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Press Agencies' News Service as a Tool to Support Media Literacy Development

ABSTRACT

The aim of this study is to present the selected findings of a research into the cooperation of The News Agency of the Slovak Republic with individual types of schools in the Slovak Republic, as well as to create a systematic overview of the current state and trends in this area. We have decided to examine the topic and illustrate its relation to individual types of schools in Slovakia as, within the conditions of the Slovak Republic, it still remains an unexplored area. This is one of the first comprehensive research tasks in Slovakia, which attempts to answer the questions concerning press agencies and schools within the context of media literacy development. The aim of this study is to analyze the cooperation of The News Agency of the Slovak Republic with individual types of school in Slovakia over the period of 2012-2016. We focus on the quantitative and qualitative analyses of secondary data created in the reviewed period within the framework of this cooperation. The second aim of the study is to present the results of research carried out at primary and elementary schools, the aim of which was to find out about the ways educational institutions utilize the services of the press agency within the concept of learning-by-doing when teaching media education. The research sample consisted of 2,164 elementary schools and 794 secondary schools from all regions of the Slovak Republic. We addressed these schools with an 11-item questionnaire examining the quantitative and qualitative aspects of cooperation with the public service News Agency of the Slovak Republic. At the same time, we analyzed the data created within this cooperation over the years 2012-2016. The news service provided by The News Agency of the Slovak Republic represents a tool used at Slovak primary schools, especially in the preparation of school media, as well as at teaching media education and other subjects. Nevertheless, the intensity of its use is undersized and there are still quite a number of schools that do not use this valuable service in their educational activities at all.

KEY WORDS

Media literacy. Media education. Press agencies. Learning-by-doing.

1. Introduction

A press agency is a specific type of media institution whose main mission is to provide services to a broad spectrum of subscribers. We talk mainly about publishers of periodical press, radio and television broadcast operators, news portals, PR agencies, commercial companies, as well as various public service and state institutions. The news service of a press agency includes text news, but also pictorial material – especially in the form of photos, infographics and, with an increasing frequency, short videos. Osvaldová et al. characterise a press agency as an institution that gathers, processes and provides news information to subscribers from its mother country, but also from abroad. Most of the information is verbal and pictorial, but there is also information about interesting events and happenings at home or in the world. They also mention that traditional production in the form of text and photographic news has been enriched by infographic service, audio service and audiovisual service. They divide press agencies on the basis of their content and material profile into universal press agencies (e.g. Reuters, AP, AFP, ITAR-TASS, DPA, ČTK) and specialised press agencies – for example sport (SID), church (KNA) and others.¹

Agency news has its own specific features: in most cases it is the type of news with a standard genre structure that brings current and general information without an emotional impact and commentary features. The standard structure of agency news requires the editors to treat it only as base material that needs to be edited: e.g. shortened, reworded, completed, captioned or commented. At the same time, the target group of readers and a periodical's focus have to be borne in mind. Only some material supplied by an agency is left in its whole original form, untouched by editors. A. Herfroy-Mischler remarks that the best venue to study the media narrative is the content analysis of press agency coverage.²

As part of the ongoing expansion of services in the last decade, press agencies have been providing their subscribers with graphic services that appeals to recipients in a more convincing way than extensive journalistic texts. Van der Meer et al. remark that „news agencies are very important sources for all kind of media“.³ In simple terms, press agencies' news services provide their subscribers with a priceless service not only for its great promptness, but also for verifying and completing information about current phenomena. The effectiveness of a press agency is multiplied by the fact that its news is, via other mass media, made available to a great number of recipients, by which it significantly affects the content orientation of news in press, radio and television. This way it affects public opinion in the whole country. A. Gynnild argues: „A news agency is a networked organization that collects, produces and disseminates large amounts of news items to vast numbers of global and local clients“.⁴ A news press agency in a pluralistic society serves all subscribing editorial offices regardless of their ethnic and political affiliation and therefore it is its obligation to respect the principles of news objectivity and impartiality. R. Leśniczak uses a similar argument: „The one who informs should offer true and objective information to society, with guaranteed respect or authentic cultural values. Freedom will not exist without such respect, and without freedom of information, democracy will not develop, and other human rights will fade“.⁵ A press agency's basic device is the fact that its news should only contain facts, without a suggestion of a subjective opinion of an agency's editor. Most press agencies refrain from providing commented news.

¹ OSVALDOVÁ, M. et al.: *Praktická encyklopedie žurnalistiky a marketingové komunikace*. Praha: Libri, 2007, p. 18. [online]. [2016-12-25]. Available at: <www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/0965254X.2016.1195857>.

