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## The Role of the Teacher in the Formation of Media Competence of University Students: Problems and Prospects

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### Abstract

The actualization of media education issues in the modern world necessitates the improvement of the activities of universities in general, and the work of a teacher in particular. It is the teacher who is at the forefront of working with young people, responsible for developing skills in working with information, its analysis, understanding and generation. The purpose of this article is related to the study of the role of a teacher in the practices of forming students' media competence. The leading research method is a questionnaire survey of students of Russian universities (n = 633). It was found that students rate the efficiency of the teacher's use of multimedia services, presentations and other traditional attributes of working with information quite highly. However, with fairly high ratings of the level of teaching in higher education, a third of students note the lack of interactivity in the work of teachers. Self-assessments of the level of students' media competence showed a high level of polarization of knowledge and skills of young people. High ratings were received for such skills as "using different sources of information", "observance of the culture of behavior in the digital environment". Lower ratings were received for such competencies as "the ability to work with large volumes of digital data, conduct analytics", "produce multimedia content". The results of the qualitative study showed that the teacher's exactingness is a key factor in the formation of analytical skills for working with information. It was found that the insufficient content of digital platforms used in training with materials limits the formation of students' media competence.

**Keywords:** media competence, role of teacher, digital platforms, analytical skills, media product, educational environment, university.

### 1. Introduction

The mediatization of everyday life, the penetration of information and communication technologies into various professional fields and activities require the development of students' media literacy and their socialization in the media environment (Kazakov, 2024). At the forefront of solving these problems is the higher education system and its key subject – the teacher. Foreign studies emphasize the need to develop adequate tools for the formal educational environment of universities to develop students' media competence. In particular, such skills as the readiness to use information and communication technologies to solve professional problems and responsible behavior in the online space are of particular relevance (Zhu et al., 2021).

The key to solving these ambitious tasks lies in the hands of the teacher as a guide in the world of information and knowledge. The media competence of the teacher himself and his

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readiness to work with students in this direction ensures the scaling of positive changes in terms of conscious and responsible media consumption.

The thesis on the need to improve the professional skills of teachers in order to develop students' media competence is gaining significant support in scientific circles. The teacher faces the inert attitude of the student, which must not only be overcome, but also transformed into constructive communication practice in the media space of higher education. This is due to the fact that in modern conditions the student acts as a media consumer, which means that the teacher must have technologies for creating a media product and promoting it. Practices of joint (students and teachers) media design of unique content are becoming relevant (Simkacheva, Bakanov, 2024).

## 2. Materials and methods

The author attempts to critically comprehend the functional significance and place of a higher education teacher in the practices of developing students' media competencies. This became the goal of the study.

*The logic of achieving it is determined by the fulfillment of a number of research tasks:*

1. Analysis of the student's level of media competence according to the following parameters: the ability to critically comprehend digital communications products, the ability to work with large volumes of digital data, conduct analytics and produce multimedia content, analyzing the dependence of the formation of these competencies on the teacher's activities.

2. Analysis of students' assessments of the effectiveness of the teacher's activities in the process of working with multimedia services, using video materials, presentations, etc.

3. Establishing deficiencies in students' media competence, dysfunctions in the teacher's work as factors in the transformation of his role in the media space of higher education.

*Research hypotheses:*

1. Attention to the soft skills of a teacher in the context of digitalization and expansion of channels of interaction with a student has reduced the requirements for strengthening the professional basis of higher education. Working with large databases, the ability to generate multimedia content are becoming an area of professional deficit for a modern teacher.

2. A significant factor in the decline in students' media competence is the insufficient content of digital platforms (services) used in training with materials.

The key research method was a questionnaire survey of students. Respondents were recruited using the snowball method and personal contact with students. The status of "student of a higher education institution" served as a sign of representation. Other signs of representation were not introduced, as well as differentiation of students by socio-demographic characteristics, profile / place of study. Thus, the total sample was 633 people. Of these, 59.4 % are girls, 40.6 % are boys. 78.6 % are students of metropolitan universities, 21.3 % – regional. The profiles of study are represented relatively evenly: natural sciences – 32.5 %, humanitarian – 17.2 %, socio-economic – 26.1 % and technical – 24.2 %. The sample mainly included full-time students, which generally corresponds to the objectives of the study. The sample covers the following levels of study: bachelor's degree, master's degree, specialist degree.

## 3. Discussion

In the works of foreign scientists, attention is paid to the interpretation of the essence of media competence, the transformation of its substantive components and meanings in the context of post-digital education, the introduction of artificial intelligence (Nam, Bai, 2023). The era of "post-truth" places new demands on the skills of critical perception of information, searching for alternative sources (Fletcher, Park, 2017), skills in verifying the authenticity of information on the Internet (Metzger et al., 2010), and information skepticism (Edgerly, 2017).

