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**On The Way to Becoming Experts-
SSU Student Journalists' Self-Directed Learning**

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It has been a tough journey for me to finish my thesis, but I believe all the hard work is worth it. I have always enjoyed the time writing this study, because this study also represents my development as a former SSU member. Before I became a member of IMICS, I was a non-journalism major who wished to become a journalist. I attended several journalism workshops, or training camps pursuing a chance to gain advanced journalistic training. I have been through several obstacles and challenges on my way of becoming a journalist. By presenting this study, I hope it can help future student journalists to take on a more effective way to have their journalistic training.

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Abstract

Studies have shown a discrepancy between what journalism education provides and what the industry desires. The root of this problem lies in the absence of providing procedural knowledge to students in classrooms. To provide a solution to this issue, this study examined the Self-Directed Learning (SDL) interactive model adopted by the Student Sports Union. Employing a semi-structured in-depth interview, this study examined the process through which eight journalists in the Student Sports Union (SSU) became experts. The results show that the SSU journalists' SDL model promotes theoretical knowledge, hands-on experience, and an applied skill set for journalism, which are useful for transforming student journalists from novice to expert.

Keywords: SDL, SSU, sports journalist, sports journalist cultivation, novice vs. expert



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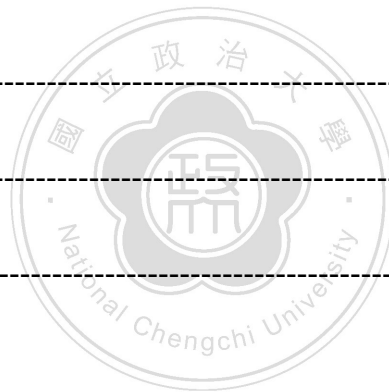
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1. Introduction

The importance of journalism education is clearly stated in the sentence, “The future of the news industry is determined by the successfulness of journalism education” (Cheng, 1964, p.39). The young journalists we cultivate nowadays will determine the future landscape of the news industry. It is important to equip our students with the requisite skills they need to become professional (Cheng, 1964). However, there is “a mismatch between graduates and the demands of employers” in journalism (Niblock, S., 2012, p.23). The crux of this argument lies in the knowledge that journalism education can provide (Chung, Tsang, Chen, 1996).

According to Chung, Tsang, and Chen (1996), the domain of knowledge a journalist needs can be divided into four dimensions, respectively: common declarative knowledge, logic procedural knowledge, professional declarative knowledge and strategic procedural knowledge. Common declarative knowledge and logic procedural knowledge are the basic knowledge one needs to survive. Professional declarative knowledge is about general facts and concepts in a specific domain. As for strategic procedural knowledge, it relates to the ability to execute knowledge and to deal with information processing. Among the four types of knowledge, it is the strategic procedural knowledge that helps journalists to cope with issues like problem representation or interviewing, and to survive in the dynamic environment of journalism (Chung, Tsang, Chen, 1996).

Strategic procedural knowledge is the key to cultivate professional journalists (Chung, Tsang, Chen, 1996). Nevertheless, in the past, journalism education focused more on providing declarative knowledge, and diminished the importance of procedural knowledge (Chung, Tsang, Chen, 1996). One of the core reasons is that procedural knowledge is mostly tacit knowledge, which is not easy to conceive through a traditional education environment (Tsang, Chung, Yang, 2001). In this case, for students to perceive

procedural knowledge, “learning by doing” becomes an important method.

Through authentic events, a student journalist is more able to proceduralize their knowledge from “knowing what” (declarative knowledge) to “knowing how” (procedural knowledge) (Chung, Tsang, Chen, 1996). Also, given the fact that “the most important knowledge for experts is conceived and incubated in the practical actions and events of professional practice” (Schempp, 2008, p.134), for journalism education to have sound development, we must combine theory and practice together (Cheng, 1964).

Upon realizing this hiatus in journalism education, the researcher has developed this study to examine the Self-Directed Learning (SDL) mechanism adopted by the Student Sports Union (SSU). The target group of this study, SSU, is a student journalist organization founded by the Chinese Taipei University Sports Federation (CTUSF). The aim of this organization is to provide a platform for university students who are interested in sports to acquire basic skills and concepts of sports journalism. Students who joined SSU mostly have no prior journalism training. The manager of SSU only provides students with access to journalism training and sports games. The progress of SSU members’ journalistic skills is mainly developed through their own endeavors. This cultivation process matches the educational concept of SDL.

According to Gibbons, “SDL is any increase in knowledge, skill, accomplishment, or personal development that an individual selects and brings about by his or her own efforts” (2002, P.2). Within SDL, learners are involved with a series of inquiries (Knowles, 1975). Through constantly formulating key questions and collecting data to answer the questions, learners are equipped with the core skill of SDL, independent thinking. Such skill is about the “know how,” which in turn provides students with the competencies they need for their academic and practical needs (Gibbons, 2002). To achieve this goal, practical training has been viewed as an important method (Gibbons,

2002). For SSU student journalists, through accessing authentic sports events, they are able to gain experience, to expand knowledge (especially the procedural knowledge), and to hone the skills they need to become expert (Schempp, 2008).

SDL is critical for adults to have sustainable development (Candy, 1991).

Nevertheless, not everyone is suitable for SDL. “It is only after someone has been reading, studying, and thinking about an area for some time that he or she is capable of true ‘self-directed’ inquiry in that subject” (Candy, 1991, p.315); otherwise learners may not appreciate the essence of the discipline. When applying these principals to the scenario of SSU journalist cultivation, this study aims to find out that, with equal journalism training and equal rights to attend sports events, what are the factors that influence the outcome of each individual SSU’s SDL? What kinds and what amount of practical experience, knowledge and skills should SSU journalists have to pave their way to expertise? To discover these issues, the researcher adopted the SDL interactive model developed by Spear (1988) in this study.

Three elements are included in the interactive model. They are: (1) Opportunities people find in their own environments; (2) Past or new knowledge; (3) Chance occurrences, as is shown in Figure 1.1 In Spear’s words, SDL does not occur automatically; instead, it only occurs when one step of action matches with other steps of actions that bear the same idea or resources (1988). In the case of SSU cultivation, the main concern of this study is to find out what elements are involved in graduated SSU’s SDL interactive model, and how these elements helped SSU’s to breed the experience, knowledge and skill they need to become experts.



Figure 1.1 Research conceptual framework

When examining the SDL method in the scenario of student journalists' cultivation, this study has its significance, because it is the first study that employs SDL into journalism education. For the results of this study, the researcher wishes to gather already graduated SSU journalists' SDL experience through in-depth interviews, and to convert this tacit knowledge into documentation for future generations of young journalism graduates to refer to. This study focuses on the cultivation of sports journalists, but it can also apply to other fields of journalists' training.

2. Literature Review

As stated in the introduction, SDL plays an important role for SSU members to move from novices to professional journalists. SDL therefore will be employed as the key concept that guides the direction of this study. Literature related to SDL is thoroughly reviewed. But to develop valuable research questions, it is critical to clearly define and to have further understanding of the target group of this study first. Accordingly, literature regarding SSU and sports journalists is also included in this chapter.

The transition from novice to expert is a thought-provoking topic to probe into. In this study, the researcher is curious about what kinds of endeavors may contribute to student journalists' transition towards professional journalists. Relevant studies of novice versus expert are explored in this chapter. But before explaining relevant theories, it is necessary to give an introduction about the Student Sports Union.

2.1 Student Sports Union (SSU)

SSU has been operating since 2007, and is continually expanding. SSU's main focus is to provide news reports related to university sports, and to cultivate youngsters to become professionals in sports communication. Students who want to become a member of SSU need to pass a paper test in order to join.

The core vision of SSU is to cultivate responsible, independent, and skillful youngsters to engage in sports communication (CTUSF, 2013). Every year, SSU sets up a two-day training program around October to give guidance of sports journalism to students. The training program is limited for university students to attend. Training courses include news writing, interview skills, news editing, and sports marketing. At the end of the program, SSU recruits 15 to 20 students among the attendees through a paper test to join the organization.

SSU student journalists come from different backgrounds, with different

professional skills. From CTUSF's perspective, they consider SSU student journalists as a pivot to promote university sports. For this reason, CTUSF provides SSU student journalists with numerous internship opportunities, covering both domestic and international sports events, for students to acquire skills related to sports communication, including news reports, sports advertising, and public relations. SSU student journalists are able to gain access to different types of sports games. However, the amount of news reports and the type of sports covered depends on the student journalists themselves. Student journalists can decide freely which news and how much news they want to cover. But to maintain membership, they are required to hand in five news reports per semester.

At the beginning, SSU only produced news reports about university basketball games. As time passed by, they gradually increased the types of sports to cover. Until 2014, they have written news reports related to 28 sports, and produced over 5000 news reports. Currently, SSU has its own official website to post daily sports news, and a YouTube channel to provide videos and live streams related to university sports events. The training of SSU journalists has gradually expanded from print media to broadcast media.

Starting from a novice, and moving toward an experienced journalist in both print media and broadcast media, the researcher of this study is curious about how SSU members prepared themselves through SDL to meet all these demands. What types of events they have chosen to attend? And how did they equip themselves with requisite skills? These issues will be discussed in the following chapters.

2.2 Self-Directed Learning

The definition of SDL is slightly different among adult education scholars. The most cited definition of SDL is by Knowles (1975). He describes SDL as a linear process “in which individuals take the initiative, with or without the help of others, in diagnosing

their learning needs, formulating goals, identifying human and material resources, choosing and implementing appropriate learning strategies, and evaluating learning outcomes” (p. 18). To be more specific, Tough (1979) defines SDL as a process in which people engage in “a series of related episodes, adding up to at least seven hours.” For those who are involved in this process, their main motivation “is to gain and retain certain fairly clear knowledge and skill, or to produce some other lasting change” (Tough, 1979 p. 7).

As for Maurice Gibbons (2002), he considers SDL as “any increase in knowledge, skill, accomplishment, or personal development that an individual selects and brings about by his or her own efforts using any method in any circumstances at any time” (p.2). And when approaching SDL, these five elements are regarded as basic: (1) Student control over as much of the learning experience as possible; (2) Skill development; (3) Students learning to challenge themselves to their best possible performance; (4) Student self-management; (5) Self-motivation and self-assessment (Gibbons, 2002, p.11).

Furthermore, to become a truly self-directed learner, Candy considers these capabilities as essential: (1) The ability to plan personal and group activities; (2) The ability to identify and obtain, and the skill to use various sources of information; (3) The ability to read, watch, and listen with different objectives in mind; (4) Skill in note taking, recording, paraphrasing, quoting, systematizing data, writing précis, and keeping records; (5) Numerical literacy; (6) Command of a foreign language; (7). The ability of self-evaluation; (8) and Problem-solving ability (Candy, 1991, p. 314).

