

**AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF CENTRAL ASIA**

This thesis submitted in in partial fulfillment of the requirements for Bachelor of Arts degree at  
the department of Journalism and Mass Communications

**TRANSITION OF THE KYRGYZ NATIONAL TELEVISION AND RADIO  
BROADCASTING CORPORATION FROM GOVERNMENTAL TO PUBLIC SOURCE  
OF INFORMATION**

By Varvara Lokteva

Thesis supervisor: Dinara Akmatbekova

Department of Journalism and Mass Communications

American University of Central Asia

Bishkek, 2012

**TRANSITION OF THE KYRGYZ NATIONAL TELEVISION AND RADIO  
BROADCASTING CORPORATION FROM GOVERNMENTAL TO PUBLIC SOURCE  
OF INFORMATION**

2

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

I would like to thank Gulnura Toralieva, JyldyzKuvatova, Elena Skochilo, Dinara Akmatbekova  
and my parents for being patient while I was writing this paper.

**TRANSITION OF THE KYRGYZ NATIONAL TELEVISION AND RADIO  
BROADCASTING CORPORATION FROM GOVERNMENTAL TO PUBLIC SOURCE  
OF INFORMATION**

3

**ABSTRACT**

The current research looks at the historical and economical background of the public broadcasting establishment in the Kyrgyz Republic. Nowadays the topic of public media is quite unexplored and needs deep investigation of its specific features which are unique for the Kyrgyz way of public broadcasting, where politics plays an important role. This study examines the changes which were made after the reforming of KTR to NTRC and what effect these changes had on its financial, management and editorial sides. Based on evaluation of NTRC capacity, some recommendation will be offered. The first part of this study is devoted to an overview of the background facts of the public broadcasting development in Kyrgyzstan, while the following part discusses the findings from examination of the current status of local public broadcasting service.

**TRANSITION OF THE KYRGYZ NATIONAL TELEVISION AND RADIO  
BROADCASTING CORPORATION FROM GOVERNMENTAL TO PUBLIC SOURCE  
OF INFORMATION**

4

**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

Chapter I: Introduction	7
Public Television and Radio in Kyrgyzstan	8
Chapter II: Problem Statement	11
Research Question	11
Chapter III: Theoretical Approach	12
Chapter IV: Methodology	13
Interviews	13
Survey	14
Chapter III: Literature Review	15
Chapter V: Findings	20
Chapter VI: Conclusion	27
Discussion	27
Limitations	28
Recommendations for Further Research	29
Recommendations on NTRC's Reforming	30
Bibliography	32
Appendix A	34
Appendix B	37

**TRANSITION OF THE KYRGYZ NATIONAL TELEVISION AND RADIO  
BROADCASTING CORPORATION FROM GOVERNMENTAL TO PUBLIC SOURCE  
OF INFORMATION**

5

**ABBREVIATIONS**

NTRC – National Television and Radio Broadcasting Corporation (public)

KTR – National TV and Radio Corporation (state-owned)

PSB – Public Service Broadcasting

IG – Interim Government

SB – Supervisory Board

AT – Art Council

RFE/RL – Free Europe and Radio Liberty

ORT – Public Russian Television

NGO – Non-governmental organization

**TRANSITION OF THE KYRGYZ NATIONAL TELEVISION AND RADIO  
BROADCASTING CORPORATION FROM GOVERNMENTAL TO PUBLIC SOURCE  
OF INFORMATION**

6

**LIST OF TABLES**

Table 1: *Timeline of events 2005-2010*

Table 2: *Amount of stories in news block on specific topics*

Table 3: *How did you get a job at NTRC?*

Table 4: *Did you have profiling education for you position?*

Table 5: *Do you feel SB is working?*

## **INTRODUCTION**

"Journalist can be a journalist only working on the public television. There is an undefined contradiction between power and journalist: power understands which information is good and which one is bad and when information can be disclosed.

Public TV works for people's interests, where interests mean being aware of everything." – Vladimir Pozner

Kyrgyzstan is a Central Asian country underwent through two political revolutions and a range of interethnic conflicts during last years. Every time when public discussions touch the theme of political or social changes in the country, mass media become one of the hottest topics on the agenda. Nowadays media are the most powerful tool to shape and control public opinion. People receive information through the media, and the image of the situation is constructed in their minds based on what they perceive from the media. One of the aspects influencing public perception of governmental bodies or any other institutions in the country is media; this is why authorities and civil society will always compete in achieving control over what is broadcast through the media in the sphere of their interest.

The same situation happens in Kyrgyzstan as well. Every time when the county was in unstable political position, authorities raised a question of establishing a public broadcasting service. They want to differ from their predecessors and bring a breath of fresh air into society by giving them access to "independent" and "objective" media channel in the form of a public one, even if the level of this independence and objectivity is planned to be controlled by the same authorities. Today it is a feature of an independent and truly democratic state to have independent media, through which public can speak out.

# **TRANSITION OF THE KYRGYZ NATIONAL TELEVISION AND RADIO BROADCASTING CORPORATION FROM GOVERNMENTAL TO PUBLIC SOURCE OF INFORMATION**

8

Currently, Kyrgyzstan is in the transition way to democracy and has taken and is still taking steps towards establishing public television. These steps are: organizing structure of the independent Supervisory Board, identifying principles of financing, and creating a law for soft transition from model law to national law.

## **Public Television and Radio in Kyrgyzstan**

It is possible to say that public broadcasting service on the basis of National TV and Radio Corporation (KTR) was born twice. The first time was when in 2005, after the March Tulip Revolution, the first president of the Kyrgyz Republic Askar Akaev left the country and this position was occupied by Kurmanbek Bakiyev. During Bakiyev's presidency, the first attempt to establish public television was made, and National TV and Radio Corporation (KTR) transformed into a Public State Television. On April 2, 2007 the law on National Radio and Television Corporation (Закон Кыргызской Республики «о национальной телерадиовещательной корпорации») was adopted. According to the legislation, a control board, or, in the other words, supervisory board, consisting of 15 members, was to be established: five people were recommended by the President, five by parliament and five – representatives of civil society. The decree said that duties of the supervisory board would include selection of the corporation's managers and control over the programme products. However, the whole procedure of supervisory board formation and selection of its members was criticized by the public. There were facts saying that there had been only one meeting of the board members, and the lack of consistency in their work was quite obvious.