Based on the importance of the above skills, we can agree with the opinion of scientists who conducted studies on the media competence of students and teachers in Brazil, Spain, Portugal and Venezuela. According to them, media competence includes a set of skills that allow one to consume and produce media products based on analytical and critical thinking (Romero-Rodríguez et al., 2019). A similar point of view is shared by other scientists, in whose works media competence is divided into the skills of competent media consumption and information production. Scientists include analysis, decoding, understanding and interpretation of

information among media consumption skills (Pereira, Moura, 2019). A number of studies highlight the importance of digital skills when working on media platforms: operational, navigational, social and creative skills (Lybeck et al., 2023).

Russian scientists draw attention to the need to develop media competence of young people, on the one hand, for successful integration into various spheres of public life, and, on the other hand, to increase the level of competitiveness in the labor market (Frolova, Rogach, 2022). In particular, the effectiveness of media education ensures the development of cultural-creative qualities of the individual, which contributes to the formation of new meanings of professional activity, new qualities and values (Yarnykh et al., 2020). Filling the educational environment with a socio-cultural component becomes the task of a modern teacher, in whose hands are concentrated the mechanisms for transforming the student's personal media culture.

In developing these conclusions, we can add the thesis of Chinese scientists who, based on an experimental study in Beijing, conclude that the teacher has priority responsibility for the implementation of educational initiatives in the field of media literacy. The results of the study confirmed the existence of a relationship between the student's media competence and the teacher's work (Zhang et al., 2024).

At the same time, a number of scientists believe that technical innovations have changed the criteria for assessing information, which, on the one hand, creates high demands on the personal epistemology of media consumers (Schwarzenegger, 2020), while on the other hand, they form a methodological gap in the education system (Kine, Davidsons, 2022). Explaining the second part of this thesis, it is worth noting that the problems are associated with the difficulty of identifying categories of students in need of media literacy training, as well as with possible deficiencies in the media skills and relevant competencies among the teachers (Mateus et al., 2019). It can be assumed that a higher education teacher, provided that he or she maximizes his or her skills in the media sphere, can become a driver for the formation of media competence among young people, both in terms of consumption and creation of media products.

#### 4. Results

Interpretation of the obtained research materials allowed us to draw a number of conclusions. Firstly, it is worth noting that the respondents rate the effectiveness of the teacher's use of multimedia services in their work quite highly. However, the trajectory of the scores given shows a decrease from maximum values to average as they move from traditional media practices (presentations, messengers for additional communication with the teacher) to exclusive practices of using digital services and programs. In particular, less than 2/3 of students (62.4 %) note the use of digital educational services in the teacher's work (Table 1). It should be noted that the potential of educational digital services today is beyond doubt. This is due to the fact that, on the one hand, the use of digital services in education ensures that students consolidate basic knowledge in specialized subjects. On the other hand, they open up wide opportunities for media design. As practice shows, modern digital educational services have a wide range of use of digital tools that allow the teacher to optimize work with students, taking into account modern capabilities and requirements. Among other things, the active presence of a student on educational digital services contributes to the development of related digital skills, including operational, information and communication, and situational navigation skills.

**Table 1.** Distribution of responses to the question: "Do teachers use in their work ...?" (%)

<i>Answer options</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>
presentations	95.6	4.4
video materials	76.6	23.4
digital platforms for organizing the educational process	83.4	16.6
corporate and personal messengers for additional communication	84.2	15.8
digital educational services	62.4	37.6
distance learning system	73.3	26.7
fascinating interactive tasks	52.6	47.4

Modern media consumption trends create a high demand for the use of interactivity, which allows focusing educational practices on the moment "here and now". Unfortunately, 47.4 % of

the surveyed students note the absence of such pedagogical tools in their educational experience. The data obtained correlate with the respondents' answers to the question about the problems of studying at the university (Table 2). Thus, with a fairly high level of teaching in higher education (87.2 % of students did not encounter such a problem), 34.0 % of respondents note the absence of interactivity.