² HERFROY-MISCHLER, A.: When the past seeps into the present: The role of press agencies in circulating new historical narratives and restructuring collective memory during and after the Holocaust transitional justice. In *Journalism*, 2015, Vol. 17, No. 7, p. 831.

³ VAN DER MEER, T.G.L.A., VERHOEVEN, P., BEENTJES, J.W.J.: Disrupting gatekeeping practices: Journalists' source selection in times of crisis. In *Journalism*, Vol. 18, No. 9, p. 1121.

⁴ GYNNILD, A.: The Visual Power of News Agencies In *Nordic Review*, Vol. 38, Special Issue 2, p. 25.

⁵ LEŚNICZAK, R.: The Professional Formation of Journalists in Europe Analysis of Journalists' Obligations According to the Regulations Stated in the Editorial Guidelines of Press Agencies and Journals, and in the Ethical Codes of UNESCO and the European Union. In *Acta Universitatis Lodzianis. Folia Litteraria Polonica*, 2015, Vol. 28, No. 2, p. 74.

For a news agency in the democratic system, the principles laid down in the past century by Lawrence Gobreight, a prominent correspondent for The Associated Press, an American news agency, apply. He relied on the following credo: „*My role is to report facts. The instructions I follow do not allow me for any comments about the facts. My reports are disseminated to newspapers that advocate a wide range of political opinions. Therefore I limit myself to undisputed information and I do my best to be true and impartial.*“⁶ The principle of not commenting applies not only to routine news but also to news analysis where the role of the agency reporter is to explain the relevance of the issue, to put the facts in context, or to indicate further developments. Another principle that applies here is that a press agency processes speeches, statements, resolutions, and communiqués neutrally, and in providing and paraphrasing them it thoughtfully deals with verbs and especially with adjectives. According to J. Johnston and S. Forde “*diversity of news sources is under much scrutiny due to the impact of the Internet on news delivery.*”⁷ It is not easy for a news agency to keep to the above mentioned principles; however, it is its inevitable duty, especially in the time when the impact of fake news is on the rise. News agencies’ news is spread also in the Internet environment and its misinterpreting and extracting facts from the context can pose a problem. Another problem that is observed is unauthorised use of agency news by website providers without a copyright agreement with the agency. R. Ritonga articulates a similar opinion and argues: „*The advanced computer-based communication technology and internet have become a threat for the existence of the national news agencies*”.⁸

Classification of press agencies

According to the scope of their activities and production, press agencies are divided into universal and specialised. Universal agencies have the dominant position in world news as they provide a wide range of news services. „*The archives of large national and international news agencies typically contain millions of articles, with thousands of new entries being added every day.*”⁹ These agencies usually process domestic, foreign and export news, they also offer documentary and graphic service, pictorial news and many of them provide economic services for the commercial, business and banking industry and also carry out publishing and promotional activities. The world press agencies have the greatest influence. The agencies generally referred to as world press agencies are: British Reuters, French Agence France Presse (AFP), American Associated Press (AP) agency and Russian Information je telegrafnoje agentstvo Rossii – Telegrafnoje agenstvo Sovetskogo sojuza (ITAR - TASS). National and international press agencies specifically have been the subject of a range of research.¹⁰

One of the basic characteristics of press agencies is an extensive network of branches and reporters all over the world, complemented by a technical apparatus allowing for continuous and fast information delivery from the places of events. The scope of press agency news includes millions of words in various language mutations aiming at thousands of subscribers in many countries of the world every day. International press agencies maintain their international status by having a network of branches and correspondents in important centres or world politics and economy. Their news activities also operate beyond the borders of the state. The agencies that fall within this group are agencies such as German DPA, Italian ANSA, Spanish EFE, Chinese HSIHUA agency, Japanese Kyódó, Polish PAP, Hungarian MTI, Czech ČTK agency and many others.

⁶ MINDICH, D.T.: *Just the Facts: How “Objectivity” Came to Define American Journalism*. New York : New York University Press, 1998, p. 109.

⁷ JOHNSTON, J., FORDE, S.: The Silent Partner: News Agencies and 21st Century News. In *International Journal of Communication*, 2011, Vol. 5, No. 1, p. 196.

⁸ RITONGA, R.: The Waned News Agencies: A Certainty. In *Jurnalski Bandung*, 2009, Vol. 3, No. 1, p. 62.