The next Law on Television and Radio was adopted on April 24, 2008, cancelling the previous one. According to this law, local TV channels are required to generate 50 percent of the



## **TRANSITION OF THE KYRGYZ NATIONAL TELEVISION AND RADIO BROADCASTING CORPORATION FROM GOVERNMENTAL TO PUBLIC SOURCE OF INFORMATION**

9

air content by themselves and half of the broadcasting materials has to be in Kyrgyz language. This law prescribes a supervisory board as well, but had another significant disadvantage: it did not stipulate inclusion of civil society representatives in this body. The President had power to appoint the Director General of the channel and nominate members of the supervisory board with prior approval of the parliament. Approval of the organization's charter also was in the president's power.

After the second revolution in 2010, interim government (IG) raised a question of public television. Creating PSB was among the first public promises of the IG, headed by Rosa Otunbaeva, after it got power when the former President Kurmanbek Bakiev was ousted from the country. On April 30, members of the new political body designed a Decree on Public Television and Radio. According to this Decree, the National Television and Radio Broadcasting Corporation (KTR) from a state-owned channel was to be transformed into a public channel (Charter, 2010). National Television and Radio Corporation was renamed into Public Broadcasting Corporation of the Kyrgyz Republic (NTRC). NTRC is also known by its Russian-language initials as *OTRK*. Roza Otunbaeva appointed 15 members of the supervisory board in a decree signed on 26 August. Since then, the supervisory board included representatives of non-governmental organizations, media experts, lawyers and journalists. In line with the new decree, elections for the NTRC's general director were designed to be held on a regular and competitive basis.

Today NTRC has the largest audience and territorial coverage compared to any other television channel in Kyrgyzstan. NTRC offers a wide range of informative, educational and entertainment broadcasting programs. This channel originally began broadcasting in 1958 as *Зыкеща* Soviet Government's effort to introduce television in every USSR republic.

## **TRANSITION OF THE KYRGYZ NATIONAL TELEVISION AND RADIO BROADCASTING CORPORATION FROM GOVERNMENTAL TO PUBLIC SOURCE OF INFORMATION**

10

Public television differs from government-owned in that it provides a variety of viewpointspoint of view, not just the one that government wants to hear, but the multitude that people wants to watch and hear. Thus television should be independent, without censorship, for public service, transparent, and controlled by citizens. President of Academy of Russian Television Vladimir Pozner shared his view on television in his TV programme “Pozner”:  
“Public television is television which does not depend on either government or advertiser. It depends only on the viewer. No one, neither the President nor the Prime Minister nor a financier, can’t interfere in its broadcasting policy. And importantly, this broadcasting is neither opposition nor pro-government, it is an objective, honest and genuinely informative. Can you imagine? I can.”

### **PROBLEM STATEMENT**

The main goal of this paper is to explain what was done in the reforming of KTR into NTRC, and what we really have now. Even if the role of media is widely discussed in the modern Kyrgyz society, it is difficult to find relevant research conducted in this field.

This study is an attempt to explain what NTRC is today, what has been done and what should be done to provide more quality content and create harmonious relations between the groups of people who manage such big national structure as Public TV and Radio Corporation in Kyrgyzstan. Since one of the most influential factors in the NTRC's reforming is politics, it is important to analyze how changes of the political regime in the country influenced the structure of PBS and what kind of public broadcasting system we might have in future.

RQ: What are characteristics of the current management system and editorial policy practiced by NTRC?

### **THEORETICAL APPROACH**

One of the theoretical approaches that is applicable to the current research is an analysis based on the agency theory. The main idea of this theory is that a firm can be viewed as a set of contracts between employees.

According to Jensen and Meckling (1976), a principal-agent relationship can be defined as “a contract under which one or more persons (the principal(s)) engage another person (the agent) to perform some service on their behalf which involves delegating some decision making authority to the agent” (p. 308).

In mass media world, any media organization can be viewed as ideological and economic entities because media influence public opinion, government policy, and voter behavior, agency theory covers a broader field of potential conflicts. Owners of these organizations may have other objectives for entering the media sector than return on investment, and agency theory offers a framework for the analysis of behavior of individuals within ideological organizations.

Agency theory raises a fundamental problem in organizations—self-interested behavior. A corporation's managers may have personal goals that compete with the owner's goal of maximization of shareholder wealth. Since shareholders authorize managers to administer the firm's assets, a potential conflict of interest exists between the two groups.

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **Interviews**

To create a complete picture of what NTRC is today it was not enough to examine Kyrgyz legislation on PBS, conduct a survey and even analyze the content of this medium. In-depth interviews were conducted in order to analyze what people who work in the media field think about the internal dynamics of NTRC, how they define the current situation and how they see the future of public broadcasting system in Kyrgyzstan.

This study reflects on several interviews with representatives of the Supervisory Board of NTRC, TV and radio reporters who work in this organization, journalists from other media outlets, and media analysts. Each interviewee was asked a different range of questions depending on his or her position and experience. Not all interviews were in-depth. Sometimes people gave their short comments via email or telephone calls. Some opinions were taken from the interviews previously published in the media.

The data derived from the surveys and interviews is represented below in charts and diagrams.

### **Survey**

Another part of the research was running two survey questionnaires. The first survey, designed in order to measure the basic knowledge of NTRC, was sent out to the representatives of the media sector: journalists, reporters, editors, members of the Supervisory Board, and also representatives from other media.

The second online survey was run among journalists and editors who work at NTRC. The goal of this survey was to get “an insider’s” perspective into NTRC’s functioning and its editorial policy.

### **Limitations**

Even though the research represents some findings in the sphere of public TV and radio outlet, it has several limitations. First of all, NTRC is a big media company with a long history and it needs time and hundreds of pages to explain what it was in the past, as a state-owned media, what role it has today, being a public media channel, and what perspectives of development it has for future. Moreover, it is impossible to talk about NTRC and not to mention changes in the political structure of the country. This media corporation is closely related to the ruling power and it is a quit time-consuming process to analyze each change or occurrence in the state body and its reflection on the working process of NTRC.

Beside this, not all representatives from media society realize the importance of conducting research on public broadcasting. As a result, they don’t pay much attention to providing relevant information and to be honest answering the questions. Such situation was noticed especially with young journalists and reporters.

