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TRAINING OF SPECIALISTS IN THE FIELD OF CRISIS COMMUNICATIONS, AS A FACTOR OF EFFECTIVE PUBLIC SAFETY

Abstract. This scientific article lays stress on the problems which are connected with preparation of well-qualified specialists in the field of crisis communication. It raises a question about low-quality level of specialists preparation in the scope of national education. After analyzing the situation which exists in the educational environment in Ukraine this article describes the steps to improve crisis communication specialists system in the field of government defense. It recounts basic functions and skills that crisis communication specialist should have. Considering a problem of crisis communication specialists preparation a historical overview is being done. The article gives a bibliographic review of the sources that have been published on this subject. It emphasizes the importance of graduated students adaptation to their first work place. The attention is paid to the availability of practical component in the educational programs of the universities. The necessity of financing and development of scientific activity in this sphere is also emphasized and it stresses that only with the presence of own scientific works and well-qualified specialists the discipline of crisis communication will exist and develop in our country. It will help our country to build new and strong system of effective communication in the time of crisis.

Keywords: government defense, system of education, upgrading the educational system, crisis communication education, crisis communication specialist

Introduction. Nowadays Ukraine is in a position of crisis, so controversial social, economic and particularly political processes are specific to it. It is against this background that, Ukraine is again facing the problem of effective communication of state and Ukrainian society and, therefore, the question of active and efficient application of new communication technologies arises. Existing sociocultural guidelines influence the formation of new courses in public policy related to the definition of necessary training of specialists, designed to effectively consider serious issues concerning the problems and contradictions of modern Ukrainian society. One of the solutions to complex contradictions of social development is to overcome the crisis by means of establishing effective communication with citizens. This problem can now be laid, in particular, upon specialists in crisis communications. The current practice of professionals of mentioned profile indicates serious shortcomings in training, which ultimately result in the deepening crisis and decline in government’s credibility.

The purpose of this research is to outline the main problems of specialists’ training system in crisis communications in Ukraine and to define
possible ways for improvement of situation of relevant staff training.

**Literature review and the problem statement.** Analyzing the works of domestic and foreign scientists, who studied the problem of training specialists in crisis communications and studied in detail the components of this profession, we can provide theoretical insights into the origin of the concept itself, its structure and functioning. Thus, researchers T. Coombs [Coombs 2007], M. Regester [Regester 1989] were the first, who proposed a “A Concept of Applied Aspects of Crisis Communications Use”, R. Heath and David Waymer [Waymer & Heath 2007], K. Fearn-Banks, [Fearn -Banks 1996], T. Coombs [Coombs 2007], S. Fink [Fink 1986] – the theory of modern ideology of crisis communications and M. Friedman first suggested the principles of interaction of crisis communications as an institution that cooperates with other institutions [Friedman 2002]. Also the works of I. Quarantelli [Quarantelli 1988], who suggested various methods of improving the efficiency of crisis communications response are worth noting.

**Research results.** Domestic education system needs a radical rethink from all points of view, which concerns the approaches to training of specialists in various disciplines, including specialists in crisis communications. Today, the first step to this from higher educational level was made – the Law of Ukraine “On Higher Education”, which aims to democratize education sector and make it more competitive. Taking into consideration that Ukraine is going through profound changes in economic and social spheres, the state faces new challenges of 21st century [Heath & Millar 2004], in particular, such as the ability to train and prepare new qualified staff in the field of crisis communications. Current approaches to the study of these issues require total rethinking of all that has been achieved in the field of PR in order to identify new directions of improvement and development in crisis communications’ training.

Due to the escalation of crisis in the political, economic and social dimensions, Ukraine feels a need for effective communication in crisis situations, and therefore the need for the formation and development of new, high-quality training of specialists in crisis communication as a branch of social science.

