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Developing Media Competence of Future Teachers in a University Pedagogy Course

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Abstract

This article examines the development of media competence in future teachers within the context of a university Pedagogy Course. The study addresses the systemic challenge facing higher pedagogical education in the digital age: the need to transition from a knowledge-oriented model to a competency-oriented approach that integrates media literacy as an essential professional characteristic. The research analyzes the theoretical foundations of media competence, tracing its evolution from the concept of "media literacy" to the more comprehensive "media competence" paradigm, which encompasses motivational, cognitive, value-semantic, activity-based, and communicative components. Drawing on the Federal State Educational Standards, the study identifies the normative requirements that establish media competence as a link between regulatory expectations and educational outcomes. The methodology involves a theoretical analysis of existing scientific approaches and a practical examination of the Pedagogy Course curriculum at Rostov State University of Economics. The results demonstrate that the Pedagogy Course provides an integrative foundation for developing media competence. The article presents specific pedagogical methods and assignments – including media text analysis, project-based learning, case studies, and role-playing games – that embed media education into professional training. A detailed table illustrates how each section of the Pedagogy Course integrates media competence components through practical activities such as teacher image analysis, examination of historical teaching tools as media artifacts, didactic analysis of digital learning environments, creation of subject-specific media content, and observation of technology use during school placements. The study concludes that the Pedagogy Course possesses unique integrative potential, enabling the development of media competence in direct connection with general pedagogical competencies, thereby preparing future teachers to solve real-world educational challenges in digital environments while meeting professional standards.

Keywords: media competence, future teachers, teacher education, Pedagogy Course, media literacy, digital technologies, educational media.

1. Introduction

Digitalization and the emergence of the information society are driving a profound transformation of higher education. The centuries-old traditional education model, centered on the dissemination of ready-made knowledge, is now demonstrating its limitations. This is reflected in the evolution of not only educational process (lectures and seminars), but also in a fundamental rethinking of the content of professional training and expected educational results.

In the field of teacher education, these changes are particularly complex and comprehensive. The key challenge is the need to transition from a knowledge-oriented model to a practice- and

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competency-oriented one. This requires a fundamental shift in the pedagogical culture within universities themselves: the creation of an educational environment that not only informs future teachers but also purposefully promotes the development of their long-term professional competence. The latter includes, in addition to subject knowledge, digital and media literacy, skills in designing a personalized educational trajectory, critical thinking, and the ability to continuously learn in a rapidly changing world.

Requirements for working with information and digital technologies are integrated into the structure of modern professional pedagogical activity. Media competence is a normatively established component of a teacher's professional activity, stemming from the provisions of the Professional Standard and the Federal State Educational Standards (FGOS, 2018). The updated in 2022 version of the Standard explicitly defines teachers' digital responsibilities: conducting video conferences, using digital communication tools while adhering to information security standards, maintaining electronic documentation, and creating their own digital materials. Consequently, media competence serves as a link between the professional standard's regulatory requirements for teachers' work activities and the educational outcomes established in the Federal State Educational Standard. Its development is a prerequisite for the implementation of the state policy on the digitalization of education and the improvement of teachers' professional education.

In this article, we focus on the development of media competence in professional education of teachers. Clearly, this professional field has its own specific characteristics and imposes specific requirements on the methods and content of developing media competence of future pedagogues. The tasks in this area, as formulated in the Federal State Educational Standard, include preparation for such activities as: teaching; project creation; methodological; organizational and managerial; cultural and educational; and pedagogical support. Moreover, one of the key competencies required for successful teaching career is systemic and critical thinking, which presupposes the ability to search, critically analyze, and synthesize information, as well as apply a systems approach to solving the assigned tasks (FGOS, 2018). In other words, effective professional activity requires the would-be teachers not only to use, but also to critically evaluate, create and teach with media.

Thus, the current stage of development of higher pedagogical education is characterized by a systemic challenge, the response to which must be complex work affecting its goals, methods, content and results evaluation. In this regard, it becomes obvious that the development of media competence for teaching staff is an integral professional characteristic that requires special theoretical justification and practical development.

2. Materials and methods

In this article, we will limit ourselves to examining ways to develop media competence of future teachers within the context of a Pedagogy Course. Our objectives include a brief analysis of the essence and structure of the concept of "teachers' media competence," determining the potential of a Pedagogy Course as an integrative foundation for developing media competence, and highlighting some methods, forms, and assignments for integrating media aspects into the content of pedagogical disciplines.

3. Discussion

The theoretical foundations of media competence as a general concept are well developed and presented in numerous works by foreign and Russian authors. These primarily include studies by L. Masterman (Masterman, 1985), D. Buckingham (Buckingham, 2003), C. Worsnop (Worsnop, 1999), Y. Usov (Usov, 1995), A. Fedorov (Fedorov, 2007), A. Sharikov (Sharikov, 1990), A. Fedorov and A. Levitskaya (Levitskaya, Fedorov, 2022), I. Chelysheva (Chelysheva, 2022) and others.