The next limitation is a lack of other studies made in this field, because there are just several studies that can be taken as a basis for the following exploration. People realize the importance of having public media in order to become a fully democratic country, but few of them dare to work out this field in order to research possibilities of creating professional public broadcasting service in Kyrgyzstan.

Another limitation is that the public opinion on the role of public broadcasting can’t be measured, since population from the whole country should be involved in such research process.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Public Broadcasting Service**

To this date, scholars and researchers agree that the main idea of Public Service Broadcasting (PSB) is serving the needs and interests of the public. This goal is reflected in the ownership, funding and programming of public service broadcasting organizations. PSB should represent a platform for public discussion and spread ideas and information. Toby Mendel, head of Law Programme ARTICLE 19, a leading international human rights NGO based in London, in his work *Public Service Broadcasting: A Comparative Legal Survey*(2005) says that this factor is essential for the proper functioning of a democratic society. “PSB is of the public, for the public and by the public,” the article says.

Toby Mendel(2005) believes that three main conditions which are necessary for public service broadcasting system to reflect the public interest. First, the independence of public service broadcasters must be guaranteed through appropriate structures such as pluralistic and independent governing boards. Second, public service broadcasters must be guaranteed funding which is adequate to serve the needs and interests of the public. Third, public service broadcasters must be accountable to the public, especially since they use public resources (from taxes) (Mendel, 2005).

Eric Barendt notes six key features of public service broadcasting organisations (Broadcasting Law: A Comparative Survey, 1995):

- general geographical availability;
- concern for national identity and culture;
- independence from both the State and commercial interests;
- impartiality of programmes;

## **TRANSITION OF THE KYRGYZ NATIONAL TELEVISION AND RADIO BROADCASTING CORPORATION FROM GOVERNMENTAL TO PUBLIC SOURCE OF INFORMATION**

16

- range and variety of programmes; and
- substantial financing by a general charge on users.

Scholars generally agree that PSB is broadcasting which is non-profit, non-commercial, and supported by public funds (McChesney, 2000; McQuail, 2000). However, in Kyrgyzstan, according to Annual Report (2010) of NTRC, it is mainly funded by revenues accrued from advertising. This fact lies in the core of the ongoing public discussion on what a real PSB should be in Kyrgyzstan. Quite turbulent democratization of Kyrgyzstan and its unstable political situation during past six years made establishment of PSB an acute and debatable issue. The issue of PSB was debated every time when a revolution would happen in Kyrgyzstan as part of public's efforts to reduce control of the government over KTR as a tool for government to control the content of the local media. It had been put on the agenda through the historical development in Kyrgyzstan and was discussed even more widely at the time of two revolutions happened in 2005 and 2010 and during other political changes in the country.

The essential characteristics of any public television outlet are defined in various studies as editorial independence, public accountability, universal service and access, program diversity and pluralism to respond the needs and preferences of the audience (Mendel, 1998; Certimedia, 2003; Blumler, 1995).

International Media Support (IMS) in June 2010 published a report called "The media in Kyrgyzstan: A Window of Opportunity", analyzing the media in Kyrgyzstan. This study was conducted as part of IMS Mission to Kyrgyzstan in April 2010. Authors of this report prepared a table of the most crucial political events that affected Kyrgyz media sector in 2005 – 2010.



# TRANSITION OF THE KYRGYZ NATIONAL TELEVISION AND RADIO BROADCASTING CORPORATION FROM GOVERNMENTAL TO PUBLIC SOURCE OF INFORMATION

17

2005	2006	2007
<p><b>March 24th</b> <i>Tulip revolution</i> President <i>Askar Akaev</i> overthrown</p> <p><b>July</b> <i>Kurmanbek Bakiev</i> wins presidential elections. Promise to transform the biggest national broadcaster <i>KTR</i> from state to public broadcaster</p> <p><b>December</b> <i>ELTR</i> given status as public broadcaster</p>	<p><b>January</b> Government stops transmission to some regions of <i>Kyrgyz New TV Net (NTS)</i> and replaces it with <i>ELTR</i></p> <p><b>November</b> Public protests against lack of reforms under <i>Bakiev</i></p>	<p><b>April</b> <i>Law on National Radio and Television Corporation</i> adopted <i>Law on Access to Information held by State Bodies and Local Self-Government Bodies of the Kyrgyz Republic</i> adopted</p> <p><b>October</b> Murder of editor <i>Alisher Saipov</i></p>

2008	2009	2010
<p><b>June</b> <i>New Law on National Radio and Television Corporation</i> granting <i>Bakiev</i> more power over supervisory council</p> <p><b>March to September</b> Pressure and civil complaints against two independent newspapers end with both newspapers forced to close</p> <p><b>December</b> <i>KTR</i> refuses to transmit <i>Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty (RFE/RL)</i> content without prior government approval</p>	<p><b>July</b> President <i>Bakiev</i> reelected with 76% of the votes – an election criticized by the OSCE for biased media coverage</p> <p><b>December</b> Murder of independent journalist <i>Gennadiy Pavliuk</i></p>	<p><b>January to March</b> Prices increase on basic commodities Demonstrations against <i>Bakiev</i> in several cities across the country Several media outlets closed, radio transmissions disturbed and internet sites blocked by the government</p> <p><b>April</b> 6th: Demonstration in Talas turned violent 7th: Large uprising in Bishkek 8th: Interim Government (IG) announced 15th: <i>Bakiev</i> flees the country IG declares that <i>KTR</i> will again broadcast <i>RFE/RL</i> content and that reform to transform <i>KTR</i> to public broadcaster will be pursued</p> <p><b>May</b> 19th: Large pro <i>Bakiev</i> demonstrations in Jalal-abad 21st: Draft Constitution published by IG Charter on ethical principles for journalists and media adopted</p>

<p><b>June</b> 10 -14th: Violent upraise in Osh 27th: Referendum on IG and new Constitution</p> <p><b>October</b> 10th: Parliamentary elections</p>
---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

Table 1: *Timeline of 2005-2010 events*

This table is useful to understand the linkage between political situation and some facts from NTRC's reform experience and changes in its structure.