**Table 2.** Distribution of responses to the question: “Are the following problems of education present in your university (in the field of your training)?” (%)

<i>Answer options</i>	Yes	No
uninteresting to study	29.5	70.5
difficult to study	39.3	60.7
lack/insufficiency of content of digital platforms (services) used in teaching	34.3	65.7
no interactivity	34.0	66.0
low level of teaching	12.8	87.2

It is noteworthy that just over a third of the surveyed students (34.3 %) critically assess the content of digital platforms with relevant educational material. Recognizing the importance of the technical component of organizing the work of digital platforms and services, the priority role in the quantitative and qualitative content filling should be given to the teacher. As V.R. Milushev rightly notes, a modern teacher is required to combine a traditional approach to teaching with the effective use of media resources in educational activities. According to the scientist, the meaningful filling of digital platforms with media resources will ensure a high level of learning efficiency. In particular, media resources become the basis for the development of new knowledge, providing expanded opportunities for information coverage of the topic (Milushin, 2023).

During the analysis of contingency tables, some dependencies were identified. In the group of respondents who noted the problem of insufficient filling of digital platforms with educational materials, the proportion of those who have the skills of critical understanding of digital communications products is lower (84.3 % compared to 88.7 %). The analysis allows us to conclude that the content of digital platforms affects the level of media competence of students. (Table 3).

**Table 3.** The relationship between the availability of materials on educational platforms (digital services) and students' assessments of their digital skills (%)

Lack/insufficiency of content of digital platforms (services) used in training	How would you rate your digital skills, where «5» is very high, “1” is very low				
	1	2	3	4	5
use different digital sources for studying					
yes	6.5	8.3	24.4	24.9	35.9
no	4.1	6.5	19.7	27.2	42.5
Average value	4.9	7.1	21.3	26.4	40.3
produce multimedia content					
yes	17.5	18.0	28.1	13.8	22.6
no	16.3	18.0	23.8	14.7	27.2
Average value	16.7	18.0	25.3	14.4	25.6
can work with large volumes of digital data and conduct analytics					
yes	11.1	17.1	32.3	22.1	17.4
no	9.1	17.1	29.3	23.1	21.4
Average value	9.8	17.1	30.3	22.7	20.1
observe the culture of behavior in the digital environment					
yes	7.4	8.7	19.4	22.1	42.4
no	3.1	8.4	15.1	25.0	48.4
Average value	4.6	8.5	16.6	24.0	46.3

The “problem” group of students has a higher proportion of those who rated their ability to apply digital skills for study as low. It should be noted that, in general, students are quite optimistic in assessing their media competence (40.3 % – “5” and 26.4 % – “4”).

It should be noted that the content of digital platforms also affects other aspects of students' media competence. In particular, 41.9 % of students who have no problems with the content of digital platforms at the university highly rated (in total “4” and “5” points) the skill of developing multimedia content (14.7 % and 27.2 %, respectively). For comparison, in the “problem” group, the proportion of students with high self-assessments of the skill of developing multimedia content is lower (36.4 %). In general, it should be noted that this skill is characterized by the lowest student ratings. More than 1/3 (in total “1” and “2” points) of respondents did not develop the skill of developing multimedia content. It seems possible that the active media consumption, which is typical of a modern student, has already ensured the development of his or her skills in searching and primary processing of information.

This was facilitated by the rapid integration of social networks into personal, professional and educational networks (Zhu et al., 2020). At the same time, creative competence, which includes the generation of a new media product, is not provided by educational institutions with a comprehensive methodological approach. It is fair to note that some students have successfully mastered this skill in everyday life and do not associate its formation with the task of the teacher.

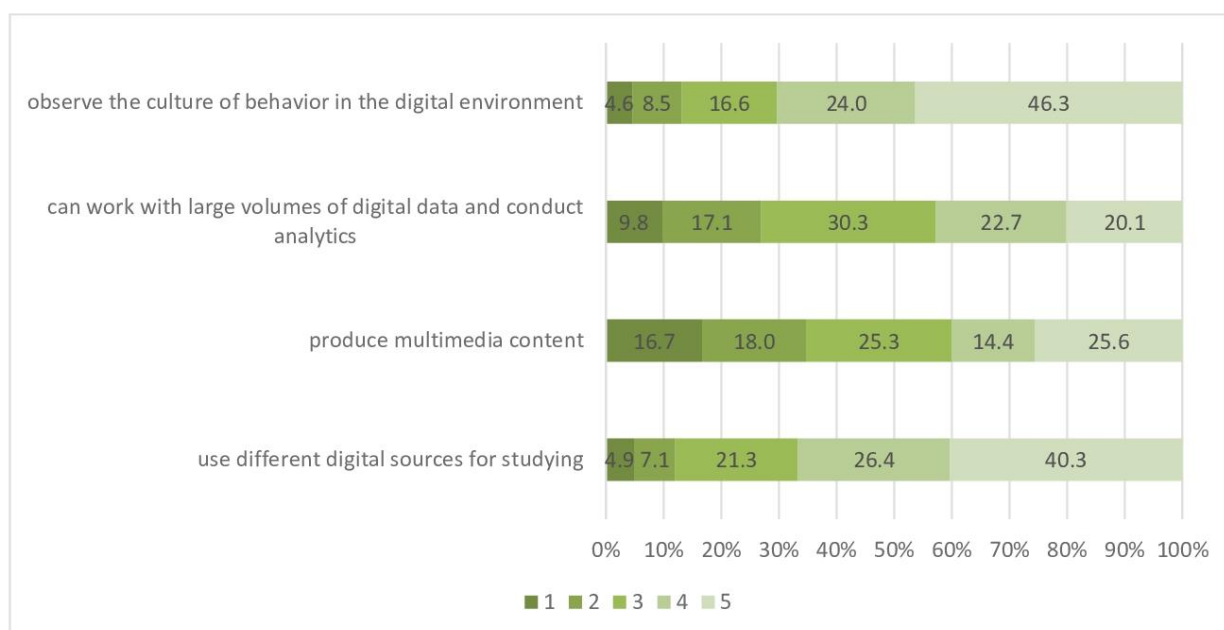
The research results are confirmed by materials from focus group interviews.

