalists was the amount of content they were expected to produce. Less experienced journalists were expected to write both for the newspaper as well as for the web and, at times, to produce videos and photos. Older, more experienced journalists said that they would do what they consider to be "additional tasks" when they have enough time.

During the observation, the editor pressurized less experienced journalists to be faster in producing news for the web. Additionally, the editors asked the less experienced journalists quite aggressively at times when would they put an abstract of the news they were writing for the newspaper on the web as well. This way, the editor ordered the journalist to speed up some phases of the news production process.

In converged newsrooms, journalists must be able to produce news for different platforms. A problem occurred when the supervising editor was unhappy with a less experienced journalist being occupied with producing video for the web and not being able to produce news for the next day's newspaper. This was a conflict because the editor had

considered producing materials for different platforms as a priority for the whole newsroom, but at that time he needed people working only for the newspaper. Less experienced journalists said that these situations confused them, because they thought they had done everything that the supervising editor expected from them, but then received a new task in an aggressive tone. This led journalists to think they had made a mistake somewhere; so the orders and directions by the editor had a negative impact on a journalist (n=62).

In couple of cases, the editor changed his mind during the day and ordered the young journalist (n=148) to write news for the next day's newspaper that he had declined during the newsroom meeting in the morning. In the case of unforeseen events (e.g. accidents, gatherings, meetings etc.), then the editors sent less experienced journalist out in field without proper preparation of how the journalist should approach the event. These kinds of situations confused young journalists and it was visible that their stress levels increased: hands started shaking, they started to scratch their head and play with their hair, they started to speed walk around the newsroom, and they visited the calling space (an isolated room in the newsroom). They did not expect this kind of a change in their work routine. They mentioned having problems with collecting themselves and focusing on being effective; they did not know where to start in reporting and newsgathering process.

This led to a case when the less experienced journalist started talking to the editor first: the journalist indicated that some of the tasks that were put on them started to overlap with each other and it was difficult to handle them all. This is also another example of where the directing by the editor led to negative effects (n=62).

Young journalists connected absence of one of the supervising editors, who was very critical, to having a pleasant working environment. One of the journalists said: "The feeling in the newsroom today is very positive, maybe because the supervising editor is not present."

The accumulation of work and the lack of free time to take rest could have added to the situation. During the discussions of who should be on call for the weekend, ready to write when something important happens, the older journalists emphasized personal family matters and said that they will not be able to be there. The burden quite often fell on younger, less experienced journalists' shoulders, who were unhappy with this kind of an arrangement, because they needed a break.

Conclusive discussion

The results from three different dailies indicate that constructive feedback and coaching are not part of the current communication culture in newsrooms, which supports the findings of the MediaAct study (Lauk et al., 2014) as well. Not only do editors not provide constructive feedback or coaching to journalists, journalists seldomly ask for these aspects as well.

As the occupation and newsrooms are changing (Preston, 2008; Spyridou et al., 2013; Hermida, 2010; Bardoel & Deuze, 2001; Picard, 2000: 100), providing feedback and/or coaching could lead to several positive ramifications as are indicated by the studies of Maertz Jr and Griffeth (2004), Hanisch and Hulin (1990), and Schaufeli and Bakker (2004).

In developing these ideas further, the resulting coaching and constructive feedback ideas could provide journalists with information of what the management expects and a possibility to reflect on how to meet these expectations. Especially when doing a job that journalists describe as being "precarious" (Örnebring, 2018), good, informative communication is an important part of job security. Negative interactions and some of the situations observed in the newsrooms could be avoided, given the addition of better professional feedback and/or coaching in the newsroom (Cheng & Chan, 2008; Vander Elst, Baillien, Cuyper and de Witte, 2010). In order to carry out changes in newsrooms, constructive feedback could help journalists

to adapt to the new situations and technology. Feedback helps to improve and develop the journalists' skills – as journalism is a creative work that changes over time, feedback or feed-forward could help journalists with different experience to evolve with the changes in the newsroom.

The differences in the work arrangements of experienced and less experienced journalists could have also affected the feedback and coaching practices. Experienced journalists had autonomy in the newsroom: they had more analytical and in-depth investigative stories to work on, they were not pressured by the editors to speed up their newsgathering or to publish materials online, they could work on the news they produced on their own. Due to the fact that the initiator of the communication tended to be the journalist, giving feedback or coaching by the editor could have been difficult as well, because the more active participant in the communication was the receiver who dictated the time, tone and the aim of the communication. The coach should be the more active participant, because he or she has the skills and techniques to explain shortcomings or to provide help (Clark & Fry 1992).

The editors might not have time or skills to give analytical or constructive feedback or even coach. It also might be that the experienced journalists, who are used to not receiving feedback or coaching, will not be expecting these actions either, neither would they have interest in improving and developing their skills (Hattie and Timperley, 2007), which is why a thorough approach is necessary.

