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Media Competence of Modern Students: Problems and Possibilities of Its Formation in the System of Higher Education

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Abstract

The purpose of the article is to analyze the level of students' media competence, to study the possibilities of its formation in the higher education system. The results of the study showed that the respondents highly appreciate the level of their own media competence. Students consider themselves competent in creating presentations, however, more complex activities are rated in the middle range. It can be assumed that those aspects of activities that are in demand when studying at a university show higher grades. At the same time, the skills associated with in-depth analysis of information and the creation of media products, are not included in the focus of attention when organizing educational activities. These tendencies illustrate the presence of risk zones in the process of forming students' media competence: insufficient attention to evaluative/interpretive and practical-operational skills of working with information. Only less than half of the surveyed respondents believe that conditions have been created in the modern education system for the development of a person's media competence. The analysis of the problems that limit this process is centered, according to students, in the field of organizing training sessions, a knowledge assessment system, and setting assignments for independent work.

Keywords: media competence, media education, social media, students, higher education.

1. Introduction

The development of media education in modern conditions is caused by the influence of such factors as the dynamic penetration of digital technologies into all areas, growth of the volume and channels of information transmission. Young people today consume huge amounts of information that is posted on various platforms on the Internet, create and exchange electronic messages (Genedy, 2021: 30-36). This puts on the agenda the issues of the formation of media literacy and media culture of the individual. The digitalization of education, the technological modernization of the learning process, the development of new means of communication, the virtual educational space of social interactions (Al-Msie'deen et al., 2021: 104-118) should be accompanied by the creation of conditions for the formation of appropriate skills in working in a digital environment.

The rapid integration of social networks into the personal, professional and educational spheres, the absence of boundaries in the process of use acts as an additional risk factor for influencing the social well-being of the individual (Zhu et al., 2020: 1935-1955). In particular, T. Ho, S. Huynh and V. Chi found that heavy use of social media leads to an increase in depression, stress and anxiety among students (Ho et al., 2021: 112-118).

Scientists pay special attention to the danger of spreading "fake" news, destructive content from social networks (Jormand et al., 2021: 38-52). According to S. Troyanskaya, in the process of

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interacting with aggressive news from the media and conflicting content, consciousness of people become chaotic (Troyanskaya, 2014: 156-159). Risks of distortion of information, the possibility of manipulating public consciousness impose new requirements on the institute of education (Frolova et al., 2020: 331-336). In this context, the key task of media education is the practice of developing skills that allow one to «resist» the randomly increasing information flows. Developing this idea, R. Kamenev, V. Krasheninnikov, A. Trotskaya conclude that the skills of analyzing media texts become a condition for preserving the country's human capital, developing its cultural potential, and increasing the competitiveness of the national economy (Kamenev et al., 2019: 65-71).

2. Materials and methods

The purpose of the article is to analyze the level of students' media competence, to study the possibilities of its formation in the higher education system of the Russian Federation.

The article used both general scientific and empirical research methods. The authors carried out a pilot study; a questionnaire survey of students was chosen as the key method. The questionnaire was posted on the Google platform: <https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1JEAGGV2v3HmfJ27u1gkw2UVj2M1FPHhZVwetCN7NrKM/edit>. The sample is spontaneous (N=148). Respondents recruited through social media. The spontaneous nature of the sample, as well as the number of respondents, can be considered as limitations of the study. However, the data obtained made it possible to test the hypotheses put forward, to form conclusions and directions for further research.

During the study, the following hypotheses were put forward:

1. Media competence of young people includes basic skills in working with information and communication technologies (preparing presentations, working on the Internet), with an insufficient level of development of evaluative / interpretive and practical-operational skills of working with information.
2. The modern system of higher education, with ample opportunities for access to knowledge bases, does not provide for the formation of media competence of young people; versatile practices of enhancing the evaluative and creative activity of students when working with media content are insufficiently used.
3. Students with a higher level of media competence are more responsible in finding the necessary information in preparation for classes.

3. Discussion

New trends associated with an increase in the volume of information make special demands on the media competence of today's youth. Searching, reading, analyzing, understanding and interpreting information content are among the basic competencies required for work and study (Pereira, Moura, 2019: 678-689). In modern conditions «media competence includes not only the skills of using information technologies, the ability to navigate the Internet, but also the presence of a culture of media communication, interaction with other media users» (Konkov, 2019: 128).

As A. Fedorov, the media competence of an individual is a combination of his motives, knowledge, skills that contribute to the choice, use, critical analysis, assessment, creation and transmission of media texts (Fedorov, 2010: 64). Of particular interest is the indicators of the development of media competence developed by the scientist: motivational, contact, informational, perceptual, interpretive/evaluative, practical-operational, creative (Fedorov, 2013: 231-247).