⁹ KIENREICH, W., GRANITZER, M., SABOL, V., KLIEBER, W.: Plagiarism detection in large sets of press agency news articles. In *Proceedings of 17th International Workshop on Database and Expert Systems Applications*, 2006, p. 181.

¹⁰ RANTANEN, T.: The globalization of news in the 19th century. In *Media, Culture and Society*, 1997, Vol. 19, No. 4, p. 605–620. ISSN 0163-4437. See also: Blondheim, M. (1994); Palmer, M.B.(1976).

Schools as subscribers to a press agency's news service

The subscribers to news agencies' news services include not only publishers of periodical press, televisions or other types of media organisations, but also various public service institutions. As L. Ha, K. Yoon and X. Zhang observe, *"the significant difference in news media use between the general population and college students."*¹¹ Within the conditions of the Slovak Republic, one of the most numerous subscribers of this kind are educational institutions. These are all primary and secondary schools and universities who have free access to news service and databases of the TASR public service press agency.

The News Agency of the Slovak Republic (TASR), in cooperation with the Ministry of Education of the Slovak Republic have made all its services and databases available to all schools in Slovakia free of charge. The aim of such projects is to provide all schools in the Slovak Republic with a general license for access to and use of the news agency's services, including archives, photo services, including archives and audio services, including archives. Schools can use this information within media education, civic education or extracurricular activities, whether in the creation of school magazines, school newspapers, or when carrying out other extracurricular activities. The information from the given news service databases can be used for free also by the authors of textbooks in their preparation or by suppliers of interactive educational content when creating such content.

In order to allow for the possibility of acquiring all school information, TASR has created a separate internet portal skolskyservis.sk which is accessible free of charge. The service consists of TASR news, but mainly of multimedia contributions from pupils, students and teachers. TASR currently has a wide range of reporters from schools who send their news on the web each day. TASR issues editorial press passes for them designated as Editor – junior and Editor – co-worker.

School media as an environment for media literacy development

The creation of a school magazine is part of the practical part of media education. It represents the concept of learning-by-doing which is supposed to provide space for students to try out the process of practical editorial work. *"Most European countries include media education in their formal education systems as a separate subject or as a part of other subjects with corresponding content. Media education is also a part of non-formal education in many countries."*¹² The work of students in school media has some features that are similar to those of the professional media; nevertheless it significantly differs from working in the professional media. It is related, in particular, to organisational and time factors as student media do not operate on a professional basis and they only have enthusiastic students who perform editorial work rather as a hobby.

A. Tušer mentions that an inseparable part of school magazines are contributions informing about current happenings at schools and in their surroundings. The most suitable form to present such current happenings is journalistic speech, in which the author adopts an acceptance opinion on events, facts and phenomena. The outcomes of adopting such opinions are journalistic genres. Before creating journalistic genres it is necessary to become familiar with the basic journalistic terms.¹³

Students often reflect on how they can express their opinions and spread them further in a way so that both their peers and their teachers will learn about them. One of the means to express students' thoughts is a school medium. The most popular media in primary and secondary schools in Slovakia are school print media, i.e. school magazines or school newspapers. These mostly inform about school events or about interesting facts in the region where the school is located.

¹¹ HA, L., YOON, K., ZHANG, X.: Consumption and Dependency of Social Network Sites as a News Medium: A Comparison between College Students and General Population. In *Journal of Communication and Media Research*, 2013, Vol. 5, No. 1, p. 1.

¹² PETRANOVÁ D., HOSSOVÁ M., VELICKÝ P.: Current Development Trends of Media Literacy in the European Union Countries. In *Communication Today*, 2017, Vol. 3, No. 1, p.55.

¹³ TUŠER, A. et al.: *Vydávame školský časopis*. Zvolen : Technická univerzita vo Zvolene, 2005, p. 6.

Radio as a school medium at primary and secondary schools is used mostly as an information tool for various types of announcements aired during tuition. Pupils and students rarely have the chance to creatively work in this medium. Probably the least used school medium at primary and secondary schools is school television. Rather widespread is the use of internet media, especially in the form of news on websites. „*The present development of Internet Journalism (journalism applied in the online environment) confirms processes comparable to the development of the genres in traditional print and electronic media (periodicals, radio, television)*.”¹⁴ Practically oriented media education aimed at creating media products is relevant in every school. It provides students with current information, it offers gifted pupils or students a chance to apply their talents, express their feelings and opinions or criticism towards matters related to their school and the students who wish to study journalism may get some pre-training, for example in a secondary school magazine.