As young journalists are still developing their skills and some of those observed in this study were new in the newsroom, feedback *was* provided at times (to talk about shortcomings of the article and norms, standards of the newsroom). There were situations in which the editors had edited the news and wanted to provide feedback regarding what they had changed in the text. Comparing to different concepts of feedback, then this situation could be considered as constructive feedback or even coaching, yet, the communication during the act of giving feedback was mostly linear, meaning there was a lack of dialogue. In this case, the editors did provide constructive feedback, yet it tended to be an overview of the changes and no in-depth explanations as to why the changes were necessary. Overall the feedback lacked the coaching element that could have helped the journalist to improve his or her own text and skills, to act in a manner more suitable for the newsroom in the future.

Lack of feedback, lack of clarity

Mainly negative feedback was provided in the newsroom to the less experienced journalists, who showed signs of exhaustion because of multitasking and producing materials for different platforms and not being able to take a rest on weekends. The less experienced journalists were not happy receiving such feedback; one of them even said that the absence of the supervising editor (who mostly passed on the criticism) provided a more positive working environment.

The reaction could be connected to the concept of receiving negative feedback or even destructive feedback (Fedor et al., 2001; Baron, 1988). Negative feedback mostly aimed at solving the fast, shortsighted problems – for example, journalist eliminating the problems in the article that was pointed out by the editor. Feedback could be more efficient if it provides a wider understanding of the problematic issues in the article (for example, explaining why the issues are considered problematic) and knowledge of how to avoid these in the future.

Although criticism came from higher in the hierarchy, the reaction from the less experienced journalists indicated that they felt it to be unfair, which supports the findings of Fedor et al., (2001) that people with more experience are open to criticism. Another reason why the less experienced journalists were negatively affected by criticism was that their efforts were left unnoticed and it provoked feelings of injustice, which supports the earlier findings of

feedback studies (e.g. Baron 1988, Fedor et al., 2001, Steelman and Rutkowski 2004). Negative or destructive feedback may have a discouraging effect on journalists trying new approaches or technology.

The roles and role expectations were not clear in newsrooms, and neither was the hierarchy of the people working there. During the observations, editors seemed to be higher in the hierarchy than less experienced journalists, yet, comparing editors to the experienced journalists, then the editors seemed to be on the same or on a lower level. The less experienced journalists were younger than most of the editors observed and had less experience as well; additionally, they were new to the profession, so they might have placed themselves lower than the editor in the newsroom hierarchy and they might have felt the need to be submissive. This also came forth while comparing the "editor directing the work of a journalist (giving orders)" code frequencies among less and experienced journalists, where it was visible that less experienced journalists had more experience with these kinds of situations. Editors directed and presented tasks to the less experienced journalists as commands, so the journalist might have felt that they did not have any opportunities to debate or refuse. This indicates a lack of autonomy and trust.

The results indicate that although changes in the newsrooms and profession have occurred, there is a lack of explanations of demands and expectations by the supervisors. Thought through constructive feedback has the ability to direct the employees' capabilities and knowledge to where it is needed (Steelman & Rutkowski, 2004). Some feedback, but mostly directing, is provided to the novice journalists, but older more experienced journalists are left aside. The deficit of constructive feedback and coaching could also express the lack of agreed upon expectations of management and/or editors (Ivask, 2019).

The state of precariousness and lack of professional communication could lead to a situation where older, more experienced journalists are let go and substituted with younger, less experienced journalists, but as younger ones lack experience and capability of time management (Ivask et al., 2017) and examples from whom to learn in the newsroom (as the situation is completely new with new demands and expectations), this could then lead to an accumulation of stress and burnout and, in turn, high numbers of turnover (Chen & Spector, 1992; Fitness, 2000).

As many journalists in Estonia are hesitant about staying in the field – one of the reasons for doubting being dissatisfaction with demands and resources in the newsroom (Ivask, 2017) – offering constructive feedback could have a very positive effect on their decision, as suggested by JD-R (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). Overall, the lack of constructive feedback and coaching hinder the development of both experienced and less experienced journalists. Although the lack of feedback or professional communication could be perceived as part of the autonomy, it could also lead to experienced journalists being isolated from the rest of the newsroom, making it difficult to update their skills and competencies according to the expectations of the job, further leading to job insecurity. There is a lack of studies about professional feedback among journalists, but the topic is worthy of further investigation as it plays a great role in the working culture.