Based on the analysis of in-depth media-biographical interviews with respondents of different age groups, factors were identified that prevent the negative influence of the media on the consciousness of individuals. These included the following: selective criticality, pragmatic trust and competence in the analysis of information, navigation through the news (Schwarzenegger, 2020: 361-377). These conclusions make it possible to single out the elements of a person's media competence, where the central link is criticality in the process of information consumption.

This conclusion was confirmed by the TGLA study by van der Meer and M. Hameleers. Consumers of online news prefer to read and evaluate positively political news that confirms their previous views (Van der Meer, Hameleers, 2021: 3156-3178). In this context, the conclusions of S. Choi gain importance, which substantiates the role of selection and evaluation of news content (Choi, 2021: 3677-3701). The formation of the skill of critical perception of information should be based on the skills of identifying stereotypes that affect the assessment of media content (Tian et al., 2021).

O. Mavropulo and E. Muryukina single out another key element of the personality's media competence. They talk about “creative indicator, which is the “embodiment” of the consolidated use of theoretical knowledge and practical skills to develop new media texts through creativity” (Mavropulo, Muryukina, 2018: 99).

In the study A. Kuatbekov, E. Vershitskaya, I. Kosareva, V. Ananishnev provided a description of the most important elements of the structure of media competence: digital literacy, content interpretation, content creation and digital awareness. The authors propose mechanisms for the formation of media competence in the educational environment: the involvement of students in the development of media content, group interactions. The authors conclude that media competence is the result of effective planning and organization of students' practical activities in the digital media space (Kuatbekov et al., 2020).

Modern youth has basic skills in working with media, the foundation of which is digital literacy, an active user position on the Internet. However, access to information and its consumption does not guarantee the development of more fundamental competencies when working with media. V. Lugovsky and M. Kokh note that modern students “lack the ability to navigate sources, to be critical of information”, young people experience difficulties in conducting a comparative analysis of the opinions of different authors, avoids turning to alternative points of view (Lugovsky, Koh, 2018: 146). Increased access to mobile news, fast reading of news on social media form new patterns of consumption of media products, the basis of which is fragmentation, superficiality, and chance (Yanardağoğlu, 2021: 149-166).

Despite the wide availability of educational materials in the information space of modern universities, students do not fully use all the possibilities of using scientific literature in the learning process (Vetrova et al., 2019: 370-377). Young people are primarily focused on the consumption of entertainment content (Frolova, Rogach, 2021: 616-625). Media skills are determined by the level of digital literacy of young people, their economic and social status (Banaji, Moreno-Almeida, 2021: 121-142).

The need to change approaches to the formation of youth media competence in the modern education system is emphasized by many researchers. O. Tikhonova, I. Azizyan and N. Grechushkina point to the need to transform pedagogical practices in organizing classroom and independent work of students. The conclusion is made about the priority of creative, research and project tasks in the process of preparing students (Tikhonova et al., 2019: 114).

The conclusions made by J. Jenson and M. Droumeva are of interest. Scientists insist on the need to apply innovative approaches to the development media competence of “digital” generation. J. Jenson and M. Droumeva conclude that the pedagogy of “game design” can be an effective method of increasing not only the computer literacy of young people, but also the formation of their skills when working with media content (Jenson, Droumeva, 2017: 212-225). Similar conclusions were obtained in the studies of other scientists who consider game teaching methods as one of the possible alternatives for achieving the necessary educational results (Goncharova, 2012: 38-44; Vinichenko et al., 2020: 694), factors of activating routine or complex processes (Kamalodeen et al., 2021: 36).

Al-Sawy recommends expanding training programs, actively using electronic information resources, and applying research methods. In addition, the scientist proposes to intensify the use of the Internet in the learning process, to link electronic information resources to academic courses (Al-Sawy, 2021: 43-49).

A. Morozova considers social networks, on the one hand, as a material for study (as an element of the media sphere); on the other hand, as a tool for media education (Morozova, 2015: 24-31). T. Boronenko, A. Kaisina and V. Fedotova believe that the use of social networks is one of the most demanded forms of enhancing the research interests of young people (Boronenko et al., 2017: 15-26). Social networks today are becoming a platform for exchanging opinions, searching for and creating groups of like-minded people, posting their publications, which creates the foundation for the development of media competence of the individual (Paßmann, Schubert, 2021: 2947-2963; Mäkinen, 2021: 2964-2978; Khalil A, Storie, 2021: 3038-3061). These ideas were developed in the research of E. Bloch. The author reveals the possibilities of using the social network VKontakte to develop such skills of young people as creating media products, collecting and analyzing information, PR competence (event advertising), forming communities and exchanging information (Blokh, 2016: 38-43).