In addition to the above-mentioned points, Guglielmino (1977) points out characteristics self-directed learners need to possess, respectively: (1) Independence and persistence in learning; (2) Willing to take the responsibility for his learning, and keeps positive when facing challenges; (3) Has a high degree of curiosity; (4) Full of

self-confidence; (5) Able to utilize his skills and organize his time for learning; (6) Has a tendency to be goal oriented (p. 73).

Although Guglielmino points out that independence in learning is important in SDL, it do not mean one is completely isolated. As Brookfield (1985) stated, “no act of learning can be self-directed if we understand self-direction as meaning the absence of external sources of assistance” (p.7). Adult educator Candy (1991) supports this point by indicating that “the success of a SDL project depends largely on the extent and type of assistance obtained by individual learners, and on the quality of the personal relationships established between the learner and his or her helper” (p. 200). And the helper here may be their “teachers, tutors, mentors, resource people, and peers” (Knowles 1975, p. 18).

Unlike Teacher Directed Learning, which puts emphasis on teachers’ experience, or on textbook writers’ knowledge, SDL focuses more on learners’ experiences, which are gained through practical experience. It is believed by SDL scholars that students “learn about others and their lives by knowing them directly and working with them” (Gibbons, 2002, p.11). For Gibbons, he believes since “the social domain is concerned with the individual’s ability to relate to others, to learn from them, and to work with them,” it is important to include both academic studies and social domains of human experience in SDL (2002, p.10). SDL is important because it helps students to form their unique style of learning (Gibbons, 2002). According to Gibbons, SDL “enables student to customize their approach to learning tasks, combines the development of skill with the development of character, and prepares them for learning throughout their lives” (p.3).

If we consider this point from SSU students’ perspectives, besides their SDL performance, the external assistance student journalists may receive from CTUSF, from athletes, or from professional journalists during interviews may influence and facilitate SSU member’s SDL. Hence, the researcher needs to include questions such as “When

you were a SSU journalist, have you ever received any support or material resources? Did it have an impact on you?” to find out what kinds of external assistance they have received that made a difference to their SDL.

Up to this point, we can see that self-directed learning refers to a process in which learners can make their learning plan according to their own needs, put this plan into action, continue learning over a period of time, utilize accessible resources to improve their learning, evaluate and improve the effectiveness of their learning, and ultimately achieve their goals. Within this process, SDL learners need to be independent, self-motivated, goal-oriented, and maintain a good relationship with others to reach a successful outcome.

As previously mentioned, Knowles (1975) described a linear model, in which learners moved from one step to another to reach their ultimate goal. However, according to the year-end report of SSU (CTUSF, 2014), even with the same amount of journalistic training, and the same access to attending sports events, SSU journalists' performance still varies greatly at the end of each semester. In addition, only a small number of SSU graduates are able to enter the news industry. With the same amount of training, resources and support, why do SSU's SDL performances still vary greatly? Obviously, the linear model is unable to explain this phenomenon. In this case, the researcher of this study adopted Spear's (1988) interactive model to further probe into this issue.



Figure 2.1 Spear's interactive model

The main idea of the interactive model is that SDL does not occur in a linear fashion. Instead, it only occurs when one step of action matches with other steps of actions that bear the same idea or resources. When a stage of action is completed, it further creates the base for the next stage; all of the elements of the first stage and second stage are interrelated. The interactive model focuses “not only the learner, but the context of the learning, and the nature of the learning” (Rubenson, 2011, p.30). Within the interactive model, three elements are included: opportunities people find in their own environments, past or new knowledge, and the chance the learner utilized to learn (Spear, 1988). The three elements together form a “unique learning experience” (Roberson, Merriam, 2005) for SDL learners.

The interactive model emphasizes how “the circumstances of one’s life will shape the learning” (Roberson, Merriam, 2005, p.271). As Spear and Mocker mentioned, “the structure, methods, resources and conditions for learning are provided or dictated frequently by the circumstance” (Spear, Mocker, 1981, P.7). An in-depth interview study

by Roberson and Merriam (2005) has also proven that “rarely did the participants purposely diagnose, evaluate, or set a climate” during their learning. Instead, it is “the internal or external incentive to learn” that helps adults to form their SDL (Roberson, Merriam, 2005).

Roberson and Merriam found that “SDL is often a response to developmental issues of that particular life stage” (2005, p. 284). SDL for adults starts from an incentive to learn, and is usually related to late life changes like health problems or technological challenges. Late life changes may occur as chances for adults to pursue further learning. To continue the learning process, a suitable learning environment is needed to develop learners’ knowledge. Local education institutions or community clubs may be some examples of such environments. For adults to perceive new information from their learning, their past or new knowledge also plays an important role (Roberson, Merriam, 2005).

Roberson and Merriam’s research revealed that adults’ SDL processes are more congruent with Spear’s interactive model. Owing to this reason, it is crucial to utilize Spear’s interactive model to examine SSU members’ SDL process, to see what kinds of conditions provide SSU student journalists with such advantages to form their SDL.

In the past four decades, self-directed learning has been a popular research topic in adult education. In recent years, SDL has also been employed in human resources development, medical education, and museum education. Even the South Korean government has adopted SDL to develop the Self-Directed Learning Policy. The purpose of this policy is “intended to take the task of directing learning processes and strategies away from the hands of the teachers to those of the students” (Sung, 2011, p.347). Their ultimate purpose is to “better equip our children with autonomous learning skills required for adapting to rapidly changing future societies” (Sung, 2011, p.347).

Similar to the Korean government, the researcher of this study also hopes to assist future student journalists to get equipped with requisite journalistic skills. Therefore, from this part of literature review, the researcher formulated two types of interview questions. The first type of questions is about student journalists' learning plans. These questions are designed to understand what kinds of efforts student journalists have spent for their own improvement. The second type of questions was designed in regards to student journalist's personal characteristics and interpersonal relationships, to identify the internal and external factors that affect SSU members in forming their SDL.

From this section of the literature review, the researcher came up with the following research questions:

RQ 1: Based on Spear's interactive model, what opportunities, chances and knowledge do SSU journalists possess that have helped them to form their SDL?

RQ 2: What kinds of interpersonal relationships do SSU journalists possess that play an influential role to their SDL?

2.3 From novice to expert

“You cannot be born to expertise, nor buy it or borrow it. You have to work at it” (Schempp, 2008, p. 11). As Schempp mentioned, no one can be an innate expert. Endeavor is a crucial key to expertise. However, endeavor alone is not enough. To successfully transform a novice into an expert, one needs to increase his or her experience, knowledge, and skills (Schempp, 2008).

Differences between expert and novice

Before we discuss how a novice may become an expert, it is important to review the differences between the experiences, knowledge and skills that an expert possesses and a novice possesses. Abilities like intelligence or memory does not set experts apart from novices. In fact, the main key lies in how experts think and solve problems

effectively. When defining expertise, “how you organize your knowledge” matters more than “how much knowledge you have” (Schempp, 2008). The reason why experts can think and solve problems in an effective way is mainly due to the formation of their knowledge. According to Bransford (2000), Experts’ knowledge “is organized around core concepts or big ideas that guide their thinking about their domains” (p. 36).

When we examine an expert vs. novice in the news industry, journalism scholars have mentioned that expert practitioners are those who know how to integrate or eliminate elements during information processing” (Chung, Tsang, Chen, Chang, Chen, 2002, p.21). In comparison, novices’ knowledge is loosely combined (Tsang, Chung, 1995), as novice journalists may only consider the problem from a superficial perspective (Chen, 1997), and they usually use the same method to cope with different situations (Chang, 2011).

If we analyze experts’ knowledge through the schema theory, we find that experts possess larger schema than novices (Tsang, Chung, 1995). With this large schema, experts are able to: (1). Deal with information processing effectively. (2). Solve problems in a more relaxed manner. (3). Reflect abstract thinking (Chang, 2005). (4). Classify information to explain real world situations (Tsang, Chung, 1995). (5). Think flexibly, comprehensively, and are more capable of considering other alternatives (Chen, 1997). (6). Shift strategies when unexpected incidents happen (Chang, 2011). For expert journalists, possessing a large schema allows them to capture the deep structure and temporal context of a news event (Chang, 2011), or to consider a situation through a fragment of knowledge (Chen, 1997).

Except for the scale of their knowledge base, how long journalists have been working in the profession may also influence his or her performance. For those journalists who worked in the field for a longer time, they have accumulated extensive

prior knowledge and prior experience. Therefore, they are able to ask in depth questions (Tsang, Chung, 1995), and are more able to capture the situational factors of a particular incident (Chung, Tsang, Chen, 1996).

The type of knowledge experts possess and novices possess are also different. Both experts and novices possess declarative knowledge, but it is experts who possess more procedural knowledge. Declarative knowledge is about general facts, such as who is the medalist in a sports event. Procedural knowledge is about “knowing how,” and is the strategic knowledge one particularly possesses to solve problems (Tsang, Chung, 1995). In journalists’ work environment, they face different challenges everyday. It is the procedural knowledge they possess that determines how well they handle various situations. As mentioned in the introduction, procedural knowledge is the key to expertise. Nevertheless, such knowledge is mostly tacit, which has practical value, but is not easy to conceive through formal education (Tsang, Chung, Yang, 2001).

How to become expert: ways to improve

As mentioned above, experience, knowledge, and skills are three secrets to expertise. According to Schempp (2008), these three elements are in fact interrelated. One needs to have experience and knowledge to form a robust base for decision-making. Nevertheless, to perform outstandingly, skillful action is required. To make progress from a beginner level, beneficial activities like journal writing, formal education, seminars, reading transcripts of other people’s experience, and networking with professionals or peers may also help beginners to keep track and make improvements to become more skilled and knowledgeable (Schempp, 2008).

Schempp pointed out that “practical knowledge earned through experience is more helpful in meeting the daily challenges and demands of work’ (2008, p.128), because this is knowledge people can apply and memorize easily in life. Through experience,

one may identify the strength and weakness of the skills he or she currently possesses, and the skills that need improvement (Schempp, 2008). Take novice journalists for example; through constant interviews, they may improve their skills of interviewing. Increased interactions with interviewees help novice journalists to establish the concept of news coverage (Huang, R.C., 2012).

From this part we can see that experience is necessary for becoming an expert (Chen, 1997). Nevertheless, increasing experience, or having the same experience as others does not necessarily lead one to expertise. Two elements are involved; one is the prior knowledge one possesses, and the other is about how one organizes knowledge (Tsang, Chung, 1995). In terms of SSU members' SDL, this part of the literature review explains the interactive model adopted in this study. Joining SSU is the opportunity student journalists found in their SDL journey. The prior knowledge or the schema they possess provides them the elements to further form their SDL. But to move toward expertise, SSU journalists still need to seek out other chances to gain experiences around them. In this case, how they organize and utilize the knowledge and resources they possess becomes decisive. In the previous paragraphs, we have discussed how a SSU student journalist can move towards becoming an expert through SDL. In the following paragraph, the researcher reviews the necessary requirements to take on the profession of journalism.