References

Baron, R. A. (1988). Negative effects of destructive criticism: impact on conflict, self-efficacy, and task performance, *Journal of Applied Psychology,* 73: 2, pp. 199-207. CrossRef

Bruns, A. (2011). Gatekeeping, gatewatching, real-time feedback: new challenges for journalism. *Brazilian Journalism Research,* 10: 2, pp. 117-136. CrossRef

Chen, P. Y. and Spector, P. E. (1992). Relationships of work stressors with aggression, withdrawal, theft and substance use: An exploratory study, *Journal of occupational and organizational psychology,* 65: 3, pp. 177-84. CrossRef

Cheng, G. H.-L., and Chan, D. K.-S. (2008). Who suffers more from job insecurity? A meta-analytic review. *Applied Psychology: An International Review,* 57: 2, pp. 272–303. CrossRef

Clark, R. P. and Fry, D. (1992). *Coaching writers: the essential guide for editors and reporters.* New York: St. Martin's Press, pp. 3-48.

Clark, R. P. and Fry, D. (2003). *Coaching writers: Editors and reporters working together across media platforms,* Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, pp. 139-52.

Cushion, S. (2007). 'Rich media, poor journalists: Journalists' salaries', *Journalism Practice,*1: 1, pp. 120-9. CrossRef

Davidson, R. and Meyers, O. (2016). "Should I Stay or Should I Go?" Exit, voice and loyalty among journalists, *Journalism Studies,* 17: 5, pp. 590–607. CrossRef

Bardoel, J. and Deuze, M. (2001). Network Journalism: Converging Competences of Media Professionals and Professionalism. *Australian Journalism Review,* 23: 2, pp. 91–103.

Ekdale, B., Tully, M., Harmsen, S. and Singer, J. B. (2015). Newswork Within a Culture of Job Insecurity: Producing news amidst organizational and industry uncertainty, *Journalism Practice,* 9: 3, pp. 383-398. CrossRef

Fedor, D. B., Davis, W. D., Maslyn, J. M. and Mathieson, K. (2001). Performance improvement efforts in response to negative feedback: The roles of source power and recipient self-esteem, *Journal of Management,* 27: 1, pp. 79–97. CrossRef

Fitness, J. (2000). Anger in the workplace: An emotion script approach to anger episodes between workers and their superiors, co-workers and subordinates, *Journal of organizational behavior*, pp. 147-62. CrossRef

Gallwey, W. T. (2001). *The inner game of Work: Focus, learning, pleasure, and mobility in the workplace,* New York: Random House, pp. 177-213.

Halbesleben, J. R. and Buckley, M. R. (2004). 'Burnout in organizational life', *Journal of management,* 30: 6, pp. 859-79. CrossRef

Given, L. M. (2008). *The Sage Encyclopedia of Qualitative Research Methods vol 2*. Los Angeles: Sage.

Hanisch, K. A. and Hulin, C. L. (1990). 'Job attitudes and organizational withdrawal: An examination of retirement and other voluntary withdrawal behaviors', *Journal of Vocational Behavior,* 37:1, pp. 60–78. CrossRef

Hattie, J. and Timperley, H. (2007). 'The power of feedback', *Review of educational research,*77: 1, pp. 81–112. CrossRef

Hermida, A. (2010). Twittering the news: The emergence of ambient journalism. *Journalism practice,* 4: 3, pp. 297–308. CrossRef

Himmelstein, H. and Faithorn, E. P. (2002). Eyewitness to disaster: How journalists cope with the psychological stress inherent in reporting traumatic events. *Journalism Studies,* 3: 4, pp. 537–555. CrossRef

Hsieh, H.-F. and Shannon, S. E. (2005). Three approaches to qualitative content analysis. *Qualitative health research,* 15: 9, pp. 1277-1288. CrossRef

Ivask, S. (2019). *The role of routines, demands and resources in work stress among Estonian journalists.* Doctoral Thesis. Tartu: Tartu Ülikooli Kirjastus. http://hdl.handle.net/10062/62768

Ivask, S., All, H. and Janson, K. (2017). Time-efficient and time-consuming practices among journalists in communicating with the sources, *Catalan Journal of Communication & Cultural Studies,* 9: 1, pp. 25-41. CrossRef

Ivask, Signe (2017). Stressed out print, digital and converged newsroom journalists consider leaving the field. *Media and Communication*, 8, pp. 83−100. http://www.media-com.me/8.pdf

Kluger, A. N., & DeNisi, A. (1996). The effects of feedback interventions on performance: A historical review, a meta-analysis, and a preliminary feedback intervention theory, *Psychological Bulletin*, 119: 2, pp. 254-84. CrossRef

Lauk, E., Harro-Loit, H. and Väliverronen, J. (2014). Media Accountability through the Eyes of Journalists: Feedback, Responsiveness. In: Fengler, S., Eberwein, T., Mazzoleni, G., & Porlezza, C. ed. *Journalists and Media Accountability.* Bern, Switzerland: Peter Lang US, pp. 83-97.