*Olga T.: “These days, developing multimedia content is a cool skill. But they don’t teach it at universities, there are no programs or teachers ready to teach...”*

*Dmitry K.: “Not everything should be taught at a university. Not everyone needs to be able to develop multimedia... And if you want, you can learn it yourself.”*

Based on the data obtained, a conclusion is made about the existence of a connection between the low level of development of students' media competence and the deficit of teachers' pedagogical skills in terms of pedagogical design of e-courses, the deficiencies in the IT infrastructure of universities. This conclusion is partially confirmed by the works of other Russian scientists. In particular, they conclude that in the context of large-scale digitalization, in order to maintain the role of the teacher as a transmitter of knowledge and mentor for students, it is necessary to transform the online learning environment and change the methodology of e-learning (Tatarinov, 2020; Vaganova et al., 2019).

An unfavorable situation is also typical for such aspect of students' media competence as “ability to work with large volumes of digital data, conduct analytics” (Figure 1). Less than half of respondents (42.8 %) rated their skills at “4” and “5” points.



**Fig. 1.** Self-assessment of students' level of development of their media skills, where “5” is excellent, “1” is absent (%)

The results of the focus group study showed that in some cases students have a distorted perception of the skill of working with large volumes of digital data.

*Anna G.: "I know how to work with digital data, everything is on the Internet, I can find and read it all, draw conclusions. You don't need to get an education to do this. I can find fresh data faster than the teacher".*

*Dmitry K.: "It seems to me that teachers themselves do not know how to work with big data".*

It is fair to note that students of technical specialties demonstrate higher standards of working with big data.

*Grigory S.: "Every techie knows data analysis algorithms, a programming language... This is the basis. But, of course, a lot depends on the teacher and the capabilities of the university".*

Thus, despite the high self-esteem of students their media competencies, the role of the driver in their formation belongs to the teacher. During the educational process, the teacher should use educational practices and tasks that maximally reveal his media skills to students. This approach has a number of advantages, as it allows not only to maintain authority and "media leadership" in front of students, but also to demonstrate the importance of media competencies in real life. The purposefulness of demonstrating the teacher's media competencies will also, in our opinion, avoid dysfunctions of their spontaneity formation of students' media competence, which in most cases is destructive. In the latter case, distortions in the perception of the content of media competencies may arise, as well as destructive practices of working with media resources may develop.

The results of the study showed that a low level of teaching becomes a barrier to students acquiring basic knowledge and skills in the mediasphere. The study tested the connections between the level of teaching and the development of such skills as «uses different digital sources for studying» and «can work with large volumes of digital data, conduct analytics» (Table 4).

**Table 4.** The relationship between a weak level of teaching and students' assessment of the level of development of their media skills (%)

Low level of teaching	How would you rate your digital skills, where "5" is very high, "1" is very low				
	1	2	3	4	5
<i>use different digital sources for studying</i>					
yes	14.8	8.6	32.0	21.0	23.6
no	3.4	6.9	19.7	27.2	42.8
Average value	4.9	7.1	21.3	26.4	40.3
<i>can work with large volumes of digital data and conduct analytics</i>					
yes	17.3	21.0	25.9	21.0	14.8
no	8.7	16.5	31.0	23.0	20.8
Average value	9.8	17.1	30.3	22.7	20.1

According to the data obtained, students who noted the presence of such a problem at their university as a low level of pedagogical skills of a teacher, more often than other respondents also assess their digital competencies as insufficient. In particular, the analysis of the results of the study on the skill "use different digital sources for studying" showed a share of 14.8 %, which is 9.9 percentage points higher than the average; on the skill "can work with large volumes of digital data and conduct analytics" – 17.3 %, which is 7.5 percentage points higher than the average for the sample. A similar situation of exceeding the average values is observed in the group of respondents who did not indicate the presence of teaching problems at their university. However, the proportions here have a positive vector – the share of those who assessed their level of competence as higher.