### **Agency theory**

According to Sune Tjernstorm, agency theory describes any organization as a link of two-person contracts between owner and employees where the owner or, in the other words, a principal, uses accounting information to control the employee. He describes the key concepts of agency theory as the following: self-interest, adverse selection, moral hazard, signaling, contract, and an asymmetric information (Tjernstorm, 2002). This theory seems particularly useful for the analysis of conflicts between levels in the media organizations, which is the main reason why agency theory is supposed to be one of the most appropriate for an analysis of the public service media firms.

Napoli in his work "A Principal-Agent Approach to the Study of Media Organizations: Toward a Theory of the Media Firm" (1997) suggested that the political dimension of media organizations makes agency theory particularly useful for the analysis of relationships among owner-management and management-employee. Concerning this issue, Rydbeck (1990) gave a vivid account of differences of opinion between the government and public service management.

## **TRANSITION OF THE KYRGYZ NATIONAL TELEVISION AND RADIO BROADCASTING CORPORATION FROM GOVERNMENTAL TO PUBLIC SOURCE OF INFORMATION**

19

Napoli (1997) also suggested that managers, editors, and journalists may differ politically on how a particular political issue should be covered. According to him, often the journalist may be free to act according to his or her preferences; content that deviates from ownership or management preferences can be produced.

Sune Tjernstrom in his work “Theoretical Approaches to the Management of the Public Service Media Firm” (2002) says that hiring practices is often cited as a method of controlling journalists. Internal control involves censorship in advance that may be as effective as external, explicit control.

In the end, the implications of the principal–agent approach for the study of the production of media content highlight some unexplored areas of investigation for those taking an organizational approach to the subject. Media content is affected by a complex interaction of organizational factors, including professional and ideological characteristics of the organizational members at all levels of the hierarchy, the methods of implicit control employed, and structural factors such as organization size and ownership type. (Napoli, 1997, p. 216)

According to Tjernstrom (2002), agency theory can also be applied to other lines of controversy, such as “potential conflicts between citizens and elected politicians who determine the rules of the game in public service media firms” (Tjernstrom, 2002).

### **Agency theory**

According to Sune Tjernstorm, agency theory describes any organization as a link of two-person contracts between owner and employees where the owner or, in the other words, a principal, uses accounting information to control the employee. He describes the key concepts of agency theory as the following: self-interest, adverse selection, moral hazard, signaling, contract, and asymmetric information (Tjernstorm, 2002). This theory seems particularly useful for the analysis of conflicts between levels in the media organizations, which is the main reason why agency theory is supposed to be one of the most appropriate for an analysis of the public service media firms.

Napoli in his work “A Principal-Agent Approach to the Study of Media Organizations: Toward a Theory of the Media Firm” (1997) suggested that the political dimension of media organizations makes agency theory particularly useful for the analysis of relationships among owner–management and management–employee. Concerning this issue, Rydbeck (1990) gave a vivid account of differences of opinion between the government and public service management. Napoli (1997) also suggested that managers, editors, and journalists may differ politically on how a particular political issue should be covered. According to him, often the journalist may be free to act according to his or her preferences; content that deviates from ownership or management preferences can be produced.

Sune Tjernstrom in his work “Theoretical Approaches to the Management of the Public Service Media Firm” (2002) says that hiring practices is often cited as a method of controlling

journalists. Internal control involves censorship in advance that may be as effective as external, explicit control.

In the end, the implications of the principal–agent approach for the study of the production of media content highlight some unexplored areas of investigation for those taking an organizational approach to the subject. Media content is affected by a complex interaction of organizational factors, including professional and ideological characteristics of the organizational members at all levels of the hierarchy, the methods of implicit control employed, and structural factors such as organization size and ownership type. (Napoli, 1997, p. 216)

According to Tjernstrom (2002), agency theory can also be applied to other lines of controversy, such as “potential conflicts between citizens and elected politicians who determine the rules of the game in public service media firms” (Tjernstrom, 2002). Public media organizations need to be analyzed not only in terms of management control or journalism professionalism but also in the terms of organizational goals.

## **FINDINGS**

National Television and Radio Corporation (NTRC) follows the guidelines set in the Public Service Broadcasting Law, which was drafted by Toby Mendel, Law Program Director, and Article 19. There are many examples of the transition in national television channels. In the case of Ukraine, which was striving for public television for many years, this media body is provided with well-structured form of governing bodies, which have its own duties: Directory Board, Governing Board, and the President. Both directory board and governing board are collective bodies. The difference is that Directory Board deals with strategic issues, project policies and controls its performance, whereas governing body deals with financial and governing issues. In Kyrgyz PSB system, the managing director, who is appointed for five years, fulfills the duties of a crisis manager. His responsibilities included development of crisis plan on the transition from the governmental broadcasting to the public. The managing or general director deals with 'problematic' questions and has the plan that should bring transition to the successful point.

Another controversy was the question of funding. According to the first version of the bill, the proposed NTRC's budget was to be set as no less than 0.12% of the country's GDP. Taking into account the fact that Kyrgyzstan's GDP currently stands at more than 200 billion soms, the budget of the channel is approximately more than 250 million soms. In 2010, its state-funded budget was about 300 million. NTRC managers want to have their budget increased at least by additional 50 million.

Besides seven interviews, an anonymous survey was conducted where 21 people took part. It contained a question on the way how an employee of NTRC obtains his or her position.

