

# Modern university in the new media (digital) environment: prospects and risks

## La universidad moderna en el entorno de los nuevos medios (digitales): perspectivas y riesgos

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### Contents

- [1. Introduction](#)
- [2. Methodology](#)
- [3. Results](#)
- [4. Conclusions](#)

[Bibliographic references](#)

#### ABSTRACT:

On the basis of contemporary understanding of media education the peculiarities of its application in the system of Higher School are being exposed. Competencies of a university graduate in the sphere of media literacy have been formulated and educational opportunities of social networks have been analyzed. Particular attention has been given to risks, attributed to using media instruments in education.

**Keywords:** Media education, online course, social network, digital environment, digital subject.

#### RESUMEN:

Sobre la base de la comprensión contemporánea de la educación en medios de comunicación, en el presente trabajo se exponen las peculiaridades de su aplicación en el sistema de la Enseñanza Superior. Se han formulado las competencias de un graduado universitario en el campo de la alfabetización mediática y se han analizado las oportunidades educativas de las redes sociales. Se prestó especial atención a los riesgos atribuidos al uso de herramientas mediáticas en la educación.

**Palabras clave:** C

## 1. Introduction

The process of digitalization of all the spheres of social life brings about considerable changes in the field of education. It is becoming vitally necessary to work and operate under the conditions of digital environment for university graduates of all the specialties without any exception. That is why media education happens to be one of the most significant measurements of a modern higher school functioning. At the same time, the model of university education which is being practiced up until this point remains a product of the classic university paradigm to a great extent. Its discrepancy with contemporary expectations of students, which, in turn, are founded by media-cognitive factors, is

becoming more and more apparent.

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## 2. Methodology

Methodological basis of the research proves to be a combination of the following methods: 1) historical-philosophical approach, which we have applied in order to reveal the leading approaches to understanding the phenomenon of the new media space; 2) hermeneutic method, which we have been using while analyzing the writings of foreign and domestic researchers of media in order to reconstruct socio-philosophical foundations of this phenomenon; 3) method of comparative analysis, applied while reflecting the status of classic and contemporary university; 4) method of ascending from abstract to concrete, which was being used when describing the changes in educational competences, determined by digital environment.

The sources of the given research are subdivided into four groups. The writings of Information Society theorists' we draw on while establishing a concept of epistemological query of users of the new media, fall within the first group: M. McLuhan (1964), M. Castells (2009), D. Bell (1973), A. Toffler (1980), Yo. Masuda (1980), L. Fortunati (2002). The writings of media theorists B. Latour (1994), L. Manovich (2009), N. Bolz (2007), which contain reflection of the phenomenon of media, are classified under the second group. The third group comprises the scholars of media education and media literacy L. Masterman (1985), N. Postman (1995), Alexander V. Fedorov (2015), J. Potter (2004), D. Buckingham (2003), R. Hobbs (2001), relying on whose works we have systematized the existing notions on the phenomenon of media literacy. The range of writings of the present-day Russian scholars, who have had a sufficient impact upon the formation of the domestic media theory, are distinguished as the fourth group: Valery V. Savchuk (2009), Kirill K. Martynov (2011), Natalia B. Kirillova (2011), L.V.Baeva (2017), Michael A. Kurtov (2014).