2.4 Sports journalist

In the past, many journalism studies have focused on providing guidance for the cultivation of journalists. For example, Hohenberg (1978) mentioned in his book *The Professional Journalist* that in order to begin a career as a journalist, one needs to have a thorough education, to be familiar with journalistic skills, and to have a strong will to face any difficulties at hand. Similarly, Cheng (1989) proposed that a wide range of

knowledge, good virtue, professional attitude, and a well-prepared body and mind are the requirements one needs to become a journalist. Nevertheless, the requirements listed above are merely basic for one to undertake a career as a journalist. To become a genuine sports journalist, there are still few more prerequisites.

In his book *Sports News Writing and Editing*, professor Chou pointed out five requirements for becoming a journalist. These requirements are: have been through a professional journalism education and possess a keen mind and observation ability, good writing ability, good virtue, and a healthy mind and body (1992, p. 64). He further focuses on the requirements for sports journalists, and points out the need for knowledge of sports rules, sports administration, and important sports figures. Professor Chou stated clearly in his book that only by acquiring these knowledge and skills could a person become a professional sports journalist (1992).

As for journalism scholars Gelfand and Harry (1969), they mentioned four requirements for one to become a sports journalist. Respectively, they are: (1). Educational background. (2). Knowledge of what is news. (3). Personality traits such as cheerfulness, sincerity, courtesy, tolerance, poise, enthusiasm, confidence, inquisitiveness, and perseverance. (4). Mastery of the language, and the ability to write clearly and concisely (p. 4). Except points 1 and 2, which are similar to previous arguments, Gelfand and Harry pointed out two significant requirements a journalist should have: personality traits and mastery of language.

Similarly, Phil Andrews (2005) considered that to become a sports journalist, one “must be able to convey your knowledge and enthusiasm to others in a lively and entertaining way, and to be willing to devote as much time to practicing your writing skills as the sports people about whom you are writing spend practicing theirs” (p. 3). From this quote we can see that Andrews pointed out the importance of practical training.

Practical training is not only fundamental for sports journalists, but also applies to student journalists. For student journalists to become professional, it is necessary for them to have as much practical experience as they can.

As mentioned previously, practical experiences and training are important for students because they help them to develop their knowledge system from “knowing what” to “knowing how,” and to learn to transform their knowledge from textbook material into knowledge they actually possess (Tsang, 2000). The skills or knowledge students conceive through practical training “will continually evolve with each new occasion of use,” and may be recast into a “more densely textured form” (Brown, Collins & Duguid, 1989, p.33), further preparing them to survive in the dynamic journalism environment (Tsang, 2000).

In conclusion, we can see that most journalism scholars consider thorough education, good personality, a wide range of knowledge, good language ability, practical experiences, and good writing skills to be the basic requirements a student needs to become a professional journalist. Knowledge regarding the sports industry is also decisive for sports journalists to execute their job successfully. Based on this part of literature, the researcher is able to design interview questions for SSU student journalists to examine how SSU student journalists prepared themselves with these requirements, and to see how they fulfilled the demands of the news industry.

From the above literature review, the researcher found that procedural knowledge is the main difference between novice and expert. For SSU student journalists to become experts, the researcher is curious about:

RQ 3: What types of practical training may assist SSU students to transform declarative knowledge to procedural knowledge?

From the literature review we may also notice that experience is important for a

novice journalist to become mature. However, studies have pointed out that journalists' prior knowledge and the way they organize that knowledge also plays a crucial role. In this case, the researcher would like to discover:

RQ 4: What types of knowledge are important for SSU journalists to pave their way to expertise? And how did they organize the knowledge?



3. Research Method

According to Wimmer and Dominick (2011), “the choice of which method to use depends primarily on the research question and the objectives of the research” (p.123). Instead of quantitatively calculating the effectiveness of SSU members’ SDL, the purpose of this study is to discover the traits and the processes of SSU members’ SDL, and compile suitable training methods and subjects for student journalists based on SSU members’ experience. The four research questions in this study seek qualitative answers.

Hays and Singh (2012) once mentioned, “qualitative research is the study of a phenomenon” (p.4). Within qualitative studies, a researcher’s goal is to gain a deeper understanding on an issue, and to further illustrate the phenomenon. Adult education scholar Merriam (1998) also pointed out, “qualitative research assumed that meaning is embedded in people’s experiences and that this meaning is mediated through the investigator’s own perceptions” (p.6). To better discover the meaning of SSU members’ SDL experiences, it is important for the researcher to employ in-depth interviews in this study.

3.1 Semi-structured interview

According to Tracy, “interviews are especially valuable for providing information and background on issues that cannot be observed or efficiently accessed” (2013, P.132). One of the features of employing the interview method “is the wealth of detail that it provides” (Wimmer and Dominick, 2011, p.139). Semi-structured in-depth interviews enable the researcher to “gain complex in-depth information from participants” (Savin-Baden and Major, 2013, p.358), and allows the researcher to identify “commonalities and differences across individual respondents on one or more topics” (Lapan, Quartaroli and Riemer, 2012, p.94). Through in-depth interviews, the researcher hopes to understand the commonalities between SSU students’ SDL, and what kinds of

personal differences in learning have helped them to become professional journalists.

For Hesse-Biber and Leavy (2011), in-depth interviews are a special kind of conversation. Active asking and listening between the researcher and the interviewee is crucial to this type of research. The process of their conversation is the source where the researcher can extract meaning. It is a meaning-making process.

Another special feature of in-depth interviews is that they are issue oriented. Hesse-Biber and Leavy further point out the fact that this method is very useful “when the researcher has a particular topic he or she wants to focus on and gain information about from individuals” (2011, p.95). In the case of SSU students, through in-depth interviews, the researcher is capable of gaining insights from SSU graduates, and to thoroughly discover their SDL process.

Employing semi-structured interviews also allow “individual respondents some latitude and freedom to talk about what is of interest or importance to them” (Hesse-Biber and Leavy, 2011, p.102). Owing to the uniqueness of each interviewee, there may be questions the researchers did not think of prior to the interviews. Through semi-structured interviews, there is more room for the researcher to discover differences between interviewees. Consequently, it “allow the conversation to develop, exploring new topics that are relevant to the interviewee” (Hesse-Biber and Leavy, 2011, p.102).

3.2 Interview Questions

Due to the research topic, the researcher confined the interview questions to how these student journalists arranged their SDL. The researcher hopes to understand what types of activities they were involved in, what types of training they have had, and to discover what has lead them on the path to becoming professional journalists.

The researcher designed 20 interview questions in total. These 20 questions were based on three aspects. The first aspect is about their personal background, and the

second is about their actual performances during their time at SSU. The third aspect is about their SDL process. Related interview questions are presented in the Appendix.

3.3 Sample Selection

Todres (2005) has pointed out that for a phenomenological research, “the aim is to understand a phenomenon more deeply through adequate exposure to the qualities of the phenomena that are given by the living of the phenomenon” (p.109).

SSU is a specially designed student organization. Student journalists who join this organization may come from different kinds of professional backgrounds; for example, liberal arts, education, physical education, or business administration. The applicants are not limited to mass communication majors only. However, after students joined SSU, the SDL process of mass communication majors and non-majors may be very different due to lack of prior journalistic trainings. Nevertheless, even for mass communication majors, it is likely that they never took any practical courses about sports journalism before they entered the organization. Therefore, the selection of interviewees for this study does not depend on their academic major, but on their actual performance while they were in SSU. The actual performance here refers to the amount and types of sports events they covered. Only those student journalists who had covered over 5 news reports and 2 types of sports are included in the sample of this study. For comparison, eight SSU members were selected according to their educational background and the length of their SSU membership.

To ensure the quality of this research and to protect the rights of the interviewees, before each interview the researcher informed the participants of the purpose of the interview, the process, and how the results may be used. With such information, the interviewees can make a voluntary decision whether to enroll and continue to participate.

4. Research Findings

This study interviewed eight people. Information regarding these eight interviewees is listed in the chart below. In order to answer the initial research questions, research findings are presented according to the following themes: backgrounds of interviewees, SSU members' SDL, SSU members' interpersonal relationships, SSU members' SDL activities, SSU members' SDL knowledge, and other SDL influential factors.

Table 4.1
Backgrounds of Interviewees

	Bachelor	Master	Years of SSU	Current profession
CHIA	Chinese Literature	Journalism	3	Student
LUO	Chemical Engineering	Physical Education	3	Student
CHANG	Early Childhood Education	Physical Education	4	Journalist
TSENG	Journalism		1	Journalist
YEH	English Literature		4	Journalist
LIN	English Literature	Journalism	2	Journalist
YU	Business Administration	Journalism	3	Student
HSU	English Literature	Journalism	2	Journalist

4.1 Background of Interviewees

Educational Background

The eight SSU journalists' educational backgrounds can be divided into three main categories: liberal arts, physical education, and journalism. The SSU members who possess a Bachelor's degree from an area other than these three fields of study decided to apply for a Master's degree related to physical education or journalism due to their experience in SSU.

For example, respondent LUO majored in chemical engineering as an undergraduate and joined SSU during his senior year. With ample sports journalism training in SSU,

LUO became more certain about his interest and decided to pursue higher education in a sports journalism related field. As LUO stated:

I do not really like chemical engineering, and I do not want to continue this profession as a career. At that time, when I joined SSU I revived my love for sports. After several sports interview experiences, I made up my mind to become a sports journalist. Consequently, I applied for graduate school in physical education to strengthen my academic knowledge of sports.

Reasons to join SSU

SSU journalists' educational backgrounds may be quite different, but they all began their sports journalism journey for a similar reason: their love for sports. Each of the SSU journalists had a certain degree of connection with sports in the past; they may have been a student athlete or a long-term sports fan. Concerning their purpose in joining SSU, two scenarios emerged: 1. To appreciate the essence of sports journalism. 2. To make contributions to the sports they love.

For the first scenario, interviewees consider SSU to be a platform for them to get to know the world of sports journalism. These interviewees all wish to learn journalistic skills and to expand their social networks in the field of sports journalism, with the ultimate goal of finding a job in the sports communication industry.

Before joining SSU, CHIA had already become interested in sports journalism. She joined this organization hoping to improve her journalistic skills. She said:

SSU provides systematic training sessions, which includes lectures and practical news coverage. From the lectures, I can learn from professionals' experiences; from practical training, I am able to hone my journalistic skills. The training courses in SSU have enlightened me about the world of journalism.

As for HSU, her main intention in joining SSU was to expand her social network.

HSU: “I am from the English department, so I have few chances to meet people from the news industry. I considered joining SSU to be a nice opportunity for me to expand my social network.” YEH is also from English department and joined SSU to pursue her dream. YEH: “I majored in English Literature, but I wanted to become a sports journalist. I joined SSU to see whether I could do an internship or find a job in the news industry.”