4. Results

Most of the surveyed respondents (60.8 %) rated their skills in working with the media and on the Internet rather high (4 and 5 on a five-point scale). When posing this question, the respondents were explained that the score “5” corresponds to a high level of media competence: “I can set filters when working with media, create my own blogs, post all the special information and knows a number of special program”, and the score “1” corresponds to the user level: “I have a general idea of the possibilities of the network, I use search queries and social networks”.

Almost every third (29.7 %) respondent chose the answer “satisfactory” (3 points) when answering this question. At the same time, almost every tenth (9.5 %) respondent is very pessimistic about the level of his media competence, considering skills in working with the media and the Internet to be unsatisfactory (1 and 2 points). The detailing of the respondents' answers shows the differentiation of assessments of students' media competence: a high level - preparation of presentations, an average level - posting your own materials on social networks, infographic preparation and preparation of analytical reports on statistical data (Table 1). It can be assumed that students either assess their skills insufficiently critically, or narrowly understand the concept of “media competence”.

Table 1. Distribution of answers to the question: “Rate how competent you are in the following aspects of the activity”, %

	not competent	practically incompetent	practically competent	fully competent
preparation of analytical reports on statistical data	4	14.9	51.4	29.7
checking the source of information for reliability	0.8	12.8	45.9	40.5
infographic preparation	6.8	15.5	48	29.7
selection of publications on the topic, comparative analysis, preparation of own conclusions	2.7	10.8	46.6	39.9
posting your own materials on social networks on various issues	4.1	18.2	36.5	41.2
preparation of presentations	4.1	4.7	22.3	68.9

It is interesting that every third student spends no more than 20 minutes looking for information in preparation for classes, while 7.4 % of them spend only 5-10 minutes (Figure 1). The results obtained indirectly indicate an insufficient attention to the search and selection of information, its fragmentary analysis.

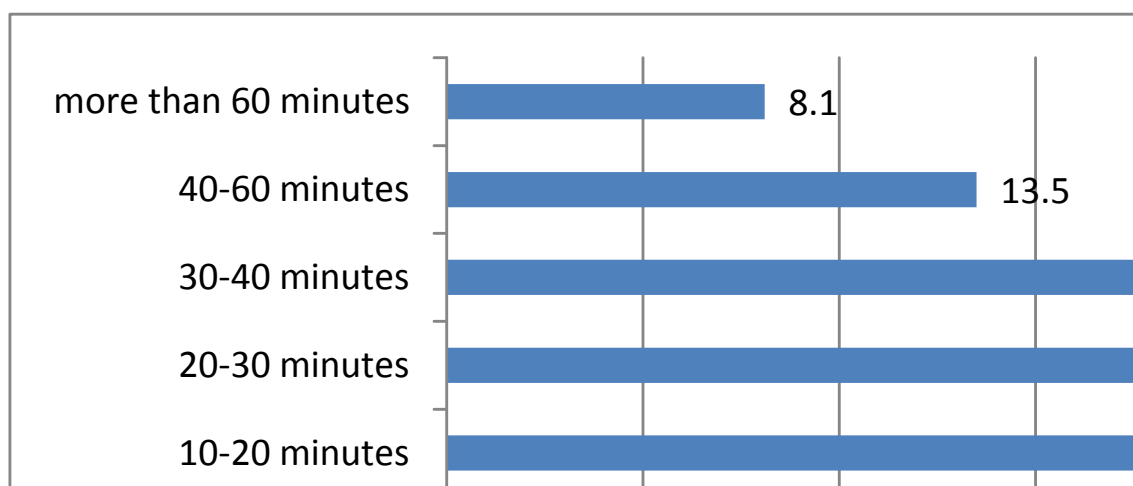


Fig. 1. Distribution of answers to the question: “How much time do you usually spend to find the necessary information in preparation for a lesson?”, %

To test one of the research hypotheses, let us consider the dependence of assessments of the level of development of individual aspects of media competence and the amount of time spent searching for information in preparation for classes (Table 2).

According to the first criterion «preparation of analytical reports on statistical data» the following results were obtained: the number of degrees of freedom is 15. The value of the Pearson's chi-square test is 18,082. At a significance level of $p < 0.05$, the critical value of χ^2 is 24,996. The relationship between factorial and effective indicators is statistically insignificant, the level of significance is $p > 0.05$.

Table 2. Correlation between the length of time to search for information in preparation for classes and assessments of the competence of individual capabilities, pers.