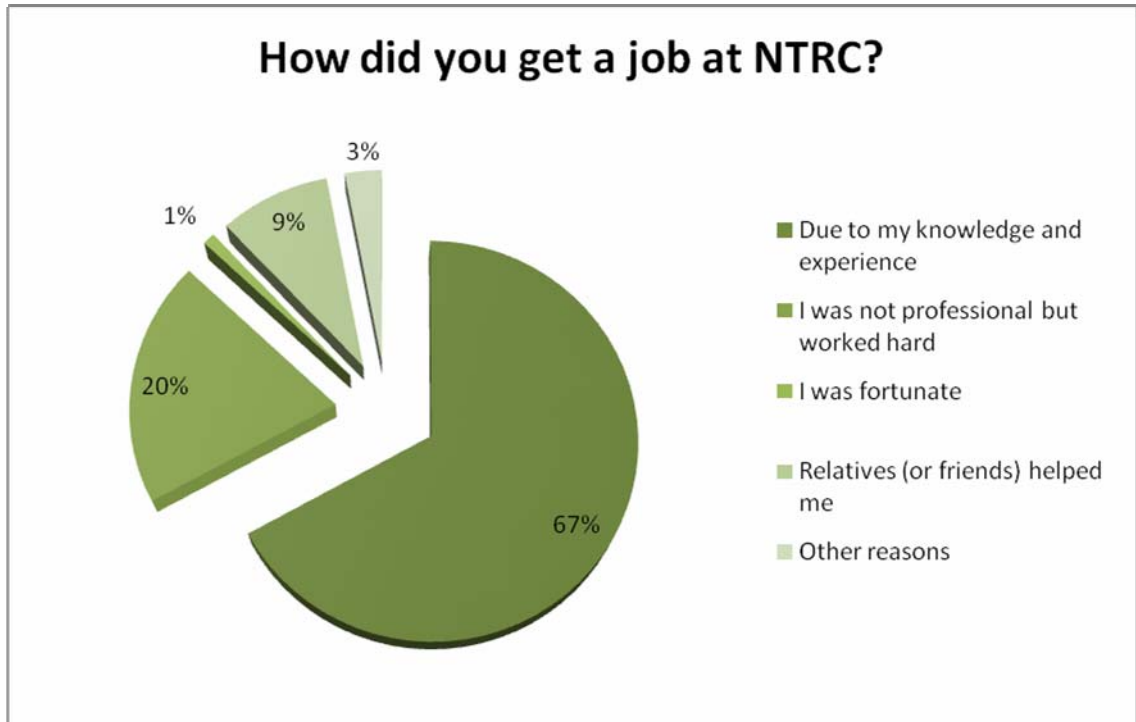


Table 3: *How did you get a job at NTRC?*

This question was important to ask because it illustrates what the requirements for being hired are. Such data helps to realize that, according to the answers of the survey participants, the majority of NTRC’s employees were selected due to their professional skills and experience in the required sphere. Nevertheless, almost 10% of interviewees confess that they were accepted because “somebody called on the phone to somebody”.

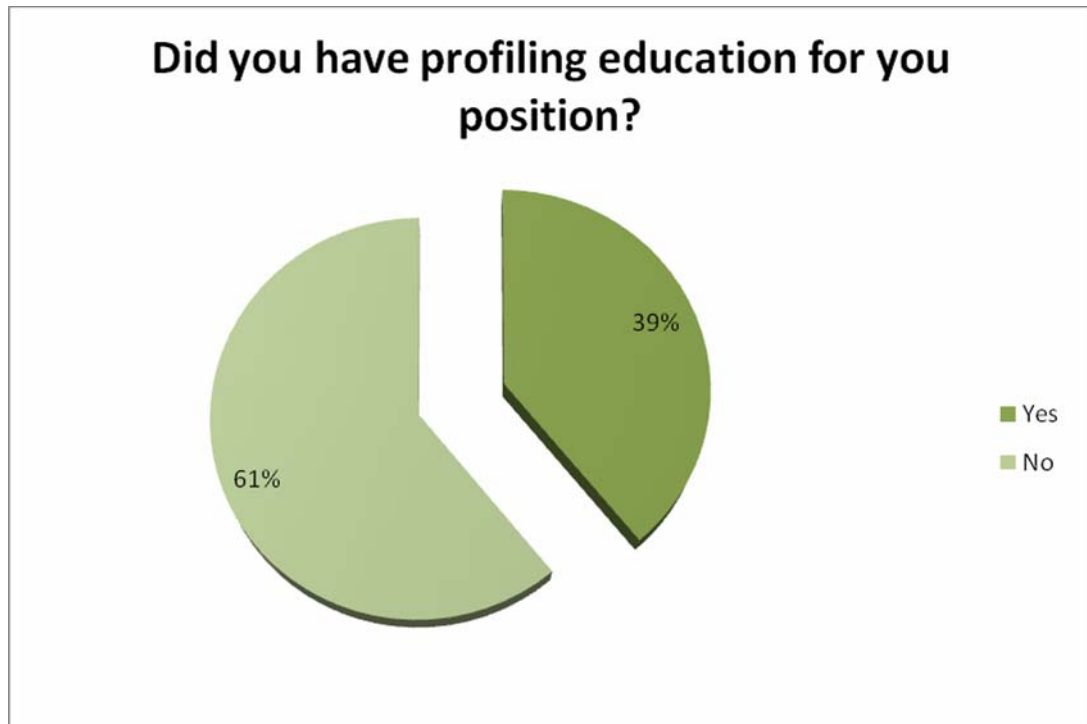


Table 4: *Did you have profiling education for you position?*

Question on the educational background is important it to talk about the future of PBS in Kyrgyzstan. Nowadays, it is said that government gave two MultiPlex units for all TV channels and soon they will transform into digital broadcasting. Will NTRC have enough professional personnel in order to produce its own content? The results show that less than half of the survey participants have educational background in the sphere they work now. Probably it happens due to the collapse of Soviet Union. During the Soviet time people studied in engineering, physics, chemistry or other sciences. After the collapse, they couldn't find a well-paid job in this field and had to look for a new one, very often it was a sphere far from what they studied. However, this fact not always disturbs the working process, because after getting experience in the new work, they could be quite successful in it. It could be explained by the following fact: practical skills can substitute theoretical knowledge and, as a result, the worker can be even more literate than



## **TRANSITION OF THE KYRGYZ NATIONAL TELEVISION AND RADIO BROADCASTING CORPORATION FROM GOVERNMENTAL TO PUBLIC SOURCE OF INFORMATION**

25

those who came after universities. This is just an assumption which tries to explain how NTRC exist even almost 60 percent of its staff had education not in the sphere they work in.

Almost all of the interviewees and survey participants mention that there is a sustainable dynamic in development of the Kyrgyz public television and radio. The result of the survey illustrated that 69 percent of the people, who took part in the online survey, sure that today concept of public interest is reflected “enough” in NTRC’s editorial policy. Moreover, all of them suppose the concept of public interest is reflected in the legislation of the local PSB. Although NTRC is a public television channel, more than a half of respondents marked members of Jogorku Kenesh as the most influential figures in determining topics to be covered and in news agenda-setting process. In other words, parliament can indirectly control the final products of NTRC’s journalists. This fact can be related only to the news editorial office, like information and analytical Ala-Too studio.