The role of students in creating a school magazine

A journalistic unit in a school media consists of journalistic and non journalistic speeches. Journalistic speeches are an essential component of each journalistic unit and they are somehow the result of an individual's journalistic activity. The second component consists of non journalistic speeches and these can be educational, popular science or artistic forms such as poems, short stories, jokes, riddles and photos. If a student wishes to be an implementer of some school media, it is necessary for them to adhere to the ethical rules of journalistic work. The students in the editorial offices of student newspapers, magazines or new media can agree on their own rules they will follow. Some of the professional journalistic codes can serve as an inspiration for them, though.

Even in a student editorial office it is necessary to deal with great topics of journalistic ethics, such as freedom of speech, the right to privacy and the topic of intimacy, the sensitivity to others but also the subject of decency and politeness. A student, as an implementer of a school media, should have a relationship to media as such, they should have knowledge gained through media education, they should know how to think critically and they should have certain media competence. The development of critical thinking is the basic building block for the development of media competences.¹⁵ It is only then that they can properly use the acquired knowledge for the benefit of the school media, create their own contributions and thus inform the future readers well. Not every student is suitable for such an extracurricular activity. First of all, they need to find this creative activity interesting, enjoyable and fulfilling. The results of their work move them forward and prepare them for their future vocation. Those who are fascinated by this work and find it fulfilling usually continue in studying mass media communication and become professionals in the area.

2. Objective

The aim of this study is to clarify the essence of the TASR School Service and its use by individual school types in the Slovak Republic. We focus our attention on creating a systematic overview of the current state and trends in this field. In the study we use methods of quantitative and qualitative research. The quantitative research strategy used in the study points to the current trend in using the TASR School Service by individual school types. We evaluate the data on the basis of completed questionnaires, as well as on the basis of the analysis of secondary data

¹⁴ PRAVDOVÁ, H.: The convergence of traditional and internet media – challenges and pitfalls. In *Marketing Identity: Brands we love I.: Conference Proceedings from International Scientific Conference*, Trnava : Faculty of Mass Media Communication, University of Ss. Cyril and Methodius in Trnava, 2016, p. 347.

¹⁵ PETRANOVÁ D.: Mediálna výchova. In MAGÁL, S., MATÚŠ, J., PETRANOVÁ, D.: *Lexikón masmediálnych štúdií*, Trnava : FMK UCM v Trnave, 2011, p. 403.

created within the cooperation of the press agency with schools. Our intention is to analyse and evaluate the cooperation between The News Agency of the Slovak Republic and individual types of schools in Slovakia hitherto and to create a comprehensive overview of the current state of cooperation between schools and the press agency.

3. Methods

The research study is devoted to the evaluation of cooperation between The News Agency of the Slovak Republic and individual types of schools in Slovakia over the period of 2012-2016. For the purpose of our survey we addressed primary and secondary schools in the Slovak Republic. By the means of sent questionnaires we contacted 2164 primary schools and 794 secondary schools from all regions of the Slovak Republic. The data collection took place between 1st February 2017 and 16th March 2017 via an electronic online questionnaire. In the final phase, 318 schools took part in the survey and answered all 11 items of the questionnaire

We also use the method of analysing secondary data gained from various sources, mainly statistical data and information obtained from schools and from the TASR press agency's databases. We processed and analysed the obtained data using quantitative and qualitative methods and evaluated them subsequently. We focus on how the addressed schools used the press agency's news service available free of charge and to what extent they worked with the provided data and news information. For the purposes of the research we had determined the following hypotheses that we tested:

Hypothesis No. 1

We assume that more secondary schools than primary schools use the news service of the TASR press agency.

Hypothesis No. 2

We assume that the schools publishing their school magazines use the news service of the TASR press agency more than the schools that do not publish their own school magazines.

Hypothesis No. 3

We assume that more than more than half of the schools that conduct media education in the form of a project or a course use the TASR news service.

4. Discussion

The TASR press agency's project aimed at cooperation with schools was launched in February 2009. The agency established a specialized portal called skolskyservis.sk for this purpose. From February 2009 to March 2017 the agency published more than 40 thousand reports within the school service. In addition to professional agency texts, this number also includes the news sent to the service by pupils, students and teachers. The complete TASR news services are available to 2,899 primary and secondary schools and 41 universities in the Slovak Republic. The TASR agency has also prepared a project called skolskenoviny.sk that offers schools a template for creating online versions of school magazines. These online school magazines are also given the opportunity to use all agency services, including text, pictorial and multimedia news.