Rate how competent you are in the following aspects of the activity	How much time do you usually spend to find the necessary information in preparation for a lesson						Total
	5-10 minutes	10-20 minutes	20-30 minutes	30-40 minutes	40-60 minutes	more than 60 minutes	
<i>preparation of analytical reports on statistical data</i>							
not competent	1	1	3	0	0	1	6
practically incompetent	3	4	5	3	4	3	22
practically competent	3	28	14	19	8	4	76
fully competent	4	8	12	8	8	4	44
<i>checking the source of information for reliability</i>							
not competent	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
practically incompetent	2	4	4	4	4	1	19
practically competent	5	20	18	13	7	5	68
fully competent	4	17	12	13	9	5	60

According to the second criterion “checking the source of information for reliability” the following results were obtained: the number of degrees of freedom is 15. The value of the Pearson's chi-square test is 14,401. At a significance level of $p < 0.05$, the critical value of χ^2 is 24,996. The relationship between factorial and effective indicators is statistically insignificant, the level of significance is $p > 0.05$.

Thus, the third hypothesis of the study was not confirmed. A high level of media competence (in the subjective assessments of respondents) does not guarantee a thoughtful attitude to information, awareness of the need for significant time expenditures on its search, selection and critical understanding.

During the study, the respondents were asked the question: “How many data sources do you read and study in order to draw conclusions on a particular topic?”. The survey results showed that the majority of respondents use «3-5 versatile data sources» (49.3 %); 43.2 % chose the answer “2-3 versatile data sources». Only 2 % use «1 any data source»; 5.4 % – “1 data source you verified”. At the same time, course of study does not affect the number of used sources of information (Table 3).

Table 3. Correlation between the use of a different number of sources and the course of training of students, pers.

Course of study	In order to draw a conclusion on a particular topic, will you study and read the material of:				Total
	1 any data source	1 data source you verified	2-3 versatile data sources	3-5 versatile data sources	
1	1	1	8	14	24
2	1	3	17	15	36
3	0	3	27	30	60
4	1	1	12	14	28
Total	3	8	64	73	148

The value of the Pearson's chi-square test is 4,571. At a significance level of $p < 0.05$, the critical value of χ^2 is 16,919. The relationship between factorial and effective indicators is statistically insignificant, the level of significance is $p > 0.05$. The results obtained indicate that the complication of educational activity with the transition to senior courses of study does not affect the behavioral models when working with information.

Only 45.9 % of the respondents believe that conditions have been created in the modern education system for the formation of media competence. Almost every third (29.1 %) is skeptical about the capabilities of the educational system in the formation of skills to find, evaluate and effectively use information in personal and professional activities.

The majority of respondents (49.3 %) believe that the presence of a test system is a key limitation of the formation of media competence in the higher education system. According to students, the test system limits the development of skills such as analyzing and evaluating information. The second most important limitation is the lack of special tasks that would be aimed at critical analysis of texts (26.4 %). Every fifth respondent (20.9 %) believes that the problem is the lack of an individual approach to the student on the part of the teacher.

Let us consider what forms of work with students can act as mechanisms for the formation of media competence in the higher education system. According to students, the priority forms of work can be: showing presentations, videos, films, special tasks, including the analysis of statistics, the formation of summary analytical tables (Table 4).

Table 4. Distribution of answers to the question: “What, in your opinion, will help to form media competence (the ability to find, evaluate and effectively use information in personal and professional activities) within the framework of training at a university?”, %

Answer options	It will help a lot	Will partly help	Will not help
use of media technology (projectors, interactive whiteboards)	46.6	49.3	4.1
showing presentations, videos, films	62.8	35.8	1.4
special tasks, including the analysis of statistics, the formation of summary analytical tables	66.2	30.4	3.4
social networks	45.3	47.9	6.8
constant work on the Internet	44.6	50.7	4.7

Most of the respondents believe that the consumption of visual information (videos, films), as well as data analysis will contribute to the formation of media competence to the greatest extent. Social networks, constant work on the Internet also, according to students, will help in the formation of skills to search, use and evaluate information for personal and professional purposes.

4. Conclusion

Despite the fact that modern students have basic skills in working with media, interpretive/evaluative and practical-operational competencies are insufficiently formed. The results of the study showed that students have a low assessment of the possibilities of forming media competence in the higher education system in the Russian Federation. On the one hand, the test system of knowledge control, focused on memorizing information, limits the possibilities of forming a pedagogical request for the development of students' research competencies. On the other hand, students pay attention to the need to modernize the approach to independent work of students in universities. It is required to strengthen the focus of attention on tasks that provide critical analysis of texts, interpretation of media content.

It can be assumed that the insufficient level of students' media competence is due to the absence of strict requirements in preparation for classes, the need to refer to primary sources, and to conduct a comparative analysis. An indirect confirmation of this conclusion is the insufficient amount of time that a modern student spends looking for information in preparation for classes.

Promising areas in this context can be work with social networks, play, research and practice-oriented forms of educational activity. The focus of attention in organizing students' independent work should be shifted towards more complex activities, such as the preparation of infographics, analytical reports on statistical data, comparative analysis of media texts.

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