One of respondents, who didn’t want his name to be published, said that some journalists have their editorial heroes, activities of which they cover. These heroes are representatives of parliament and other power bodies. He says these journalists don’t need the scenario of the plot to be approved by editors. “They don’t need to wait until cameraman and technical equipment will be free. Everything is ready for them. And it is because somebody is very interested in this video to be shown,” he says.

On the question “Have you ever had topics for reportages which were given “from above”?” 10 percent of respondents answered “yes”. Actually, this fact doesn’t tell a lot and can not be considered as relevant information for several reasons. First, it is unknown who exactly participated in the survey. It could be journalist from child studio “Kelechek” or a cultural one –

## **TRANSITION OF THE KYRGYZ NATIONAL TELEVISION AND RADIO BROADCASTING CORPORATION FROM GOVERNMENTAL TO PUBLIC SOURCE OF INFORMATION**

26

“Ibarat”. Obviously, they will hardly get any political order from authorities (only if to make a video of somebody’s kid birthday).

Journalists sometimes don’t aware about the real responsibilities of the Art Council (русс. “Художественный Совет”). According to the replies, the need of the approval of the Art Council (AC) exists only on the beginning stage of project’s implementation. The majority of projects at NTRC work on the base of outside donors but not funding of the channel. Kasiet Karacholokova, a radio journalist who worked at Kabarlar Radio for more than six years says that AT could be gotten around if the project has its personal donor, like Soros, IMS or other international organizations. If a journalist who has an idea for future EMor Radio project doesn’t have a way where to get financing from, he or she has to go to AC, where members of the council will decide on “how this project will be profitable and whether it can attract donors”.

Nowadays, staff of NTRC consists of more than 780 people. Result of the survey shows that there are occasions when people are enrolled but they “don’t work and even don’t come to the channel”. There is a term for such employees – “dead souls” – borrowed from Russian writer Gogol.

A member of the NTRC’s Advisory Board Elena Voronina said that before the establishment of the official NTRC, this media corporation had no management system at all. According to her, it was a fully pro-governmental structure which produced and broadcasted information preferable only for the local authorities. Aibolot Aidosov, a journalist who is an author of several TV shows on NTRC thinks that OTRK can be considered as a small model of Kyrgyzstan. He said that like any other official agency, NTRC has a front side, where everything is according to the legislation, and a hidden side where there is corruption, representation of

## **TRANSITION OF THE KYRGYZ NATIONAL TELEVISION AND RADIO BROADCASTING CORPORATION FROM GOVERNMENTAL TO PUBLIC SOURCE OF INFORMATION**

27

personal interest and other problems. He says that he as a staff member of NTRC and an author of TV project “I change the world” doesn’t feel the Supervisory Board is doing something.

Media expert Elina Karakulova believes that the current Advisory Board doesn’t understand function of this management body. “SB’s member should understand they play a role of a lobby group. They have to protect NTRC from people who give orders “from above”. They have media – the best tool for persuasion, but they don’t use to say the audience that it is not right when public TV covers what authorities say. They have to spread out this idea not only among citizens, but also journalists and reports. Journalists should not afraid saying corrupted official “*You do not have a right to call me and demand!*” We do not have in mind that this is nonsense”, she says. According to her opinion, SB didn’t use their possibilities to the audience that only they own TV, but not Jogorku Kenesh, and ordinary citizens pay for this public broadcasting by their personal taxes.

About 70 percent of the survey participants agree that they didn’t notice significant role of the Supervisory Board.

According to Aidosov it happens because not all members are interested in the final result of their work. “We all used to work like in the Soviet time. If it is a state organization, it is “not mine”, the journalist believes. There is a need to create corporate ideology in order to attract people to work with the aim on result bu4t not just “work in the sake of work”.

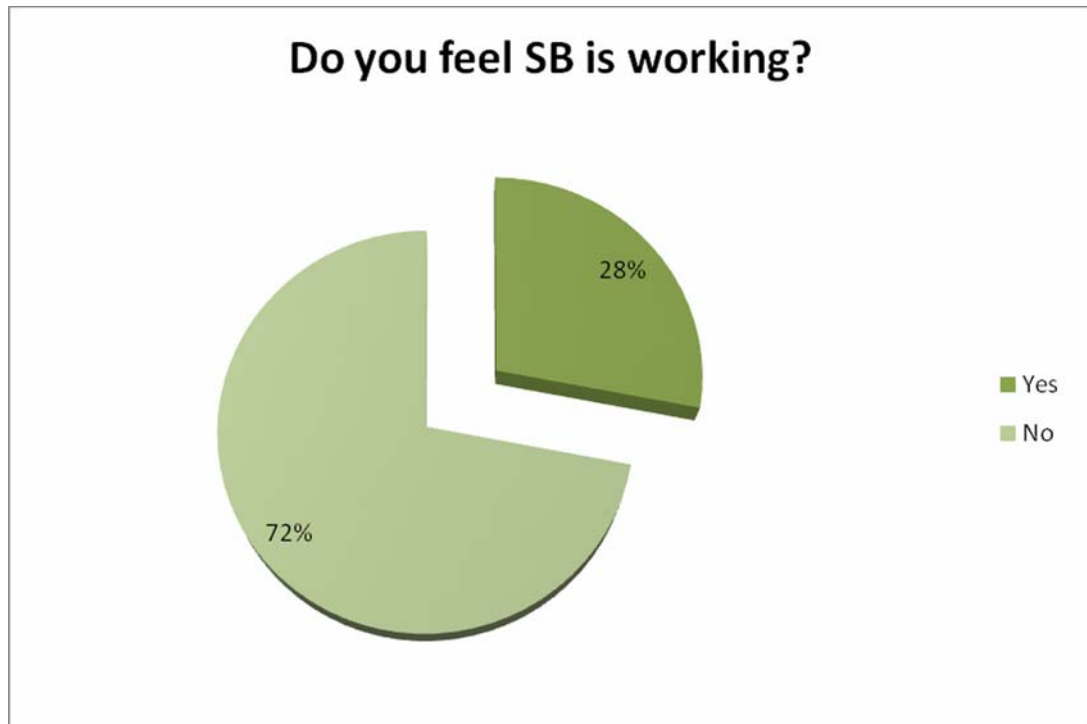


Table 5: *Do you feel SB is working?*

Such answers illustrate the differences of the opinion and attitudes of people from different groups – Advisory board and journalists’ team. This is a good example of how people of different position observe the working atmosphere in such big national media corporation as NTRC. This issue is a fruitful ground for conducting an analyzing research conducted on the agency theory, the main idea of which is coping with conflict situation between groups of people based on personal interests. Such findings illustrates that the current situation in NTRC management system leaves much to be desired, but anyway, all respondents emphasize positive dynamic of its inner development.