Most SSU members had little or no knowledge about journalism before they joined SSU. However, even for TSENG, who majored in journalism, it was not until she joined SSU that she actually got involved in practical sports news writing. As TSENG stated:

My department does provide training courses on news writing. However, what I had learned at school was closer to general concepts of what to write and how to interview. On the contrary, the training in SSU focuses specifically on sports news. Training courses such as sports photography, sports interviewing and sports news writing have profoundly helped me to excel at my current job.

In the second scenario, interviewees joined SSU to support the sport they love. As YU shared:

When I was a kid, my dream was to stay by the sports fields all day to watch sports games. So when I had the chance to join SSU, I was so happy. I tried to cover as much news as possible whenever I had free time.

CHANG also mentioned:

I never thought I would become a journalist. I joined SSU simply because I love sports. At that time, I did not have any specific learning plan. All I wished for was to become familiar with more sports and more athletes.

CHANG, like many other interviewees, started her news coverage by focusing on the kind of sport she is most familiar with: basketball.

4.2 SSU's SDL

The eight interviewees all began their SSU journeys by covering basketball news.

RQ1 explores what opportunities, chances and knowledge SSU journalists possess that has helped them to form their SDL.

The Formation Process of SSU journalists' SDL

Among the eight interviewees, five were once members of a basketball team. They know basketball rules well; therefore they started their SSU journey from covering basketball news. The other three interviewees do not play basketball, but they are fans of the sport, so they also chose basketball games as their first stories to cover.

The eight interviewees started from writing basketball news, but they did not merely focus on writing about this single sport. Being sports lovers, SSU writers often indulge themselves by covering different types of sports. CHIA expressed: "Every opportunity in SSU seems interesting to me. My goal is to conduct as many interviews related to different types of sports, different levels of sports, or different gender groups as possible."

It is the same case for LIN. As a female basketball player, she started with basketball news. Then in her second year, she began to challenge herself and started to write news reports related to volleyball and football. As for TSENG, before joining SSU, she never had the chance to cover volleyball news. So after she joined the group, she seized every opportunity to learn volleyball rules, to become familiar with more volleyball athletes, and to write news about the game.

Most SSU members have stayed in the organization around 2-3years. Within this amount of time, these SSU members have kept one clear objective in mind: to know more about sports. They have tried to cover and to learn about as many sports as they can. However, these interviewees did not have a specific learning plan at the beginning; in fact, they set their plan gradually.

YEH joined SSU when she was a freshman and stayed in SSU for four years. In her first year, YEH focused mainly on her schoolwork and didn't have much time for SSU. She could only manage to hand in five news reports during that semester, which is the minimum requirement of SSU. YEH:

At that semester's year-end meeting, I realized that I had missed many chances to cover interesting stories, because the manager of SSU provides extra opportunities for those who are more involved. This motivated me to set a goal to write about more games during the second year, and to write news about more different kinds of sports during the third year. Therefore, my most productive year was the third year; I handed in 40 news articles related to nine different sports. Because of my constant involvement, the manager of SSU provided me with extra opportunities to join international events like the FISU Forum and the World University Triathlon Championship in my third and fourth years.

One of the reasons that allowed YEH to increase the amount of interviews she conducted was that she had more free time in her sophomore year. The same went for YU, as more time in his schedule allowed him to increase his involvement in SSU. YU: I joined SSU in my senior year, so I had plenty of free time. Besides, I was preparing to take the entrance exam for graduate school. Covering sports news served as an outlet for me to release my stress. I went to basketball courts whenever I was free, or when I needed to shift my attention. In total, I wrote about 50 news articles in that semester.

Except for the issue of free time mentioned above, geographical proximity is also a crucial factor that influences SSU members' SDL. CHANG shared, "My university often held university basketball games and volleyball games. Because I was usually close by, I had the advantage of covering more matches. During that period, it was

convenient to go to the courts whenever I had free time.”

In addition, the researcher discovered that a SSU journalist’s background plays an important role in shaping his or her SDL. TSENG covered mostly female basketball news after she joined SSU. According to TSENG, this was mainly because of her personal relationships with these athletes. TSENG:

I’ve been a basketball athlete since high school, and I am friends with many former HBL female athletes from my school. I also have prior knowledge about their performance and their personalities. Because I am their friend, they often share their thoughts and stories with me, which turns out to be a great source for news writing. In addition, my school often holds university female basketball games. These factors all gave me advantages when covering female basketball news.

SSU journalists’ SDL Approach

In order to become professional journalists, interviewees reflected similar approaches to improving themselves. SSU members’ learning approach can be classified into 4 areas: 1. News writing. 2. Interpersonal communication. 3. Data collection. 4. Improvisation. News writing is SSU student journalists’ primary focus. SSU training started their news writing journeys by following the inverted pyramid writing principle. In order to improve, SSU revealed that “reading, writing, and asking” are fundamental approaches. CHIA pointed out, “Through reading, I can absorb new knowledge and new writing techniques to add depth to my stories.” CHANG further explained the process:

At first, I used a certain pattern to present my articles. But after I read many news stories written by professionals, and had written a good amount myself, I gradually got the sense of how to present a nice article. I was then able to further transform my articles by presenting a different theme or adding different perspectives to it. I could sense my progress during the process. I started my SSU journey as someone who

knew nothing about news writing, and have since become someone who knows how to maintain relationships with interviewees, how to conduct an interview, and how to write a feature story. Even though I do not have a journalism degree, through accumulating interview experiences I have become more skillful at news writing.

To push their improvements further, interviewees revealed that observation and imitation are two important approaches. By reading other journalists' news reports, observing how they interview people, and imitating how they write articles, SSU members are able to learn advanced journalism skills and create their personal writing style. As LIN brought up, she first learned news writing skills through comparison. LIN:

I often read the same news story written by different news agencies. I would compare these news reports to find differences and to discover if there were any details that I had originally missed. I also observed certain journalists' articles to see how they elaborated upon stories to make them more interesting, or how they combined stories together with statistics.

Unlike LIN, who focused on developing news writing skills, LUO sought to learn interview skills through observation. LUO believes that the toughest part of news writing lies in asking the right questions:

When conducting sports interviews, you need to be able to understand the game to ask relevant questions. And you need good questions to produce nice articles. Since this is the case, I often observed how professional journalists approach an issue, and how they combine all the collected information together into a news report.

Peer observation is another important approach for SSU members to learn news writing skills. Interviewees like YEH observed news articles written by experienced SSU members and tried to learn from their strengths. YEH said:

One of my friends, LIU, is good at storytelling. I often refer to his articles when

writing feature stories. CHEN and CHIU are productive student journalists; they are able to produce several articles in a short period of time. So I often consult them about how to speed up my writing time.

Likewise, YU often referred to his peers' articles to improve his ability to write feature stories. YU:

There are two SSU members' articles that I often refer to. One is Debbie, who often starts her news reports with a quote from the athlete. This makes her news articles special and more readable. I often refer to her articles when I am writing feature stories. The other person I consult is CHIA. Her articles are very concise, but she includes all the important information in just a few lines. I often observe their articles, take notes, and then have a discussion with them.

As for TSENG, she discovered through observation that some journalists have prepared their own databases, such as game records over the past 10 years, and then will use these data often in their news reports. TSENG:

This has influenced me to pay attention and to collect athletes' records to enrich my news reports. I am specializing in badminton news, so currently I have compiled my personal databank, which includes Taiwanese badminton players' world records and rankings over the past few years.

In addition to news writing, imitation also helps SSU members to prepare for other journalistic positions. HSU's goal is to become an anchorperson, so she focuses on developing her ability to present news. HSU: "I consider imitation to be an important skill. Through imitating the way an anchorperson presents news, I am able to make progress and improve my own oral presentation skills."

Interpersonal communication is another crucial skill that SSU journalists have learned from their practical experiences. Through frequent interviews, student

journalists have learned to build up interpersonal relationships with interviewees and other key sources. Their role as student journalists has also influenced SSU members to change their way of interacting with people. CHIA expressed that she has changed her method of interacting with people after she joined SSU. CHIA:

I am not a talkative person, but when working as a journalist, I need to be active and speak to others directly. From my experiences, I have learned how to build up mutual trust with my interviewees, so that they will be willing to share more stories with me. Also, I have realized that in order to conduct a good interview, you need to be well prepared by searching for related information and preparing questions in advance, and then adjusting your questions during interviews if needed. As a journalist, you need to find the best way to interact with different interviewees.

YU discovered the importance of setting an appropriate interview atmosphere when he conducted an interview with a disabled basketball athlete. YU:

In the past, I only asked athletes about their performance on the court. But for this news story, I interviewed the player about his personal life and how he manages to attend all the team practices and games with only one arm. This is the first time I tried to chat with my interviewee instead of simply interviewing them for information.

After this experience, I realized that it is better for me to interact with my interviewees in a relaxed manner. By changing the atmosphere from that of a formal interview to an easygoing chat, in which I can talk with interviewees like friends, the interviewees are more willing to open their hearts and share their minds with me.

4.3 SSU's Interpersonal Relationship

The interpersonal relationship mentioned above may be further elaborated upon, as it can refer to interactions with a peer, team leader, SSU manager, athlete, or professional journalist. In this study, the researcher is curious about what kinds of interpersonal

relationships SSU journalists possess that play an influential role in their SDL. In this section, the researcher explores the findings to address **RQ2**.

In SSU, student journalists are divided into three groups according to their geographical location. Team leaders in each group provide feedback to members whenever they hand in a news article. The manager of SSU may also provide students with extra suggestions about how to improve. The relationships formed between SSU members offer abundant resources for SSU journalists. As CHIA mentioned: “The exchange of experiences in SSU means a lot to me. From conversations with other SSU members, I can learn new journalistic skills or even get some extra job opportunities.”

When speaking about his relationship with peers in SSU, LUO expressed strong emotions:

I had just transferred to a new school when I joined SSU. I did not have many friends at school, so I depended on my friends in SSU for companionship. After all, we shared the same hobby and the same goal. To this day, we discuss our favorite athletes, watch games and work to become sports journalists together. The relationship with my friends in SSU is like a constructive competition; we compete with each other to push ourselves to improve.

As LUO pointed out, it is common for SSU members to consult with senior SSU writers about how to improve their news reports. LUO once took on the task of writing volleyball news. During the production process, he consulted a senior SSU member, who was once a volleyball player, about how to write excellent volleyball news. The senior SSU analyzed the game for him and pointed out particular aspects worth paying attention to. LUO: “People in SSU have helped me to discover my blind spots, and in that way, they have helped me to make progress.”

YU had a similar experience. YU is a certified basketball referee; he knows

basketball rules extremely well. However, he knew nothing about news writing when he first joined SSU. After he learned the inverted pyramid writing technique taught in SSU's news writing training course, YU contacted his division leader, followed her to the basketball sidelines, and observed how she asked questions and took notes. Yu then wrote a news report and compared it with his team leader's version of the same game. As YU pointed out, "The relationship between me and my team leader is crucial. With my team leader's help, I gradually gained a clearer idea about news production."