Speaking about the historical aspects of development of crisis communications as a science and, as a consequence, the emergence of areas of professional activity, the first scientists who contributed to the development of crisis communications and anti crisis technologies, as a professional field, were T. Coombs [Coombs 2009], R. Heath and D. Waymer [Waymer & Heath 2007], S. Boys [Boys 2009] and K. Fearn-Banks [Fearn-Banks, 1996].

The main problem in preparing professional staff in crisis communications is that this question has not been researched in our country. Scientist M. Friedman rightly notes that a certain gap in scientific understanding of the phenomenon of anti-crisis professionals, as a new professional group in modern Ukrainian society, can be seen in Ukraine [Friedman 2002]. It is obvious that the efficiency of communities’ operation depends on rates and the formation quality of relatively new to the national labor market community.

The problem of education in the field of crisis communications in our country requires careful study because training of relevant professionals has specific character. Experts in crisis communications are obliged to have a wide range of knowledge, because their work is often non-linear, unusual and requires specific skills. Today’s information war with Russia confirms that once again. The task of determining the ways and means of training in the field of crisis communications is complicated by the fact that the experts of this activity may hold different positions and to perform different functions, ranging from technical
routine work and ending with high managerial positions. Using the approach of I. Mitroff and G. Anagnos we can define basic functions and knowledge of specialist in crisis communications, including:

- identification of groups, organizations, authorities, persons, support and understanding of which, organization, institution, etc. require or will require;
- monitoring the media and public opinion;
- development of programs and strategies to inform and interact with the components and recipients of social environment of institution;
- installation, support and development of necessary contacts, relationships and relations;
- preparation and publication of necessary information materials, articles, etc. for external and internal use of the company;
- public information system using media, trade publications, personal contacts with journalists and publishers;
- organization of preparing of photo-film-video materials, movies, multimedia;
- management of press conferences, exhibitions, demonstrations, special meetings, presentations and receptions;
- speechwriting and personal ability to speak in public;
- organization carriage of polling, content analysis of information materials and documents, to obtain and undertake interviews, negotiate, collect necessary information by different methods [Mitroff, Anagnos 2001].

All these aspects have to be applied effectively in a crisis situation.

As we can see, the range of knowledge, an expert on crisis communications should possess, is really wide. That is why, education in the field of crisis technologies require thorough study of the peculiarities of this professional activity at the country level. It is worth agree with the position of M. Regester that “participation of specialists in crisis situations, passage of which depends on public opinion, mood or intentions of partners, often provides direct political or economic impact. That is why governments, enterprises (organizations) can not carry out successful activities without effective communication with the public during the crisis, and it stimulates rise in communication protection level of the country” [Regester 1989]. As mentioned above, the issue of training of specialists in the field of crisis communications has a number of problems related to the adaptation of professionals, who have graduated the universities, to current labor market conditions and to the development of new qualified standards for training.

Having analyzed the situation of the domestic education market, we can make some generalizations about the problems that stand in the way to professional development of education in the field of crisis communications in our country. It should be noted that the problems faced by Ukraine in the training of experts of crisis technologies are almost the same as in other countries around the world. That's what D. Smith, chairman of PRLTD, CEO of Nords PR says about this: “This profession is not yet finally formed: its place and role in social stratification structures of society are not investigated in science terms, there are no scientific criteria and operation principles, standards of education, performance indicators” [Smith 1990].

D. Smith, a member of the Chartered Institute of PR in London, a founding member of the American Association of PR, Vice President of Royal & Associates Ltd has the same view of the situation. He insists that crisis communications are in the process of formation not only in the post-Soviet countries, but also in...
other developed countries [Smith 1990]. Academic programs on this course appeared in the eighties of the last century; therefore, they are very young. That is why the issue what to teach, how to teach and who should teach future crisis technologies professionals remains open [Smith 1990]. According to scientist I. Mitroff, Ukrainian crisis management has similar problems to other post-Soviet countries [Mitroff 1994].