## **CONCLUSION**

### **Discussion**

It was found out by the research that some people who work in the media sphere and especially at NTRC believe that NTRC develops, but not due to reforming process but mostly by its own initial potential. It is like a baby who was left, anyway he will grow and develop but because the inner predetermination. It is interesting that this opinion is mostly shared by journalist and reporter, who are doing their work according to job descriptions.

On the other hand, people from the higher level, such as management representatives, and people from donor organizations have an opposite opinion. During interviews, it was mentioned quite often that international organizational, foreign donors and even local government try to do their best in order to give NTRC opportunity to develop according to the modern norms and requirements of public media. Regularly people from other countries with a successful experience in establishment of public TV and radio, such as Georgia, Denmark or Latvia, are invited to NTRC. They share their experience and skills they obtain passing through the difficulties they faced with at the initial stage. Sometimes local media people are sent there to see at their model of public broadcasting service and realize it in the Kyrgyz land.

Based on the existing results, it is possible to say that ordinary journalists don't have opportunity to participate in some trainings with international experts. Probably there is an inner division: who can be sent and who not. Even these journalists believe that the reason of not-always-honest system of sending NTRC's employees to other countries or inviting them to trainings depend on the same "tribal affiliation" or north-south division.

We live in a very interesting time in our country. Every person who has a power can make changes in the usual course of events. Future of the country, prosperous or not, and, as a result, the development of public media depends on today. Every action or decision may affect the future course of history. Two revolutions can happen in life of one person very rarely and it is important to get all necessary skills from this situation and carry it through the time for future generations. Thus, they can create more democratic and open society with free public TV, radio and other media with fewer efforts.

Kyrgyzstan is a unique country with its unique way of establishment of public media and it is important to take this fact into consideration while reforming it.

### **Recommendations for further research**

Since nowadays public broadcasting service in the Central Asian countries, and especially in Kyrgyzstan, is a topical issue which is currently in the process of being reformed, this sphere offers great variety for topics to be researched.

Further research can enlarge the current research and integrate new building blocks into the theory of public service media firms. In this case, empirical research can be useful for testing the relevance of the idea that public media firms have the similar management structure as nonprofit organizations and behave the same way in the modern media market. Another question that can be asked is “*Whether it is possible to have public television in Kyrgyzstan*” like other post-soviet countries have transferred from pro-governmental to independent public one.

It is interesting to explore the relations among NTRC staff: *how they communicate with each other and with their editors. Do they feel any discrimination because of their origin and*

*background? How does this reflect on the produced media products? What public TV we can have in future?*

There are assumptions that very soon NTRC will transfer to digital way of broadcasting and each of its current studios will turn into a separate channel, for example Kelechek can transfer to a channel for children, Ala-too – analogue of Euronews with never-ending news reports or live broadcast.

### **Recommendations**

There is a need to design strict rules for accepting an employee to NTRC. Based on the quotes from survey, very often people don't know their job description. Moreover in order to avoid situations when people work without having the proper education, internship terms should be introduced.

In order to motivate people to work hard and perform well at work, some changes should be done in the amount of staff members. Experts agree that about 800 people are quite much for NTRC. However some of these people were hired due to their tribal affiliation and in order to remove them from the list the whole corrupted structure should be destroyed. For now it is not seemed to be possible because corruption penetrates all spheres of modern life.

In order to attract investors and transform into digital broadcasting service, NTRC needs to publish results of financing, organizational and technical audits. It will help to illustrate transparency of the corporation, so investing companies can see what the income of NTRC is and how much it need in addition to provide the better content.

## **TRANSITION OF THE KYRGYZ NATIONAL TELEVISION AND RADIO BROADCASTING CORPORATION FROM GOVERNMENTAL TO PUBLIC SOURCE OF INFORMATION**

32

NTRC should make an accent on multimedia. Nowadays, in the world known media organizations reporters can work as a cameraman and a cutter. Allocate money for this purpose will let decrease the amount of employees by half. In Batken city, for example, there is a small state news service which broadcast only one hour per week and only for Batken city. The staff of this regional office is 30 people. The question arises what do they do and don't they eat a state budget. Elina Karakulova thinks that the reason why reforming process goes so slow is no change of quantitative composition.

Another way to raise motivation of people and to burn their desire for reforms is to select a responsible Supervisory board which will root for the common aim in achieving independent public television and radio.

Dina Tokbaeva, a media expert, says the editorial policy of NTRC is a reflection of the state policy. According to her, the main problem of NTRC is editors don't motivate journalists and reporters to produce better journalism. "It is not a problem of the only NTRC, but also of many other media outlets in the country, our media are not business projects. Everybody has fixed wage and nobody wants to work more than he or she paid," Tokbaeva says. In this case, there is a need to design a system of incentive system when employee will be interested in producing good results of their work. This reward could be not only material remuneration but also participating in international training and seminars, which from one hand will provide journalists a chance to go abroad, but also increase a level of local journalism.



## **BIBLIOGRAPHY**

Annual Report of NTRC (2010).

Blumler, Jay G. and Michael Gurevitch (1995). *The crisis of public communication*. London and New York: Routledge.

Barendt, E. (1995). *Broadcasting Law: A Comparative Survey*, Oxford, Clarendon Press.

Jensen, M. C., and Meckling, W. H. "Theory of the Firm: Managerial Behavior, Agency Cost and Ownership Structure." *Journal of Financial Economics*, 1976, 3, 305–360.

McChesney, R.W. (2000). *Rich Media, Poor Democracy; Communication Politics in Dubious Times*. New York: The New Press.

McQuail, D. (2000). *Mass Communication Theory*. 4<sup>th</sup> Edition. London: Sage.