Besides interacting with peers, SSU members often met professional journalists during their work. Professional journalists can be viewed as role models for SSU members to follow. However, they may also occasionally serve as bad examples for student journalists. LUO once met a journalist who interviewed athletes while he was having his lunch. LUO: "I thought it was inappropriate. It reminded me to be aware of my attitude and behavior when conducting interviews." CHIA also agreed that by observing professional journalists, SSU members are able to learn from their strengths and weaknesses. CHIA:

Whenever I saw journalists who asked questions without any preparation, it reminded me to be careful to not to make the same mistake. If I met someone who asked great questions, it inspired me to develop new ways to conduct my interviews.

While SSU members may not have many direct interactions with professional journalists, LIN pointed out that SSU writers should always be aware of their attitude:

Whenever you meet a professional journalist, remember to be polite to them. They are experts in this industry. They are able to help you to move further, or to stop you from working in this field. If you are polite, they may be willing to share their experience with you and guide you in a direction that will help you succeed at your job.

Aside from gaining extra help, LIN also mentioned that establishing a good

relationship with experts might help student journalists to pick up on tacit knowledge and wisdom about the industry. LIN:

There is a lot of journalism knowledge that you cannot learn from textbooks or from the Internet; it lies in the minds of these experts. Only by having direct interactions with them can one learn the essence and depth of knowledge about the field. I often need to consult professional journalists for information about important figures or potential athletes. They have been in the industry for a long time, so they are better able to predict or decide what is newsworthy, and to then connect various pieces of information together in a cohesive way.

In addition, LIN analyzes how important interpersonal relationships have been to her once she entered the industry. LIN:

When I was in SSU, the workload was less; it was fine for me to work on my own. But after I entered the industry, I realized that I depended more upon my coworkers. Under time constraints and a heavy workload, sometimes it is impossible to finish all the interviews or take all the pictures. This is when I need help from other journalists. Maintaining good relationships with other people in the industry can help me finish assignments on time.

As well as the benefit of receiving extra help, maintaining interpersonal relationships may also provide additional opportunities for student journalists. LUO once got the chance to write a news story for a tennis company because of his previous volunteer experience. As for HSU, she met her boss at a SSU event and got offered a position as an anchorperson.

Another experience that most SSU members share is being assigned to cover a topic that they are not familiar with. This may include reporting on rules or sports figures they did not understand. When they were novices, they may have been nervous about

venturing into unfamiliar territory, but as their experience increased, they figured out ways to solve such problems. For example, they learned to search for related information through the Internet to increase their knowledge, or to ask a key informant for help.

As for HSU, she prefers asking a source questions to get direct answers. HSU:
Through asking questions directly with a key person, I can get the answers I need quickly and comprehensively. I'm able to learn directly from them, which works better than searching on the Internet by myself. In addition, through this method journalists can also build a positive relationship with that key person.

The various ways that SSU members react to such situations also relates to the journalists' personalities. HSU prefers direct interaction, while TSENG still prefers finding answers by herself. From time to time she might also consult a personal reference for help. TSENG:

I prefer searching information by myself. But for some sports like golf, I can only obtain limited knowledge from the Internet. To learn more, I have been visiting golf courses often to chat with coaches, to get to know the athletes, and to become familiar with the rules of golf.

Additionally, TSENG also mentioned that it is important for journalists to build up a social network of key sources and references before covering big events. TSENG:

Some matches, such as preliminary rounds, may not be viewed as newsworthy, but I will still visit the sidelines to expand and maintain my social connection with interviewees. If I visit them often and make friends with them, we can gradually build up trust and then they may be more willing to share extra information with me. Also, after I entered the industry, I realized that collecting an athlete's telephone number is important. Sometimes we need to do a second follow-up interview to get updates, or simply to fulfill your boss's requirement to get extra information. Therefore,

whenever I interview an athlete that I haven't met before, I will ask for his or her phone number right after the interview to ensure that I am able to contact them when needed.

4.4 SSU members' SDL Activities

SSU provides student journalists with a platform to experience the world of sports journalism. Through years of practice, interviewees reported that their journalistic abilities have advanced. As CHIA shared:

By increasing the amount of interviews in the second year of my SSU journey, I have learned how to react to unexpected situations. Rather than just asking questions, I found out it is also necessary to pay attention to interviewees' emotions, or to the surrounding environment.

LUO reinforced this point by saying:

My ability has been upgraded comprehensively. Especially for news writing, through constant practice and instruction by professionals, I made progress from merely imitating to discovering my own personal writing style. From my increase in experience, I have also learned how to react to diverse situations, and thus improve my ability to improvise.

LIN shared similar experiences. LIN:

It was around my second year in SSU that I started to consider how to improve my articles. In hindsight, when I first started to write news, I included some content that seems irrelevant now. As the years passed by, I started to recognize how to eliminate unnecessary details and how to elaborate things in different ways. Overall, I realized how to improve my writing.

From the aforementioned quotes we can see that through practical training and accumulating experiences, SSU journalists are able to transform declarative knowledge

into procedural knowledge. But what types of practical training may benefit SSU members to transform declarative knowledge to procedural knowledge? In the following discussion, the researcher will discuss the answers to **RQ3**.

SSU Activities

The manager of SSU provides student journalists with both domestic and international internship opportunities related to sports communication. Once they are assigned to their missions, student journalists can decide freely what topics to cover.

CHIA mentioned:

SSU gives us freedom to decide what to cover. The core mission of SSU is to write stories about student athletes who are special but unknown. Interviewing such athletes is great training for me to hone my interview skills. Since these athletes are unknown, I need to do extra preparation for data collection and interview questions.

Activities like international sports events also broaden SSU members' horizons, and provide them with a chance to practice their English. CHIA and YU were both staff workers at an international table tennis event. During the event, they needed to conduct English interviews, which presented a great challenge for them. As CHIA mentioned:

The first challenge was that we needed to translate our questions into English.

However, due to the language barrier or cultural differences, they still may not always understand our questions. So the second challenge lay in adjusting the way we stated our questions from time to time, to get our points across to the foreign athletes during the interviews.

Many SSU members experienced series coverage at Universiade or other international championships. At such international events, student journalists are able to interact with athletes from different sports and to learn to follow up on news in a short period of time. Four of the interviewees shared their experiences.

YEH:

I was in charge of the 2013 Universiade news project. I got to know the rules and the athletes of many different sports because of this mission. I did a lot of online research during this period of time, and learned how to read statistics and write the special terminology for different sports. The experience was quite unforgettable. It further connected to my first mission after I entered the industry, in which I was assigned to write news reports about the Incheon Asian Games. Because of my experience in SSU, I am able to deal with diverse topics and finish writing news reports on time.

CHIA:

I experienced events like the Asian University Men's Basketball Game and the Gwangju Universiade. At the first event, I learned to do interviews in English; as for the second one, it increased my knowledge of multi-sport events. Events like the Universiade include many sports other than basketball, baseball and football, and I learned a lot about those sports' rules. These experiences from SSU let me see clearly that writing news reports is not just about interviewing, and there are still a lot of aspects to be aware of. For example, an awareness of international politics or Universiade-related events helped add depth to my stories.

CHANG:

Conducting pre-event interviews at the Shenzhen Universiade was an important experience for me. That was the first time that I entered the National Sports Training Center, where I interviewed athletes from archery and weightlifting. I chose these sports purposely, because I wanted to challenge myself and get to know different sports that I had little exposure to.

LIN:

The World University Karate Championship was a great challenge for me. The

manager of SSU only provided us the coaches' contact information as a starting point. All the other components involved in covering the event, including what to interview, how to interview, and how to make contacts with athletes and coaches, depended on my own initiative. I needed to write news reports before, during and after the championship. Therefore I had to find ways to contact athletes while they were traveling abroad. This experience was like pre-employment training for a sports journalist career. It is the exact same situation once you step into the industry. Your boss only gives you a general direction, and then you have to collect the rest of the information and finish your work on your own.

From the quotes above, it is clear that international events serve as an opportunity for SSU members to: 1. Learn different sports rules. 2. Hone their data collection ability. 3. Experience the work mode as professional journalist.

Other than learning from international events, SSU members revealed that they have also learned to improve their ability through conducting different SSU duties. YEH mentioned: "I was a team leader in my third and fourth year. I needed to switch from a writer's perspective to a reader's perspective to give helpful advice. This helped me to improve my news writing skills through constant reflection." As for TSENG, her experience with simultaneously providing news reports to two different organizations has helped her to write about the same incident from different angles.

The learning process at SSU focuses mainly on sports communication and provides training geared towards print and broadcast media. CHANG, YEH and TSENG, currently working in the industry as sports journalists, expressed that their experiences at SSU have truly helped them in completing their current work assignments. CHANG:

Thanks to my training at SSU, the pace of my writing is quicker, as I am able to identify the key point in a short period of time. This is mainly because now I am used

to the mindset of sports news, and I am familiar with the rules and specific athletes of different sports, so my interviews always stick to the point.

YEH shared:

I have been practicing news writing skills for over four years. My ability to interview players, highlight the key points, and write quality news articles has gradually matured with years of practice. I am able to decide what to ask and what not to ask, and how to respond to different situations. After I entered the industry, I am able to directly utilize the abilities I developed at SSU.

TSENG mentioned:

I am able to cut to the main point of an interview quickly. This is mainly due to my practice in SSU. In the past, it took me a lot of time to figure out the key frame, but now I am able to process it in a very short time, and I am able to produce my articles from different angles or use different methods to elaborate upon stories. Besides, the training at SSU also helped me to decide my career path. Once I was assigned to do a sideline interview in front of the camera. It was my first debut on camera, so I was extremely nervous. Originally, I had set my mind on becoming a journalist for print media. Owing to this experience, I became even more certain that I should develop my career path towards print media instead of broadcast media.

Additional Activities

Student journalists may also attend sports journalism related activities, internships or part time jobs in their spare time to hone their journalistic skills. These activities play an important role in shaping SSU members' career paths. Interviewees revealed that they took extra journalism courses and attended seminars or workshops at school to learn from different perspectives or different professions. YU attended several sports seminars, and in his view, he considered them to have broadened his horizon. YU: "Sports journalism is

not just about the games; it relates with the culture of the industry as a whole. Having more knowledge about this industry allows me to write my news reports better.”

YEH started volunteering with the Chinese Professional Baseball League when she was a freshman. Starting the job as a baseball fan, she mentioned that her volunteer experience helped her to gain an insider’s view into the world of baseball, to get to know the culture surrounding the sport, and to build up relationships with various groups of people. Her knowledge and experiences have helped her to build up her own baseball database, which further allows her to fulfill her current tasks as a sports journalist.

The same is true for HSU, who attended several international seminars hosted by the Chinese Taipei Olympic Committee. In her opinion, international sports seminars may not be related to news writing directly, but they helped her to expand her knowledge of international affairs and to hone her English ability. Furthermore, the many oral presentations she delivered in these seminars improved her stage manner. Now she is more used to participating in such grand events and does not get timid on stage.