The materials of the focus group study made it possible to see the reasons for the obtained dependence.

*Konstantin A.: "There are demanding teachers who make you prepare analytics, look for different digital sources, and draw conclusions".*

Victor B.: *“My teacher... is not satisfied with simple copy-paste from the Internet. At first, it irritated me, but when I figured it out, I realized that this is a good skill that will come in handy in the future. In general, I pumped up my skills”.*

Thus, the role of the teacher is seen not only in the transmission of knowledge, but also in the organization of effective systems for their control. Students especially note that the teacher's exactingness is a key factor in the formation of their media competence, including the formation of analytical skills. In foreign studies, barriers to the development of students' media competence include not only the insufficient level of professionalism of the teacher, but also the institutional conditions of the functioning of educational institutions. The Institute of Education, due to its reliance on centuries-old traditions and the academic presentation of knowledge, cannot fully integrate digital technologies into the educational process. This problem does not allow for an effective transition to a new level of practices of digital interaction between teacher and student (Masalimova et al., 2014).

## 5. Conclusion

The study concludes that students highly evaluate the effectiveness of teachers' use of multimedia technologies and platforms. It can be assumed that digitalization of education and updating of retraining and advanced training programs for teaching staff have had a beneficial effect on the teacher's media competence and their willingness to use multimedia technologies in the classroom. However, an analysis of students' qualitative assessments showed that there are deficiencies in the teacher's media skills. While traditional media practices are quite popular in the teacher's work, exclusive practices of using digital services and programs are minimally represented. The lack of these media skills reduces the teacher's authority, both in terms of the process of knowledge transfer and in terms of popularizing media education. The modern media environment equips students with the skills of searching and analyzing information, while the creative competence of generating a new media product requires an integrated approach to its formation and inclusion in educational practices. The research results showed that 34.7 % of students today have not developed the skill of developing multimedia content. It can be assumed that the insufficient level of development of students' media competencies is due to both the weakness of the teacher's skills in terms of pedagogical design of electronic courses and the deficiencies of the IT infrastructure of universities. Indirect confirmation of this conclusion is the opinion of a third of respondents who experience a lack of interactivity in the educational process.

One of the limitations in the development of students' media competence is the lack or insufficiency of the teacher's filling of digital platforms and services with educational content used in training. This problem affects such a skill of students as critical understanding of digital communications products. Similarly, students note the deficit of such an aspect of students' media competence as «the ability to work with large volumes of digital data, conduct analytics». The increasing complexity of everyday operations when working in a digital environment makes these skills extremely relevant to ensure the successful functioning of an individual in financial, economic and social life. In addition, analytical skills increase the level of competitiveness of a graduate in the labor market. A teacher, possessing the relevant knowledge and a high level of exactingness, acts as a key subject in the formation of a student's media competence in terms of his work with big data, preparation of analytical conclusions. The role and authority of a teacher is based on the ability to work with large databases, make analytical conclusions and generate new knowledge. Today, the emphasis in understanding the role of the teacher has significantly shifted towards “soft” skills (communication, empathy, charisma). However, it would be fair to note that such an interpretation narrows the role of the teacher, leaving key professional interests on the periphery.

The results of the study showed that a higher level of teaching at the university allows for the successful development of such student skills as “I use different digital sources for study” and “I can work with large volumes of digital data and conduct analytics.” The results of the focus group interview confirmed that the teacher's exactingness becomes a key driver in the formation of students' media competence, including the formation of analytical skills.

Thus, the key vectors for improving students' media skills and their competencies in working in the modern media space are determined not only by the teacher's readiness to provide pedagogical support for this process, but also by the availability of the necessary his skills. The results obtained emphasize the importance of developing the teacher's media competencies in accordance with new digital requirements. This approach will help increase the teacher's

authority in the educational process, as well as ensure greater involvement and motivation of students to acquire new skills. The study established the importance of developing "fundamental" knowledge and competencies in young people. Excessive emphasis in the educational process on the development of soft skills leads to a decrease in pedagogical attention to the academic component of higher education. This imbalance is reflected in a decrease in the on students' fundamental knowledge and skills that allow working with large databases, analytically comprehending them and generating new high-quality media content.

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