Mendel, T. (1998). 'Public Service Broadcasting; Enabling Broadcasters to Play their Role Effectively.' In *Southern Africa Media Law Briefing*, Vol.3 No.4 (Nov).

Napoli, P. M. (1997). A principal-agent approach to the study of media organizations: Toward a theory of the media firm. *Political Communication*, 14, 207–219.

Radio Echo of Moscow. On Public Television. Retrieved 2012 Apr 15, from:

<http://www.echomsk.spb.ru/blogs/pozner/5162.php>.

Charter of NTRC (2010).

Rydbeck, O. (1990). *I maktens narhet: Diplomat Radiochef FN-ambetsman*. [Close to power: Diplomat, CEO in broadcasting, serving the United Nations]. Stockholm, Sweden: Bonniers.

Tjernstrom, S. (2002). Theoretical Approaches to the Management of the Public Service Media Firm. *Journal of Media Economics*, 15(4), 241–258.

**APPENDIX A**

**Survey Questionnaire: NTRC**

**Instructions: This survey was developed for a diploma research of Journalism and Mass Communications department's student of the American University of Central Asia. The purpose of this study is to analyze the current status of the National Television and Radio Broadcasting Corporation and its perception of media people. If you have any questions regarding the survey, please, contact Journalism and Mass Communications Department, AUCA, Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan.**

8. ФИО \_\_\_\_\_

9. РОД ДЕЯТЕЛЬНОСТИ \_\_\_\_\_

10. ПОЛ \_\_\_\_\_

11. ВОЗРАСТ

- a. 18-23
- b. 24-28
- c. 29-35
- d. 36-45
- e. 46 и боле

12. ОБРАЗОВАНИЕ/СПЕЦИАЛЬНОСТЬ \_\_\_\_\_

13. Кто финансирует ОТРК? (выберите не более трех ответов)

- a. Налогоплательщики.
- b. Частные инвесторы.
- c. Взносы зрителей.
- d. Доход от рекламодателей ОТРК.
- e. Другое.

14. Достаточно ли отражается понятие «общественного интереса» в редакционной политике ОТРК?

- a. Да.
- b. Нет.
- c. Не знаю.

Комментарии: \_\_\_\_\_

15. Достаточно ли отражается понятие «общественного интереса» в законодательстве Кыргызстана?

- a. Да.
- b. Нет.
- c. Не знаю.

**TRANSITION OF THE KYRGYZ NATIONAL TELEVISION AND RADIO  
BROADCASTING CORPORATION FROM GOVERNMENTAL TO PUBLIC SOURCE  
OF INFORMATION**

35

16. Изложите, пожалуйста, вкратце свое понимание концепции «общественного интереса» («своими словами»):

---

---

---

17. Кто самая влиятельная фигура в процессе реформы ОТРК в Кыргызстане?

- a. Президент.
- b. Парламент (кто: \_\_\_\_\_).
- c. Гражданское общество (кто: \_\_\_\_\_).
- d. Другие.

18. Назовите три самых сложных препятствия, которые мы должны пройти на пути к эффективной работе ОТРК?

Комментарии: \_\_\_\_\_

19. Как вы считаете, ОТРК должен существовать в Кыргызстане? (если «нет», переходите к 17 вопросу):

- a. Да.
- b. Нет.

Комментарии: \_\_\_\_\_

20. Назовите три плюса канала:

---

---

---

21. Назовите три недостатка канала:

---

---

---

22. Что бы вы сделали, чтобы исправить недостатки, указанные в пункте 14.

---

---

24. Самые важные, на ваш взгляд, три фактора, которые необходимо принять по внимание для проведения успешной реформы общественного телевидения:

1 –

2 –

3 –

25. Сколько часов в день вы смотрите телевизор?

a. 0-1

b. 2-4

c. Более 4

Если НОЛЬ, то объясните причины

---

---

---

26. Сколько часов в день вы смотрите ОТРК?

a. 0-1

b. 2-4

c. Более 4

27. Если НОЛЬ, то объясните причины \_\_\_\_\_

28. Какие программы ОТРК вы смотрите? \_\_\_\_\_

29. Принимали ли вы участие в реформах ОТРК? ДА – НЕТ

Если ДА, то расскажите подробнее:

**APPENDIX B**

**Survey Questionnaire: NTRC**

**Instructions:** This survey was developed for a diploma research of Journalism and Mass Communications department's student of the American University of Central Asia. All responses are anonymous. The purpose of this study is to analyze the perception of NTRC's employees the inner atmosphere at the corporation. If you have any questions regarding the survey, please, contact Journalism and Mass Communications Department, AUCA, Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan.

1. Как Вы устроились на ОТПК?

- a. По знакомству (друзья либо родственники посодействовали трудоустройству)
- b. Благодаря своим знаниям и опыту
- c. Я не был профессионалом в данной области, но усердно работал.
- d. Мне посчастливилось!
- e. Другие причины \_\_\_\_\_

2. Как долго Вы работаете на ОТПК? \_\_\_\_\_

3. Ваша должность: \_\_\_\_\_

(Можно указать лишь основную направленность, к примеру, корреспондент, редактор, оператор, монтажер, технический сотрудник).

4. Имелось ли у Вас профилирующее образование при устройстве на данную должность?

- a. Да.
- b. Нет.

Комментарии: \_\_\_\_\_

5. Как Вы думаете, сколько процентов из ваших коллег имеют специальное образование, а сколько из них «самоучки»?

Имеют образование- \_\_\_\_%

Самоучки-\_\_\_\_%

6. Имеется ли у Вас четко прописанный список обязанностей?

- a. Да.

30. Как Вы считаете, улучшается и качество информационного материала?

---

---

---

31. Чувствуете ли какую-либо дискриминацию в отношении себя либо своих коллег?

---

---

---

32. Отражается ли работа Наблюдательного Совета на Вашей деятельности?

Если «Да», то как? И если «Нет», то, как Вы думаете, почему это происходит?

---

---

---

33. В чем, по-Вашему мнению, заключается деятельность Художественного Совета ОТРК?

---

---

---

34. Если бы Вас завтра назначили на должность генерального директора ОТРК, какие бы изменения Вы сделали в первую очередь?

В структуре ОТРК \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

В системе менеджмента \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

В редакционной политике \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

В других сферах \_\_\_\_\_

---

---