4.5 SSU members’ SDL Knowledge

In the interview, CHANG asserted that to become a sports journalist, “You need to be a sports lover. You need to be able to see the professional side of the game, and explain it to the audience. Therefore, upgrading your knowledge is crucial.” But what types of knowledge are important for SSU journalists to pave their way to expertise? And how did they organize the knowledge? In this section, the researcher discusses the findings for **RQ4**.

To begin with, knowing the rules of different sports is a basic requirement for sports journalists to write news reports. CHANG:

I tried to understand different sports, not just the rules, but also the essence of these sports. Take athletes, for example; the audience may only notice who is faster. But for

me, I would like to understand why those athletes are faster than others, and what are the factors that influence their performance? I think it is better if you can include explanations for sports rules in your articles.

HSU further mentioned:

You have to be sure that you truly love sports. What I mean is more than just knowing one or two athletes, but knowing everything about sports to become a sports journalist. You need to know the rules, the athletes, and the culture of the sport. Don't limit your knowledge to only a single sport. Having additional knowledge about different sports may present an interesting opportunity for you. You don't need to be a journalism graduate to become a journalist. But you need to accumulate experience and knowledge about sports for you to fulfill your job.

In addition, interviewees mentioned that to become professional journalists, having strong language ability is a plus. SSU suggests that members work to improve their foreign language ability, including but not limited to English proficiency. CHANG: "You might need to conduct an English interview sometime in the future. Possessing such an ability will help you to better fulfill your work requirements."

Speaking of English ability, LIN shared her experience. LIN had a part time job writing and translating international sports news, which later became her profession after she graduated. Her experience working in the news industry turned out to be very different from what she had learned in SSU. English-language sports news refers to many special terms, so now she needs to do lots of research and copy all the new terminology into her notebook. LIN:

I was a slow writer when I first got the job. English sports news uses many special terms. Even though I majored in English, I still spent a lot of time checking words in the dictionary. Also, my knowledge about foreign athletes is very limited, so it took

me a long time to get to know their names and faces. I subscribed to English-language sports magazines and read more English sports news to supplement this area of my knowledge. I also took notes on new information I did not know, and compiled it into my databank.

CHIA also collects different data and information for her personal learning. CHIA:

I always prepared information before interviews. And after each interview, I wrote down my reflections and what I learned from each mission. To improve, I also read news articles from foreign websites like ESPN to increase my knowledge of English sports terms and enhance my English news writing skills.

SSU also pointed out that attending inspiring events can be key transitions for students to improve. From the impressive events they encountered, SSU journalists have learned to react to different challenges and find ways to improve their skills and abilities. Events provide student journalists with the opportunity they need to modify their way of doing things.

For example, HSU and YEH were shocked by the fast pace of the news industry, and realized that their knowledge of sports was not enough to fulfill their journalism work. Therefore, internships, work experiences, and key events offered an incentive that encourages them to improve their knowledge about sports. HSU:

I remember my experience working at the company Videoland. Because of the heavy workload, I realized that my knowledge of sports was not enough. So I started to watch more sports games and read more news reports related to different sports. As a sports journalist, one needs to possess abundant sports knowledge to fulfill the job requirements. And also, from interviews, I found that to write a good news report, you not only need to understand the game, but you also have to know the culture of the sport and the athletes of the sports. A person who contains all this knowledge can

be viewed as a professional sports journalist.

YEH:

From my experience, I discovered that if you are interested in sports journalism, it is better to experience some other fields in the sports industry, like sports advertising, or volunteering at a sports event. All the knowledge about the sports industry is interrelated. Understanding more areas in the sports industry can help journalists to write better news.

LUO and YU also gained experience with conducting interviews in English, which encouraged them to improve their English ability. LUO:

My goal is to become an international sports journalist, so I have been enhancing my English ability since I entered university. I attended international sports events for tennis and table tennis, where I interviewed athletes in English. This has encouraged me to improve my English ability to better communicate with international athletes.

YU also attended several grand sports events. These experiences have helped him to improve the content of his news articles. YU:

There are two events that influenced me the most. One is the Asian University Men's basketball game. The other is the intercollegiate sports games event. For the basketball game, reporters only needed to focus on one sport, but because the athletes came from several different countries, we needed to communicate with them in English to write feature stories. As for the intercollegiate games, I had to cover several different types of sports within the course of a few days. I not only needed to understand the sport, but I also needed to do research about past records and potential rising athletes. The two events were very different, but both of them increased the depth and breadth of my story-writing ability.

Furthermore, SSU also mentions that the point in time in which learning takes place

may also influence the amount of knowledge students can absorb. YU shared his experience of learning in SSU:

The first year when I attended SSU's training course, I could only understand 75% of the content. But after I had more interview experiences, I was able to understand 85% or 90% of the content during the training courses in my second year. From my experience, I've noticed that everything is worth learning. Even if you are assigned to buy a lunchbox for your manager, you may get to know their hobbies, preferences, or some other interesting piece of information. Never be afraid to ask questions. No one is an innate expert. You have to read, learn, and do a lot of preparation before the games in order to ask deep questions. These experiences may transform into rich nutrients that allow you to move on and grow.

The concept of a learning curve over time also relates to YU's performance as a south division team leader. YU was assigned to this position in his second year of SSU. He believes that his training in graduate school has helped him to make decisions. YU:

As a team leader, my role is not only that of a journalist. I need to make decisions, assign missions and give advice to team members. If I hadn't had this job earlier, I don't think I would be able to perform as well. It is because of the training I have received both in graduate school and in SSU that I can accomplish the work set out for me.

4.6 SDL Influential Factors

Except for the above research findings, the researcher also discovered several interesting aspects of SSU journalists when it comes to their SDL, including findings on SSU members' interest in learning, the external incentives that encouraged them to learn, and their personal attitudes towards learning. The findings in this section are directly related to the four research questions, as these factors play an influential role in shaping

SSU members' SDL.

Interest in Learning

From the interviews, the researcher discovered that interest plays an important role in SSU members' SDL. Possessing a keen interest is the main incentive for students to learn deeply and comprehensively. YEH attested, "I am a picky learner. I am only interested to topics related to sports. It encourages me to learn comprehensively to know more about the world of sports." CHANG said that if she had no interest, her attitude would become indifferent; but if she cares about a topic deeply, she will work hard to improve. The same goes for YU, who shared that "when it comes to sports, I become an active learner. It is mainly because I am in love with sports."

Another interesting point regarding SSU journalists is that they may also factor their personal interest into their decision-making. Take CHIA and LIN for example; they are both members of female basketball teams, and they have noticed that women's basketball or female sports do not get enough coverage. So when they have the choice to decide which sports to write about, they choose female sports. LIN:

As a basketball player, I've discovered that most mainstream media focuses mainly on male athletes, while female athletes gain little attention. SSU gives us the freedom to write on topics we care about. So for me, I wish to promote female sports through my articles. In the first year, I mostly wrote about female basketball games. Then in my second year, I started to challenge myself to write news about female volleyball and female football. Around 80% of my articles are about female athletes.

As for HSU, before she entered SSU she had already formulated her career plan to become an anchorperson in the future. Therefore, she tried to attend to a variety of anchor training events. Her goal was not just to accumulate experience, but also to get to know more people from the industry.

LUO's goal is to enter an international sports news organization. Therefore, he took English classes constantly to practice his speaking skills. He also attended workshops offered by the Chinese Taipei Olympic Committee to increase the depth of his knowledge about international sports affairs.

External incentive

One reward that student journalists gain is an incentive that pushes them to learn. For those whose articles have been posted on the main page of the SSU website or the front page of the SSU monthly newsletter, they feel a sense of accomplishment, which further pushes them to pursue more accomplishments in their career. LUO expressed:

Seeing my articles on the front page gave me a sense of accomplishment. It encouraged me to write better articles. Besides, because I care about the number of page views, I also think about how to improve my articles to attract more readers.

As for YEH, she once wrote a news story featuring a handicapped baseball player, which garnered the attention of a professional baseball team. YEH:

I once wrote a news report about a baseball athlete who is handicapped, and still works hard for the sport he loves. His story encouraged many people, and one of the professional baseball teams in Taiwan even invited him to throw the ceremonial first pitch. This experience is quite important for me, because I realized that my news reports can be influential, and that I am able to help people with my news reports. It inspired me to discover other touching stories.

Attitude toward Learning

“Attitude” here refers to the attitude SSU graduates showed for their learning. SSU pointed out four important attitudes, including: 1. Passion for learning. 2. Learn full heartedly. 3. Love for sports, and 4. Being positive and active. According to SSU, these attitudes are interrelated and will make a difference to SSU members' SDL. Examples are

listed below.

1. Passion for learning

LIN pointed out the importance of being passionate: “You need to be passionate and responsible. Passion is important, because sometimes interviews can be exhausting. If you don’t have a passion for sports, you cannot persist.”

2. Learn full heartedly

From their experiences, interviewees put emphasis on the importance of learning whole-heartedly. It not only helps SSU members to learn important skills and knowledge; it may also help them to find a job in the industry. As CHANG mentioned:

Originally, I never thought I would become a sports journalist. But it was my experience in SSU that helped me get my current job. With all the articles I wrote in SSU, I am able to prove to my manager that I am able to analyze the game, am able to write news, and am qualified to become a sports journalist.

YU also emphasized that every experience might connect with one another sometime in the future. Some skills or social networks may seem unnecessary at this time, but it may influence an SSU journalist’s performance in the future. LIN reinforced this point by saying:

In SSU we not only learned news writing, but also team cooperation. I have learned how to communicate with my teammates, and how to distribute assignments to execute a task efficiently. Even if I’m just dressing up like a mascot, I am still important. After I’ve entered the industry, I understand that every incident or every news topic is important, and I will not complain to my manager if I got an assignment that I might have once thought to be unnecessary.

3. Love for sports

In the interview, CHANG analyzed the situation of the sports communication

industry, and pointed out the importance of knowing different sports. CHANG:

Sports journalism in Taiwan is basically divided into two types: baseball and all the other sports combined. If you are only fond of a single sport, like badminton or table tennis, you will be frustrated, because there are not many chances in Taiwan for you to fulfill your dream. So the basic principal to become a sports journalist is to love sports, and not just a single sport.

4. Being positive and active

Possessing a positive and active attitude can deeply influence student journalists' performance, as TSENG stated:

In my department, not everyone wants to become a journalist; some people may seem indifferent in writing their news articles. However, in SSU most of the members' goals are to become a sports journalist. Their attitude is relatively positive. It makes a difference to their performance.

From the interviews, this study has found that the experiences acquired at SSU have given these interviewees a clear direction of where to set their career path. For those who have already entered the industry, they believe that SSU has provided them with a strong base from which they can fulfill their current tasks. For those who haven't graduated yet, they consider their experiences at SSU to have helped them be even more certain about their future, and therefore be inspired to continue working hard to equip themselves with the skills needed to advance towards their goals.