All primary and secondary schools and universities in the Slovak Republic have access to the TASR School Service. Each school that is interested in the service is given a password to log in to the system. Teachers use the TASR news service as a source of information providing a daily overview of current news from home, from the world, or from various regions. They

use this information to educate their pupils or students. The TASR news service is also an excellent source for school magazines, school televisions or radios from which students can draw photos, news or videos for their creative work. It is not possible to use the information obtained in this way for commercial purposes, i.e. to make profit. The service can be used as a source of information for teachers when preparing for educational process, for their own information purposes or when preparing material for a conference, etc. However, when using the material, it is necessary to state the source of a text post, video or photograph.

The TASR news service brings schools news especially about happenings in the field of education, but also in other areas of social, political, economic and cultural life on a daily basis. The majority of news consists of TASR editors' production, the other part consists of contributions from teachers and pupils who can also send any news reports to the service.

Should someone wish to become an active contributor, first they need to register and they can enter their administrative zone using their login name and password. Via this zone they submit all their new articles and, at the same time, they can see all the articles they have posted so far. All submitted articles are reviewed by TASR editors who communicate with contributors via e-mail and thus can provide precious feedback on the articles by evaluating their strengths and weaknesses and helping the contributors avoid undesired mistakes in the future. It is very good if an article is accompanied by a picture that attracts attention to a particular text and thus raises the chances of wider readership. The TASR news service is a suitable means for the students to penetrate the media world. It provides them with the possibility of stating their publishing activity when applying to study journalism or mass media. It is also a way how to gain some work experience.

In the survey we were interested in whether a particular addressed school uses the skolskyservis.sk Internet portal which is accessible free of charge. Having analysed the 318 answers that we had received, we found that 140 schools use the service, which represents 44% of the received answers, and 178 schools do not use the free service, i. e. 56% of the schools that had responded. The findings made it clear that a higher percentage of the schools participating in the survey do not use the given service. Another question examined whether a particular school publishes a school magazine or a newspaper. Having studied the data provided by the responding sample, we found that 155 schools, i.e. 48,7%, publish a magazine or a newspaper and 163 schools, i.e. 51,3%, do not conduct such activity. We conclude that fewer schools are interested in the extracurricular activity of publishing a school magazine or newspaper.

In our survey we were further interested in whether the questioned schools run websites where they would regularly publish the news from the life of the school. We found out that 296 schools run their websites where they regularly publish news about school life, 16 schools do not have their own websites that would serve this purpose, i.e. 5,0%, and 6 schools, i.e. 1,9%, have such websites; however, they do not publish any news about school life there. It follows that 93,1 % of the schools participating in our survey have created a school website where they regularly publish news about school happenings.

Another question focused on whether the schools use the information from the skolskyservis.sk website when creating a school magazine or newspaper. The answers provided by the schools that publish a school magazine or newspaper and that participated in our survey show that 31 schools, i.e. 9,7%, use the information provided by the free internet portal and 287 schools, i.e. 90,3%, do not use this service at all. We found that only a small percentage of schools use the information published by the above mentioned website and that schools use this possibility minimally. Drawing information also from this source, that provides a great amount of free current information, whether from school environment or other areas, can be a great asset for each school and the information could be used when creating a magazine or a newspaper.

We were looking at whether school teachers use the information from the skolskyservis.sk website in their lessons (or when preparing for lessons). We found that the lesser part of teachers draw information from the given source when preparing for a lesson. Only 111

schools, i.e. 34,9%, stated that they use such information, however, 207 schools, i.e. 65,1% of the answers to the given question read that the teachers do not draw information from this source when preparing for tuition.

The question aimed at placing media education as a cross-cutting topic in each particular school's educational programme provided us with the answer that most schools that had participated in the survey, have placed media education as a cross-cutting topic in their educational programmes. 228 schools (71,7%) stated that they had included media education as a cross-cutting topic in their educational programmes, 90 schools (28,3%) have not included media education in their educational programmes in this way.

Another aim of our survey was to find out whether schools have ever conducted media education in a form of a project, course or other practically focused activities. The participating schools could have answered this question by selecting the choice of publishing school magazines or organising a discussion on the topic of, for example, cyber bullying or any other similar activities. We found that 248 schools, i.e. 78,0%, conducted media education also in this form, however, 70 schools, i.e. 22,0%, have not conducted media education via projects, courses or other activities. We think that the above-mentioned form of media education, as one of the suitable educational means, is an interesting form of implementing media education (within the system of school education) that can attract pupils and students, especially thanks to its innovativeness

The following question aimed at finding out whether media education is taught as an individual subject placed within school educational programmes. 30 schools (9,4%) stated that they teach media education as an individual subject placed within school educational programmes and 288 schools, i.e. 90,6% do not teach the subject in this form. It follows that media education is represented as an individual subject equal to other commonly taught school subjects within the educational process to only a very limited extent.