Our analysis of the scientific literature shows that the evolution of concepts in the field of media education has shifted from “media literacy” to “media competence”. This shift has been a key trend in academic discourse and has resulted in a shift from defining a set of skills to be taught to exploring ways to develop personal qualities expressed in competencies. Among the first scholars to develop the concept of "media literacy" (the defensive paradigm) were S. Livingstone (Livingstone, 2002) and R. Kuby (Kuby, 2019). Their works in the 1990s and 2000s laid the foundation for understanding media literacy as the ability to "access, analyze, evaluate, and create media." This was a skills-based approach. D. Considine and A. Hall actively promoted it in school education, prompted by the rapidly growing influence of media in society.

The Russian tradition maintains a clear distinction between these concepts. In Russian discourse the theory of media competence predominates. A. Fedorov (Fedorov, 2007; Fedorov, 2015) has provided the most comprehensive and systematic justification for this evolutionary transition in Russian scholarship. He explicitly states that "personal media competence" is an integrative personality trait, a combination of motives, knowledge, skills, and abilities (perceptual, analytical, critical, and creative) that enable effective, critical, and responsible action in a complex media environment. It is a synthesis of motivational, contact, informational, perceptual, interpretive, practical-operational, and creative components.

Regarding the development of theoretical foundations for media competence of educators and teachers, an analysis of the scientific literature shows that this is an interdisciplinary field, uniting media education, pedagogy, psychology, and communication studies. Research is being conducted in key the following key area: clarifying the conceptual apparatus (Buckingham, 2003; Gálik et al., 2024; Kuby, 2019; Usov, 1993), defining the structure of the main components of media competence (Fedorov, 2015; Worsnop, 1999), developing pedagogical models for its formation (Grigor'eva, 2014; Muydinov, 2023) and assessing of their effectiveness (Hobbs, 2018).

After covering a wide range of material on the topic we may argue that media competence is a person's ability to participate in culturally significant events using mass media. In the context of a teacher's activities, it is characterized by the ability to conduct professional and cultural dialogue, solve professional and pedagogical problems in the information society, integrate media education and media educational technologies into the educational process, implement socially significant media educational projects, and organize the information and educational space in the classroom.

Theoretical analysis and systematization of established scientific approaches to defining a teacher’s media competence create the basis for identifying and describing its structural components. Most modern models of media competence of teachers includes following components: 1) cognitive (knowledge of media theory, media language, genres, and perception features); 2) value-semantic (critical attitude, ethical and legal assessment of media content); 3) activity-based (ability to search for, analyze, create, and distribute pedagogical media content); 4) communicative (use of media to interact with students, parents, and colleagues).

The identification of these components, in turn, allows us to determine effective ways and methods for their targeted development in the system of professional pedagogical education.

4. Results

The Pedagogy Course has great potential for developing media competence of university students. It is not simply a discipline that conveys knowledge about education and training, but a system-forming foundation for developing future teachers' media competence. It integrates technical skills for working with information into a professional and pedagogical context, ensuring that graduates are prepared to solve real-world educational challenges in the digital environment. The potential of the Pedagogy Course lies in its ability to translate theoretical concepts of media into practical pedagogical actions. By mastering the various sections of the course, students learn not only to use media, but also to design educational situations based on them, evaluate their educational impact, and manage communication in a digital educational environment. Unlike highly specialized disciplines (for example, Information Technology), Pedagogy allows to consider media not as an end in itself, but as a tool for solving professional tasks.

The pedagogy curriculum consists of several sections, each of which organically integrates media aspects. Traditionally, the course "Pedagogy" is divided into History of Education, Didactics, Educational Theory, School Studies, etc. But nowadays the list of pedagogical courses may vary among different universities. In accordance with the Federal State Educational Standard for Higher Education, Rostov State University of Economics has developed a bachelor's degree in the field of Pedagogical Education in which the course "Pedagogy" is studied over five semesters since the 1st to the 3rd year of education. It includes a sequence of several interrelated disciplines: Introduction to the Teaching Profession, History of Education and Pedagogical Thought, Theoretical Pedagogy, Practical Pedagogy, and Technologies and Organization of Educational Practice. This allows to consistently and fully organize work on the formation of the main structural components of media competence of future teachers.

Let's briefly describe the most promising pedagogical forms, methods, and techniques and how we use them in our university classrooms to provide high-quality student learning in both media education and professional fields.

In general Pedagogy, as a science of education and training, offers methods that in themselves are tools for developing media competence. For example, using Media Text Analysis in the classroom helps students learn to critically evaluate educational resources, online courses, digital textbooks, and traditional texts in terms of didactics, scientific validity, and age-appropriateness.

Project-based learning technologies develop students' skills in creating their own educational products (infographics on pedagogical theories, trailers for books by famous pedagogues, podcasts with interviews with practicing teachers, etc.).

In the process of teaching pedagogical disciplines, the method of analyzing specific cases from pedagogical practice is traditionally used. Case study method includes analysis of real pedagogical situations related to education. It may also concern issues related to the media and development of media competencies (e.g.: “A student brought a video with unreliable scientific information to class,” “A conflict arose in the parent chat”, etc.).