5. Discussion

From the research findings we can find that for a SSU student journalist's SDL to succeed, four factors are involved. The four factors respectively are: 1. Basic journalistic training. 2. A platform to experience the world of journalism. 3. Opportunities to build social networks. 4. Students' personal interests and willingness to learn. Within these four factors, the first and the second factors are equal rights shared by all SSU members. The key that makes certain SSU members stand out and earn a position in the news industry lies in the third and fourth factors.

Figure 5.1 below depicts the process of SSU members' SDL. Factors 1 and 2 mentioned above are included in the inner circle of figure 5.1, and represent the output of the interaction of the three components: opportunities in life, chance situations, and knowledge. Factors 3 and 4 are incorporated in the outer circle. Factor 3 corresponds to the arrow indicating interpersonal relationships. Factor 4 relates to the two arrows indicating personal interest and learning attitude.

Note that the interest segment on the upper left side of the figure, and the personal interest arrow within the outer circle serve different roles. The interest represented on the upper left triggers student journalists' motivations to join SSU. However, the personal interest in the outer circle serves as the motivation for SSU members to continue their learning. Further information about figure 5.1 is explained below. Based on this figure, the researcher raises several issues for discussion in the following paragraph.

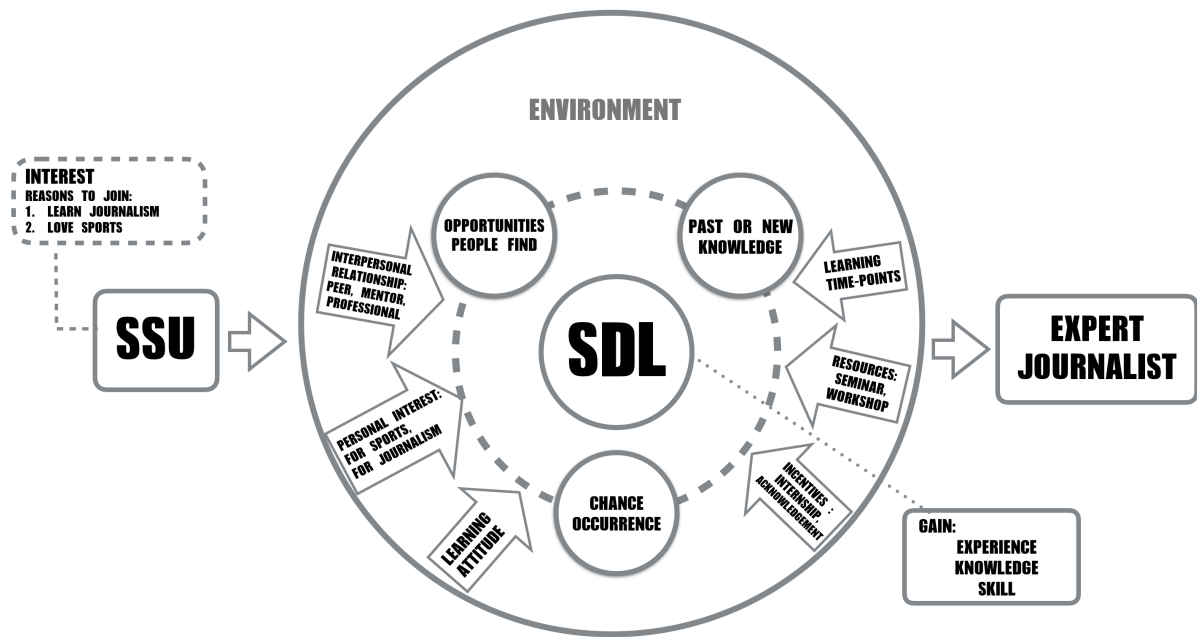


Figure 5.1 Process of SSU's SDL

5.1 The formation of SSU's SDL

From the definition of SDL, we can gather that SSU student journalists are able to construct their learning plans according to their own needs. They may set their learning plans according to their interest in a specific sport, a specific gender group, or a specific field such as broadcast media. SSU continues to encourage students to follow their learning plans for around two to four years. Within this amount of time, students may put their study goal into action. As interviewees mentioned, they do this by maintaining interpersonal relationship with peers, SSU managers, or professional journalists, which helps them to learn further or gain more information.

Within this process, SSU members also utilize available resources to attend seminars or do internships to increase their knowledge. From the findings, this study has also demonstrated that through years of practice, SSU students become able to evaluate their own performance and to find ways to enhance their learning and advance towards their ultimate goal of becoming a sports journalist.

Figure 5.1 shows that SSU members' SDL began with their interest in sports or in journalism. Their SDL process is coherent with Spear's interactive model, in that it consists of three components: opportunities in life, chance situations, and knowledge. These three components form the inner circle of figure 5.1. As mentioned in the literature review, the interactive model does not occur in a linear fashion. It occurs when the three components co-exist, thus generating the experience, knowledge, and skills SSU journalists need to build up the foundation needed for advancing to the next stage.

However, the co-existence of the three components is not enough for SSU student journalists to become professional. Previous research and this present study have shown that for the inner circle to continuously be formed, variables in the surrounding environment play a decisive role. The five arrows around the inner circle are the other influential aspects in SSU members' SDL. Previous SDL research has pointed out the importance of incentives, accessible resources, and interpersonal relationship in SDL. For this study, the researcher further discovered the value of interpersonal relationships, personal interest, learning attitude, and learning time-points in the process of SSU journalists' SDL.

Interpersonal relationships

Adult educator Candy (1991) indicated that, "the success of a SDL project depends largely on the extent and type of assistance obtained by individual learners" (p. 200). From SSU journalists' experiences, the present research has found that it is crucial for SSU members to maintain a good relationship with others for three reasons: 1. To gain additional instructions. 2. To gain exclusive news or extra information. 3. To build social networks within the sports profession.

1. To gain additional instructions

From LIN's experience, she has learned the procedural knowledge of "know how"

not from textbooks, but from her manager's instructions. By maintaining a good relationship with her manager, LIN has learned how to determine the key figure in a news story, as well as how to cope with unexpected situations.

2. To gain exclusive news or extra information

From TSENG's example we can also see that to become a sports journalist one needs to maintain connections with interviewees. Journalists make efforts to become friends with a key contact, and continuously follow their status. As TSENG explained, this is how professional journalists gain sources to write daily news or exclusive stories.

3. To build social network with sports profession

The essence of journalism is about interviewing and making connections with people. SSU focuses on providing sports news at the university level. As some of the student athletes competing at the university level go on to become professional athletes in the future, relationships with these athletes give SSU members an advantage. As CHANG mentioned, she became friends with the Olympian weightlifting athlete HSU Shu-ching when she was still a student. Their relationship has continued up to now, when both of them have become professionals. This relationship has helped CHANG to better fulfill her work as a professional journalist.

Another pivotal finding of this research is the importance of role models. Most SSU members have a role model they look up to, which is quite different from other SDL research findings. SSU members viewed their role model as an example to follow. They observed and imitated the performance of their role model, learning certain traits and advantages from them, and trying to improve their own skills to advance towards their role model's level. Their role model turned out to be an influential force leading the direction and the outcome of SSU students' SDL.

Personal interest and learning attitude

From the experiences of TSENG and CHANG, we can see that they gained more opportunities to cover sports news due to the fact that many games were hosted at their schools. Also, for YU and LUO, their position as senior students gave them more free time to cover news reports. Different identities also gave SSU members opportunities to experience diverse aspects of training, like YEH's experience as a team leader or TSENG's experience writing news stories for two different organizations. These factors provided SSU journalists with exclusive opportunities to experience the world of journalism.

But as Roberson and Merriam pointed out, it is “the internal or external incentive to learn” that truly helps people form their SDL (2005). The interviewee TSENG graduated from the journalism department. She mentioned in the interview that some students in her department lacked interest in becoming a journalist. Therefore, they showed an indifferent attitude toward their learning. However, SSU members are highly interested in sports journalism. The eight interviewees in this study all have shown a positive and active attitude towards the training in SSU.

Scholar Phil Andrews once said if you want to become a sports journalist, you need “to be willing to devote as much time to practicing your writing skills as the sports people about whom you are writing spend practicing theirs” (2005, p. 3). These research findings show that the eight interviewees were willing to spend a lot of time to learn sports rules and improve their skills in news writing, sports interviewing, or other journalistic tasks. In addition to the training in SSU, these interviewees spontaneously attended other sports journalism related activities, like volunteer groups, sports seminars or internships, to strengthen their sports journalism knowledge base. Their interest in sports and active attitude towards learning has helped them to learn continuously and comprehensively.

Platform to experience the world of journalism

Different from journalism education in school, which provides students with both academic and practical trainings, SSU focuses mostly on providing students with practical sports journalism training. Interviewee TSENG mentioned in the interview that compared to her studies at school, the training in SSU has helped her even more towards becoming a sports journalist. What are the differences between journalism education and SSU training that resulted in this comment?

The findings of this study show that to become a sports journalist, one needs to have certain amount of connection with or knowledge about sports. Sports journalism is a professional field of study that deals with sports rules, sports statistics, figures, and international affairs. Besides, each different sport has its own culture surrounding it. One needs a relatively long period of time to be able to perceive the various nuances of different sports knowledge.

By joining SSU, student journalists have gained access to different sports fields, and to interact with diverse professionals in the sports industry. Through an increase in experience, SSU members are able to become familiar with different sports rules, with different sports news productions, and can then enhance their journalistic skills from each experience.

Schempp once pointed out that “Practical knowledge earned through experience is more helpful in meeting the daily challenges and demands of work,” because people are able to apply such knowledge in real life (2008, p.128). As LIN mentioned in the interview, the training offered by SSU is similar to pre-employment training, in that it helps students, including herself, to get used to the work mode of sports journalism.

Most of the interviewees in this study have been assigned to cover sports that they are not familiar with. Rather than acting as a novice who does not know what to do,

through an increase in experience, SSU members gradually develop methods, including searching the Internet or asking a key informant, to solve problems. From these experiences, SSU students are able to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the knowledge and skills they currently possess, as well as their skills that need improvement (Schempp, 2008). Also, such experiences allow student journalists to transform their knowledge from “knowing what” (declarative knowledge) to “knowing how” (procedural knowledge) (Chung, Tsang, Chen, 1996). This transformation is also the key that separates novices and expert journalists, which helps SSU members to continue on their path towards becoming professionals.

The learning time point matters

The findings of this study have also pointed out that, the learning time-point may also affect student journalists’ learning outcomes. The definition of the interactive model is that the three components co-exist to form the base for the next stage. From the interviews, we can see that the elements within SSU journalists’ SDLs are indeed interrelated. As YU mentioned, he could only understand 75% of the content during his first year of taking the SSU training course. But in his second and the third year, due to his increase in experience and knowledge, he became better able to conceive the interview skills or photography skills taught in the SSU courses. This allowed him to make progress from writing event news to writing feature stories.