Another important problem is that Ukraine started to train bachelor specialists in public relations, within the sphere of which crisis technology specialists could be prepared, only in 2007, and for the qualification levels “Specialist” and “Master” – only in 2010. Consequently, our country has not yet made significant contribution to the development of training in the field of crisis communications. Nevertheless, there are schools in our country that train specialists in crisis technologies and conduct professional development training. But this type of preparation is made not on the basis of accreditation, but on the provision of temporary licenses. This fact affects the development of education in crisis technologies in Ukraine rather negatively than positively, because it affects the quality of education.

But the main problem, according to the author, is that there is no quality content in educational plans, where crisis technologies and peculiarities of anti-crisis response to crisis calls are neglected. Since our country started to prepare specialists in crisis technologies only seven years ago, it is obvious, that there are no developed models of education, procedures and teaching technologies are absent. In order to increase educational level of specialization, the problem should be studied from all directions; and seminars, round tables and so on should be held. But, unfortunately, the issues of content and training procedures in the field of crisis communications in our country have not been raised. T. Coombs says for this purpose: “Ukraine tends to use practices of international, not national, experience of discipline teaching and there is nothing wrong to follow best international standards of such education. At the worst (especially in business schools and at professional development training) it results in eclectic, random combination of elements of marketing, advertising, journalism, separate communication technologies (up to neurolinguistic programming), according to the principle of “what is around” (depending on which trainers, coachers and teachers were found and attracted).” [Coombs 2007].

Since crisis communications, as well as other scientific disciplines, are rapidly developing now, it would be appropriate to introduce enhancement of discipline proficiency that would be as close as possible to international standards. Abroad, there is also practice of issuing various special publications, in other words publications which would be dedicated to a particular field, in this case – PR publications, since this field includes crisis communications. Institutes and universities, which have degrees in “Public Relations”, should carry out certain researches, in the field of crisis communications in general, as well as in methodological aspects of crisis in particular [Kyrychok 2016].

Also, our country has problems with human resourcing in the field of PR-education: those, who teach crisis communications, are historians, marketers, journalists or economists by education, who just mastered certain subject and now teach it. The question, why those who have practical experience do not teach, has entirely different nature, and there is no answer.

Due to the fact that employees of other professions occupy the professional field of crisis communications, and the practice itself is constantly enriching and changing, the necessity to divide the system for training experts in
the field of crisis communications into two parts acquires particular importance:
into basic training system in academies and into the system of constant retraining of PR-specialists, who already practice [Coombs 2007].

Another important part of the problem is that in Ukraine there is no desire to develop crisis communications as a branch, which can be taught and which can bring benefits. It is necessary to qualitatively and radically overview educational plans, which train PR-specialists. It is obvious that the country should establish uniform rules and requirements for PR science.

ATO speakers can be called a sort of anti-crisis experts; they are opinion leaders in current situation and bring necessary information about everything that happens on and off the battle field to the public. By this, ATO speakers try to dress up our army that is absolutely correct. ATO speaker – a kind of spokesman – essentially serves as public relations manager. Direct communication with the audience is only one of many methods; but to the author’s opinion, indirect methods of information presenting, which are not that intrusive but that no less effective, play the most important role in information war. But there is no need to distinguish crisis communications in the military sphere as a separate sphere; naturally, each educational program has its own specifics, but we will be able to talk about it only, if the total training system will be rearranged. Due to the fact that foundations are all the same, any specialist, if desired, can go deeply into the sphere, he/she works in, more deeply. European model of education can serve as an example, where, for example, if a person wants to be a journalist who writes about medicine, he first should master medicine, and then – the journalism. The author implies that the most important is to learn a discipline and then, if needed, you can additionally retrain at any particular sphere. Also, information warfare is carried on rather by warmongers than by PR-experts but, essentially, it does not change core of the matter, because they have one and the same training system. But, let’s go back to the analysis of the educational situation of crisis communications in Ukraine [Kyrychok 2017].