London, M., Larsen, H. H., & Thisted, L. N. (1999). Relationships between feedback and self-development. *Group & Organization Management*, *24*(1), 5–27. CrossRef

Maertz Jr, C. P. and Griffeth, R. W. (2004). 'Eight motivational forces and voluntary turnover: A theoretical synthesis with implications for research', *Journal of Management,* 30: 5, pp. 667–83. CrossRef

Mey, G. and Mruck, K. (2010). *Handbuch qualitative forschung in der psychologie.* Springer, pp. 449-458.

McKeen, W. and Bleske, G. L. (1992). Coaching Editors to Coach Writers with Team Teaching Approach: Drama Asks Editors to Learn to Respond to Reporters. *The Journalism Educator,* pp. 81–84. CrossRef

Niemann, J., Wisse, B., Rus, D., Van Yperen, N. W. and Sassenberg, K. (2014). Anger and attitudinal reactions to negative feedback: The effects of emotional instability and power, *Motivation and Emotion,* 38: 5, pp. 687–99. CrossRef

O'Sullivan, J., & Heinonen, A. (2008). Old values, new media: Journalism role perceptions in a changing world. *Journalism Practice*, 2:3, pp. 357–371. CrossRef

Örnebring, H. (2018) Journalists thinking about precarity: Making sense of the "new normal". *International Symposium on Online Journalism*, 8: 1, pp. 109–127.

Picard, R. G. (2000). Measuring quality by journalistic activity. *Measuring media content, quality, and diversity*, pp. 97–103. http://www.robertpicard.net/files/Measuring_Media_Content_Quality_Diversity_Book.pdf#page=97

Picard, R. G. (2006). Capital crisis in the profitable newspaper industry. *Nieman Reports,* pp. 10–12.

Preston, P. (2008). Journalism in a state of flux? Explanatory perspectives. In *Making the News*, Routledge, pp. 9–23.

Reich, Z. (2013). The impact of technology on news reporting: A longitudinal perspective, *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly,* 90: 3, pp. 417–34. CrossRef

Reinardy, S. (2009). Beyond Satisfaction: Journalists Doubt Career Intentions as Organizational Support Diminishes and Job Satisfaction Declines, *Atlantic Journal of Communication,* 17: 3, pp. 126–39. CrossRef

Reinardy, S. (2011). Newspaper journalism in crisis: Burnout on the rise, eroding young journalists' career commitment, *JOURNALISM,* 12: 1, pp. 33–50. CrossRef

Schaufeli, W. B. and Bakker, A. B. (2004). Job demands, job resources, and their relationship with burnout and engagement: A multi-sample study, *Journal of organizational Behavior,* 25: 3, pp. 293–315. CrossRef

Schreurs, B. H., Hetty van Emmerik, I., Günter, H. and Germeys, F. (2012). 'A weekly diary study on the buffering role of social support in the relationship between job insecurity and employee performance', *Human Resource Management,* 51: 2, pp. 259–79. CrossRef

Shute, V. J. (2008). 'Focus on formative feedback', *Review of educational research,* 78: 1, pp. 153–89. CrossRef

Simpson, R. A. and Boggs, J. G. (1999). An exploratory study of traumatic stress among newspaper journalists. *Journalism & Communication Monographs,* 1, pp. 1–26. CrossRef

Spyridou, L.-P., Matsiola, M., Veglis, A., Kalliris, G. and Dimoulas, C. (2013). Journalism in a state of flux, *International Communication Gazette,* 75: 1, pp. 76–98. CrossRef

Steelman, L. A. and Rutkowski, K. A. (2004). Moderators of employee reactions to negative feedback, *Journal of Managerial Psychology,* 19: 1, pp. 6–18. CrossRef

Ternes, B., Peterlin, L. J. and Reinardy, S. (2017). Newsroom Workers' Job Satisfaction Contingent on Position and Adaptation to Digital Disruption, *Journalism Practice*, pp. 1–12. CrossRef

Theeboom, T., Beersma, B. and van Vianen, A. E. (2014). 'Does coaching work? A meta-analysis on the effects of coaching on individual level outcomes in an organizational context', *The Journal of Positive Psychology,* 9: 1, pp. 1–18. CrossRef

Vander Elst, T., Baillien, E., De Cuyper, N., & De Witte, H. (2010). The role of organizational communication and participation in reducing job insecurity and its negative association with work-related well-being. *Economic and Industrial Democracy*, 31: 2, pp. 249–264. CrossRef

Whitmore, J. (2010*). Coaching for performance: growing human potential and purpose: the principles and practice of coaching and leadership*, London/Boston: Nicholas Brealey Publishing, pp. 9–15.

Worlds of Journalism. Aggregated tables for key variables (2012-2016). Socio-demographic backgrounds. Available: http://www.worldsofjournalism.org/data/data-and-key-tables-2012-2016/. Accessed in June 2018.