This also relates to the issue concerning the point in time in which learning occurs. As education scholar Candy pointed out, not everyone is suitable for SDL; “It is only after someone has been reading, studying, and thinking about an area for some time that he or she is capable of true self-directed inquiry in that subject” (Candy, 1991, p.315). CHANG and YU’s learning about how to change the interview atmosphere is one example. They learned this skill in the training courses, but it was not until they went

through interview situations that they realized how to utilize this skill.

Interviewees like LIN and CHIA also revealed that it was around the second year of their SSU journeys that they began to be able to react to unexpected situations, and to decide and eliminate unnecessary content from their news reports. CHANG's experience indicated that in the beginning, she used the same pattern to present news. But after her experience and amount of news reports increased, she learned how to use different ways to present stories.

These examples also indicate SSU journalists' progress from novice to expert. Starting from a novice who repeatedly uses the same method to cope with different situations (Chang, 2011), through the increase of practical experience, SSU students gradually become expert practitioners who know how to integrate or eliminate elements during information processing (Chung, Tsang, Chen, Chang, Chen, 2002, p.21).

5.2 Limitations

From this study, the researcher identified several basic approaches that SSU has used to promote learning. However, there are also limitations to this study. The researcher has listed out five different aspects of this study's limitations.

1. The percentage of importance of interpersonal relationships

This research revealed that interpersonal relationships are an important factor for SSU to become experts. However, from this in-depth interview research, this study is unable to measure the percentage of importance that interpersonal relationships have within SSU journalists' SDL. Future studies may combine other research methods or conduct interviews with the SSU manager to further explore this issue.

2. How did SSU members make progress?

From interviewees' responses, it is evident that they did make progress from their original positions as novices. However, this research is unable to specifically identify

what exactly SSU members' progress resulted from. Future studies may employ field study to further probe into this issue.

3. The differences between school education and SSU training

The researcher is curious to illuminate the differences between the training offered by university press centers and SSU. Except for specialized training in a specific field, are there any other aspects of the training in SSU that are worthwhile for university press centers to refer to? Once student journalists enter the news industry, are there any differences with respect to the performance of SSU members and journalism graduates? Again, these questions cannot be answered by this study. Yet, it is an interesting topic for future studies to explore.

4. The absence of diverse respondents

This research speaks mostly from the students' side of the equation. For researchers who are interested in student journalists' cultivation, they may further combine perspectives from the SSU managers, or from the professional journalists with whom student journalists have interacted. It is also recommended for future studies to combine field studies in which researchers actually observe how student journalists utilize learning resources, how they interact with people, and how they make progress with their articles.

5. The absence of diverse background samples

The interviewees in this study are mostly supported by their family to continue their studies in SSU. However, there may be students who cannot continue their studies in SSU due to financial pressure or health problems. The researcher did not include such samples into this study. Nevertheless it would be better if future researchers can include this element to make comparisons to see whether external pressure or threat can be an influential factor to an SSU member's learning.

6. Conclusion

6.1 Summary

News reports serve as a decisive source in modern society for people to gain up-to-date information. The validity of news reports is important, especially for sports news. The core of sports news is to provide information and explanation of different sports rules, sports figures and game statistics. A sports journalist's job is to combine all the important information and explain the statistics correctly in a news report. However, a journalist's job is not simply about collecting data and writing articles. In the dynamic environment of journalism, journalists also need to be aware of several different aspects at the same time, such as the environment of the interview or the emotion of the interviewees.

A journalist's job is complex in nature, and requires tacit knowledge that is not easy to conceive through classroom education. This gives rise to a "mismatch between graduates and the demands of employers" in the journalism field (Niblock, S., 2012, p.23). The researcher of this study realized this problem, and developed this study to examine the ways in which the SDL mechanism adopted by SSU may offer a solution.

It is important to provide students with practical training to succeed in the journalism industry. In this study, the researcher discovered that Spear's SDL interactive model is a beneficial method for students to combine learned knowledge, useful skills, and real world experience to perform professionally. SSU's SDL journey allows students to compartmentalize knowledge from "knowing what" (declarative knowledge) to "knowing how" (procedural knowledge). The procedural knowledge further provides SSU members with the ability to solve problems and handle various situations in the news industry.

Other than the interactive model, the researcher also discovered that social connections play a crucial role in the cultivation of a student journalist. Journalism is a

dynamic industry; the cultivation of student journalists should never occur in an isolated manner. Maintaining interpersonal relationships with professionals, peers, or mentors can help student journalists not only to complete their news reports, but also to gain additional opportunities and continue learning throughout their lifetime.

From the research findings, the researcher identified several approaches used by SSU to improve students' journalistic performance. By documenting the eight interviewees' experiences, the researcher hopes their tacit knowledge may benefit future student journalists.

6.2 Implication

When examining SDL in the context of the cultivation of student journalists, this study is significant because it is the first study that analyzes how SDL is incorporated into journalism education. From the findings of this study, we can see how SDL can help students, especially students who are not journalism majors, to become professional journalists. The importance of this study can be viewed from three different perspectives:

1. Implications for student journalists' SDL. 2. Implications for journalism education. 3. Implications for journalism industry.

1. Implications for student journalists' SDL

This study provides useful suggestions for 1. Journalism majors to enhance specialized knowledge regarding to sports news. 2. Non-journalism majors to gain journalism knowledge. This research also informs student journalists of a clear direction to improve their journalistic skills, interpersonal communication skills, data collection skills, improvisation skills, and guides students to build up their information database and their social networks. From the results of this study, future student journalists can learn from predecessors' experience and modify their SDL approaches accordingly.

2. Implications for journalism education

SSU's SDL happens in a non-classroom education context. Nevertheless, from the interviewees' responses, the design of SSU's training may still provide insight for journalism education. As interviewee TSENG mentioned, current journalism education in Taiwan mostly focuses on general concepts of news writing. However, the results of this study indicate that the general concepts are not enough. Within the large category of sports news, there are great variations in sports terms, sports rules, or statistical interpretation between different sports. Instead of merely teaching the basic idea of news writing, this study recommends that journalism educators include specialized instructions regarding sports news, financial news, political news, or showbiz news into curriculum design. Furthermore, a cooperation scheme between the industry and academia may offer a solution to this issue.

By inviting instructors from the news industry, students can get exposed to up-to-date information and instructions, which can bridge the gap between journalism education and the industry. In addition, course design should be developed to culminate in a long-term project. From SSU members' experiences, this study found that student journalists need one or two year periods of practical training to execute procedural knowledge. In this case, the industry-academia cooperation plan should be implemented for at least two to four semesters, and should include one-on-one or small group instruction for student journalists to improve.

As scholar Candy (1991) indicated, students must possess prior knowledge in order to experience the essence of SDL. In this case, the researcher suggests the time-point of the industry-academia cooperation scheme should begin during students' sophomore or junior year, after students have perceived basic journalism knowledge.

3. Implications for the journalism industry

It is common for journalism organizations in Taiwan to offer internships for students during the summer vacation. The internships usually last for one to two months, during which students are placed into several different sections. The design of such internships may benefit students by becoming exposed to the specialization in the industry. However, due to the two-month time constraint of the internship, and the limited instruction students often receive, the effectiveness of the internship may be inadequate, as it may only give students a few general ideas. To truly cultivate student journalists to become professional journalists, this study recommends that the industry adopt the industry-academia cooperation plan as well.

The researcher of this study hopes that the ideas put forth by this research can help decrease the discrepancy between journalism education and the news industry. This study focuses on the cultivation of sports journalists, but can also be applied to other fields of training.



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Appendix

訪談大綱

Interview Outline

1. 請敘述你的學業經歷以及職場經驗。

Please describe your learning and working experience.

2. 請問當初為什麼想要加入 SSU?

What makes you want to join SSU?

3. 加入 SSU 之前，是否曾經有新聞採訪經驗？對新聞產製流程是否熟悉？

Before you joined SSU, have you ever had any journalistic experience? Were you familiar with the news generating process?

4. 進入 SSU 後，你是如何分配以及選擇採訪活動？

After you joined SSU, how did you allocated your time for writing news reports?

5. 以 SSU 培訓為例，你最初在採訪過程中，希望自己有哪些方面的成長？

What kinds of progress did you expected when you were a SSU journalist?

6. 加入 SSU 之後，你是否有規劃學習計劃？學習主要目標為何？

Did you have a specific learning plan? What was your learning objective?

7. 擔任 SSU 特派員之任期長度？期間之新聞報導篇數和種類為何？是否曾經有報導登

上大專運動報或是 SSU 網站頭條？

How long had you been as a SSU journalist? What are the amount and number of news reports that you wrote? Had any of your articles been posted on SSU website or the

university sports news?

8. 請概略說明擔任特派員期間採訪的賽事種類和大型賽事之名稱。

Please briefly list out major sports events you had attended while you were a SSU journalist.

9. 在 SSU 採訪階段，碰過印象最為深刻的採訪經驗為何？你是如何因應？

What was the most impressive interview experience you had as a SSU journalist? How did you cope with this experience?

10. 擔任 SSU 特派員期間，影響你最深刻的採訪經驗為何？對你的影響為何？

Have you ever had an interview experience that influences you deeply? What was the influence on you?

11. 在 SSU 的採訪過程中，你覺得你學到哪些方面的技能？

What have you learned from your SSU experience? Please relate it with the progress of your journalistic skills.

12. 除了 SSU 的採訪工作外，擔任特派員期間，你是否曾參加其他採訪活動，磨練採訪能力？

Beside your SSU experience, have you attended or joined any other journalistic activities to hone your interview skills?

13. 除了參與 SSU 活動之外，為了成為專業體育傳播從業人員，你做了哪些努力？

In order to become a professional sports journalist, what kinds of efforts have you made?

14. 擔任特派員期間，你是否曾向他人請教，或是透過觀摩法學習？若有，當時學習的對象是誰？學習的素材為何？你選擇向他學習的原因為何？

When you were a SSU journalist, have you ever consulted with someone, or learned through observation? If you did, who was the person you consulted with? What was your learning material? What was your reason to learn from this particular person?

15. 你對於學習採取什麼樣的態度？

What is your attitude towards learning?

16. 你擔任 SSU 特派員期間，在時間配合、經濟狀況、健康狀況或是家庭方面，是否曾經遭遇困難或挫折，進而影響你的學習？若有，你是如何因應？

Have you encountered any difficulties or frustrations that hindered your progress as a SSU journalist? (No matter it is related to time management, financial issue, health condition, or family issues.)

17. 從你自身經驗來說，你認為擔任 SSU 特派員需要具備的精神或能力為何？

From your own experience, what do you consider as the required attitude or skills a SSU journalist should have?

18. 擔任特派員期間，你是否曾獲得資源的協助？對你是否造成影響？

When you were a SSU journalist, have you ever received any support or material resources? Did it have an impact on you?

19. 整體來說，SSU 的學習對你的影響是？

Overall, what is the influence SSU training has on you?

20. 在擔任 SSU 特派員期間，若想增進自己的能力，你認為學員應該做哪些規劃和準備？

If SSU journalists wish to improve their journalistic skills, what are your suggestions for them to prepare themselves?