An essential element, in our opinion, is a practical training during the education. It is practice, which allows us to learn the occupation as best as possible. Thus, teachers should explain all the intricacies of the profession including the concept of crisis PR, features of image and reputation restoration as well as the concept of information warfare.

A society, where education becomes a real capital and the main resource, makes new and even strict requirements for training in terms of their educational needs, according to democratization of society in Ukraine. It is very important to create an approach to teaching, by which the teacher not just gives knowledge but also cheers students to self-development and training of required qualities such as creativity, cognition and so on. This can be considered as methodological basis for development and operation of modern national system of professional education in the field of crisis technologies. Society should realize that the value of knowledge is to be able to apply it and to have certain abilities that are unique or at least rare. Thus, there is no need to accumulate background of theoretical knowledge; we should practice and cultivate necessary qualities, as mentioned above.

Another important aspect is to encourage innovation, but due to the low level of funding, researches are not carried out in our country. The current labor market requires not only deep theoretical knowledge, but also the ability to apply knowledge in unusual situations independently, which will allow reaching a new
level of education. Nowadays anti-crisis branch dynamically develops in Ukraine. This also concerns all kinds of it. Crisis communications’ specialists are increasingly in demand on the labor market, since crisis is quite noticeable now in all spheres of society. That is why crisis communication experts rise steadily of social movement and society in general. Servants of all government ranks, private businesses and all the spheres of people’s influence defer to the opinion of crisis experts. It became essentially to have a person, responsible for anti-crisis activities and thus lobbying interests of certain subjects in the face of community, in the staffing list of a company. At this point we must act proactively. Educational plans, which have been introduced in Ukraine since the beginning, are of long standing; that is why our task is to develop qualitatively new educational models to improve the quality of education of professionals in the field of crisis communications.

If we imagine perfect model of development, we should include, at least, approximate forecast for the future. That is, by analyzing the situation, various types of monitoring and other means we need, at least partially, predict what sort of education in crisis communications will be in the future. This will enable us to have a coherent picture of movement direction.

**Development prospects of the topic.** It is worth considering this topic as very promising, whereas as a result of total globalization and informatization world is becoming more open to communicative, business and political relations. As a result, there is a need for lobbying and promoting the interests of a country, an individual, a product on the market.

Nowadays Ukraine is at a position of war with Russia, as well as military operations are conducted on all fronts of military action, and they are also reflected in the information space. This phenomenon is called the “information war”, which unfortunately our country loses. This means that during the years of independence Ukraine was not involved in the formation of its image and did not try to find its niche in information space. Now all government agencies, responsible for promoting the image of Ukraine in the global information space, are involved and mobilized. As a result, if Ukraine will acquire good reputation, internal commercial structure will also need PR-promotion. Here, exactly, a need for training specialists in this branch appears, because the prospects of PR development in Ukraine are quite powerful as well as new perspectives in preparing young, qualified individuals who will move this direction forward in our country.

**Conclusions:**

1) Modern education in the field of crisis communications has a number of drawbacks, including non-compliance of received training with professional requirements of the labor market, the deficiency of qualified higher-education teaching personnel, even with the number of candidates and doctors of science, the low interest of the country in the matter considering training of experts in the field anti-crisis technologies.

2) An essential element, in our opinion, is practical training during the education. It is practice, which allows learning the profession in a best way.

3) Such an approach is required to teaching, where teacher will not simply give the knowledge, but also push them to learning, self-development and cultivation of essential qualities such as creativity, cognition and so on.

4) Due to the fact, that we live in a world, which is steadily growing, we need to act proactively. That means that educational plans, which have been introduced in Ukraine since the beginning, are of long standing; that is why our
task is to develop qualitatively new educational models to improve the quality of education of professionals in the field of crisis communications.

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Data przesłania artykułu do Redakcji: 05.05.2017
Data akceptacji artykułu przez Redakcję: 10.05.2017

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