



SEARCHLIGHTS AND SUNGLASSES

LEARNING LAYER

Sizing up the roadblocks to change

Niccolò Machiavelli was an Italian writer, statesman and philosopher during the Renaissance best remembered for his book on the realities of politics, *The Prince*. He wrote:

“It must be remembered that there is nothing more difficult to plan, more doubtful of success, nor more dangerous to manage than a new system. For the initiator has the enmity of all who would profit by the preservation of the old institution and merely lukewarm defenders in those who gain by the new one.”

Educators revealed the roadblocks in their way to rework their curriculum in interviews with [Inside Higher Ed](#):

1. **Change is more work.** Regional accrediting bodies require faculty to have advanced degrees unless an institution shows why the professional background of a teacher is relevant. This means there’s extra work when hiring professional faculty, according to Beth Barnes, director of the school of journalism and telecommunications at the University of Kentucky.
2. **Change requires money and approvals.** Barnes also noted that a journalism school may be willing to change, but can’t unless the university overseeing that school agrees. Money often is needed to build new, up-to-date facilities, but conflicting campus priorities can commit those dollars elsewhere.
3. **Change takes time.** It took decades for journalism education to expand from vocational education to the teaching of the intellectual foundation of a profession. It’s not reasonable to expect instant change.

Three levels of discussion for your class:

Flashlight: Are the roadblocks listed above the major ones? Are there other explanations? (Check out [these math and data tools](#), for example: Could it be that student journalists are just not good at math?) If Machiavelli’s statement does apply to journalism education, who profits by the preservation of the current system? Why don’t digital advocates make more noise?

Spotlight: Consider this article by Len Downie, former executive editor of the *Washington Post*, on [the roadblocks journalism schools face to implement the "teaching hospital" model](#). Given the roadblocks, do you think journalism

education can accomplish the “drastic changes” called for by Downie?

Searchlight: Ask students to read the research below on journalism education reform.

- Cherian George at Nanyang Technical University of Singapore wrote in his 2011 research *Beyond Professionalization: A Radical Broadening of Journalism Education*, that he saw the need for change in undergraduate journalism education. He argued that journalism is a human right, and should be taught and practiced as such. He called for an emphasis on journalists, as representatives of all people, having access to all information.
- Tim Vos at the University of Missouri, in his 2012 article *Homo journalisticus: Journalism education's role in articulating the objectivity norm*, discusses how the concept of objectivity was naturalized in journalism education from the 1890s to the 1940s.

Class discussion: Should these changes happen? How?