Another unique element of pedagogical training is the technology of Role-Playing games, which bridges the gap between abstract theory (knowing what media competence is) and practical application (knowing how to act). For example, students may experiment with different communication strategies, make mistakes, and experience the consequences of poor media decisions (e.g., privacy violations) without facing real-world consequences.

In Table 1, we summarize and illustrate how we implement the integration of media competence into the content of various sections of the Pedagogical Course and form its main components in university students at Chekhov Institute (Taganrog, Russia).

Table 1. Media Competence Integration into the content of various sections of the Pedagogy Course

№	Sections of the Pedagogy Course	Educational Focus	Media CompetenceIntegration
1	Introduction to the Teaching Profession	Shaping professional identity and understanding the modern teacher's role	*Teacher Image Analysis:* students analyze how teachers are portrayed in movies, TV shows, news articles, and social media trends. They find out what stereotypes exist, and how they shape public perception of the profession. *Digital Professional Identity:* students discuss the concept of the teacher's "digital footprint" and create guidelines for their own professional online presence (online profiles, privacy settings for personal accounts, the implications of a public-facing role). *The Evolving Teacher Role:* students create the modern teacher’s frame not just as a knowledge transmitter, but as a "learning facilitator" and "digital gatekeeper" in an information-rich world.
2	History of Education and Pedagogical Thought	Understanding the evolution of educational ideas and practices	*Media as a Historical Artifact:* students analyze historical teaching tools as the "media" of their time: from hornbooks and slates to the printing press, radio, and early educational TV. They draw conclusions about pedagogical shifts that new teaching tool enabled. *Tracing Pedagogical Ideas Online*: students research the modern digital presence and interpretation of historical figures (e.g., they create Jan Amos Comenius/Ushinsky/Makarenko, etc. VK page or find out “how Montessori's ideas are discussed in online teacher forums”). *Critical Analysis of "Timeless" Truths*: using digital archives and online sources students compare how the same pedagogical concept (e.g., "the concept of free/collective education") has been framed differently across different eras and media.

№	Sections of the Pedagogy Course	Educational Focus	Media CompetenceIntegration
3	Theoretical Pedagogy (Didactics & Theory of Education)	Principles of teaching, learning, and curriculum design	*Media as a Didactic Tool:* students analyze the affordances and limitations of different media for specific learning objectives (e.g. they explore whether and when a podcast is more effective than a simulation; what could be better for learning: interactive infographics or a chapter from a textbook). *Theories of Learning in Digital Spaces:* students connect learning theories (behaviorism/cognitivism/ constructivism) to the design of digital learning environments, educational apps, and online courses. (e.g. How do platforms like Khan Academy or Duolingo embody these theories?) *Designing with Media*: students create a micro-lesson plan that intentionally integrates a specific media type, justifying their choice based on didactic principles.
4	Practical Pedagogy (Methods of Teaching Specific Subjects)	Subject-specific teaching methodologies and classroom techniques	*Creation of thematic media content:* in our case, future foreign language teachers learn to create and analyze media content relevant to their target language. – To teach *vocabulary and grammar,* students are encouraged to use photo stories, short visual narratives and word clouds. – To develop *listening and speaking skills,* students are encouraged to create podcasts, talk show segments, and video blogs that encourage oral communication. – Media techniques such as infographics, digital storytelling, timelines, and social media simulations contribute to the development of *intercultural competence* and the teaching of *reading and writing* as a way of understanding information. – Interactive stories, quizzes, and digital flashcards help increase student *motivation* and create a low-risk, error-prone practice environment.
5	Technologies and Organization of Educational Practice (Including School Placements/ Practicum)	The practical application of technology in managing and delivering education	*Learning Management Systems as a Site of Practice*: students practice structuring a course site (e.g. Moodle, Canvas, Google Classroom, etc.), creating digital content within it, and using its communication tools. *Digital Communication with Stakeholders:* students participate in role-playing and real-practice scenarios for professional communication (writing clear and respectful emails to parents, coworkers, managing parent-teacher communication via school portals, and using digital tools for collaboration with colleagues). *Observation and Analysis of Media in the Classroom:* students have a specific task: to observe and analyze how their mentor teachers and the school itself use media. What tools are used? For what purposes? What are the implicit norms around technology use? This connects theory to lived experience.

In essence, when future teachers create different types of media across the foundational Pedagogical modules, they are actively designing the very materials they will one day use in their own classroom. They are learning to think like instructional designers, considering not just what to

teach, but how to present it in the most engaging and effective way for the digital-native students they will soon teach.

5. Conclusion

We use the above-discussed technologies in our university classrooms and believe that they help students acquire the necessary components of media competence: students move from thinking about media to acting with media as a natural and integral part of their professional practice.

Thus, it can be argued that the Pedagogy Course possesses unique integrative technological resources: it allows develop media competence not in isolation, but in an inextricable connection with the development of general pedagogical competencies of future teachers, which corresponds to the logic of the professional standard and the requirements of the Federal State Educational Standard.

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