The survey results show that the schools which participated in the survey and provided their answers state that both their teachers and pupils/students use the skolskyservis.sk website to a lesser extent. They use the information it provides only when creating their school magazines or newspapers, but only those schools who conduct such activities. Similarly, media education as an individual subject is taught only to a lesser extent, however, media education as a cross-cutting topic within the schools' educational programmes, whether in the form of a project, a course or other activities is taught at most schools that have participated in our survey.

Within the quantitative research we further focused our attention on the empirical part of our study on several research questions. We were interested in how many contributors from among pupils and teachers have sent information to the TASR School Service in the years 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015 and 2016.

Hypothesis testing

Within hypothesis No. 1 we assumed that the TASR School Service is used by more secondary schools than primary schools. We found that the majority of secondary schools, 60 schools, i.e. 54%, use the given service and that 51 schools, i.e. 46%, do not use it. If we compare the utilization of such services by primary schools, we can see that 82 primary schools (40%) use this service and the majority represented by 125 primary schools (60%) do not use it. It follows that the established hypothesis No. 1 was confirmed, as the TASR School Service is used by more secondary schools (54%) than primary schools (40%).

Within hypothesis No. 2 we assumed that the schools publishing a school magazine use the TASR School Service more than schools that do not publish a magazine. In our research we focused on the question of whether the schools publishing a school magazine also use the TASR School Service. We found out that the schools publishing a school magazine use skolskyservis.sk to a greater extent than the schools that do not conduct this activity. We can see that 95

schools, i.e. 69%, publish a school magazine and, at the same time, they use skolskyservis.sk when doing so, whereas 43 schools, i.e. 31%, do not engage in an extracurricular activity, they do not publish a school magazine or a newspaper, but they do use the TASR School Service for their own purposes. We found out that hypothesis No. 2 had been confirmed.

Hypothesis No. 3 assumed that more than half of the schools that conduct media education in a form of a project or a course use the TASR School Service. Analysis of the research data showed that less than half of the schools (114 schools), i.e. 31%, that conduct media education in a form of a project, course or other practically aimed activities use the TASR School Service. The majority of schools (248), i.e. 69%, conduct media education in a form of a project, course or other practically aimed activities, but they do not use the TASR School Service. Hypothesis No. 3 has not been confirmed.

The information we obtained from the databases of the News Agency of the Slovak Republic made it possible for us to see how different types of schools, pupils and teachers, both groups separately, use the TASR School Service. Thanks to the comparison of the collected data we were able to observe how different types of schools joined the service. We found that secondary schools, both the students and the teachers showed the highest values in terms of the number of contributors as well as in terms of the number of articles submitted to the TASR School Service. We also found that the year 2014 – 2015 was the most active one with the highest number of contributions to the TASR School Service from all types of schools. An interesting finding was that primary school and university teachers showed the highest activity in 2016, unlike secondary school teachers who were most active in 2014 and 2015. Secondary grammar school teachers were the most active contributors, even in terms of the number of submitted articles, already in 2013. The year 2014 – 2015 was the least active one for them.

5. Conclusion

Although skolskyservis.sk is a free of charge internet portal available to all schools, the available data showed that, despite the fact that it has been running for several years, it is not sufficiently exploited by schools. Teachers do not reach out for the information provided by the TASR news service for educational purposes (either for media education or for other subjects) often enough. Even though media education has become an established topic in Slovakia, we can still see that in some cases schools show very little, even insufficient, interest in its inclusion to curricula. At present, schools still use the opportunity to teach this subject only as a part of another subject, course or project aimed at advancing in this field or as a part of other educational activities or as a cross-cutting topic. However, media education as an individual subject currently absents in large numbers. At the same time, there are many schools that have access to the news service of the TASR agency, but they do not use it at creating school media at all. The reason for this is, according to our findings, poor awareness of the possibilities of using these information services which persists not only among students but also among teachers of many schools. A solution leading to the optimization of the situation could be teacher training aimed at the opportunities which the news service provides to schools, as well as the development of methodological material for teachers that would help them embrace these valuable media sources so they could work with them in lessons or in the creation of school media.

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