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## 3. Results

The model of university education which is being practiced up until this point, remains a product of classic university paradigm to a great extent. Its discrepancy with contemporary expectations of students, which, in turn, are founded by media-cognitive factors, is becoming more and more apparent. Traditional educational systems are focused on particular and declarative knowledge. Universities wrap this knowledge in static academic-program units and submit the latter in autonomous forms predominantly. Consequently, knowledge, translated out of relation with authentic, situational context, frequently remains ineffective, for students do not comprehend its contextual relevance to the full extent. Classic model of university implies a teacher-student style of interaction, where a lecturer always appears to be an expert in a particular scientific area. The students are prescribed to obligatorily attend lectures, which end up with exams passing, where the success in recalling the information, received from a lecturer, turns out to be the principal object of assessment. The new, neoclassic educational strategy of a contemporary university is being stylistically defined through self-reference with the media. This occasion predetermines the necessity for university to develop the independent web-platforms, residing under the university administration's supervision, to ensure the information exchange between students and lecturers. This kind of educational process digitalization has beneficial effects on the process of studies. Digital educational environment submits authentic contexts, stimulates practice-oriented cognitive activities, and maximizes students' involvement into the learning process. Situational education is going on in the regime, which ensures regular contacts with professional experts, pedagogs, and with more experienced (media-literate) students. As a result of convergence between a traditional (formal) education in a closed environment (class) and an informal (situational-contextual) one, there occurs an integration of educational programs with a variety of contexts digital environment happens to be a carrier of.

1. The task of becoming network online-centers, which produce, integrate and distribute knowledge, is assigned to the universities in the XXI century. The educational environment, created by them, necessarily covers industry, business-structures, professional experts,

academic scholars. It's dynamic by its nature and is highly susceptible to both extrinsic and intrinsic changes. In this case universities should actively develop partnerships with industry business-partners, scientific establishments, nonprofit organizations, educational providers and other universities.

University of a digital epoch is a Meta University, which represents a socially-oriented system of online platforms, with the aid of which the most relevant theoretical and applied knowledge is being introduced to the students in the most effective and accessible regime. In this university both – separate participants and groups work together on creation and support of alternative digital communicative infrastructure, allowing to establish alternative digital platforms (spaces).

2. Digital educational technologies drastically change the concept of literacy. J. Potter characterizes these changes, making use of the notion of 'media literacy', defining it as 'a set of prospects, by means of which we expose ourselves to media and interpret the essence of messages which we encounter with' (Potter, 2004, p. 58). Currently, the culture, based on participation, is being formed. Communication and interaction in social networks become its most evident incarnations. Opportunities of free, unlimited access to information spring up. Production of own content, which is possible to be used together with a big number of other users, is being widened.

The distinctive feature of media literacy is that it implies a set of common competencies, which are attributed not to concrete disciplines, but to logical, systemic, and critical thinking, well-developed skills of information management and sufficiently formed communicative capacities instead.

On the basic level media literacy implies that a university graduate, being involved in the process of using digital multimedia technologies, possesses the following skills and abilities:

- Finding information in the Internet and ability to upload various types of information.
- Navigational skills, allowing to orient oneself in digital networks and ensuring the understanding of strategies of using the Internet.
- Classification skills, which imply an ability to order information in compliance with a particular classific scheme: problem, genre, subjects.
- Integrative skills, which are related to ability to compare and select different types of information, related to multimodal content.
- Evaluative-reflexive skills – abilities to verify quality, relevance, objectivity, applicability of information, maintaining critical position herewith.
- Communicative skills – interaction and cooperation organization, ability to express oneself by virtue of media, participation in network educational interactions, observation of ethical norms of communication.
- Creative-instrumental skills – abilities to generate own content in a form of multimodal texts, to create web-pages and to transform the existing contents into the new ones.

3. The issue of the fate of analogue (traditional) education in the context of digitalization remains being rather acute: whether it is going to be saved, or will unavoidably be replaced by the digital one? Evidence indicates the anticipations of the most fervent adepts of a total digitalization of education, connected with an ultimate replacement of analogue studies with digital ones, are not met because of the number of reasons. Thus, long before the 'digital revolution' M. Polanyi underlined the phenomenon of implicit knowledge (tacit knowledge), produces non-verbalizable prerequisites of intellectual creativity and is being transmitted by dint of social relays, that is via reproduction of the proximate samples of activity in personal communication (Polanyi, 2012). According to J. Wissema, while dealing with online courses it is practically impossible to form the skills of intellectual search, necessary to graduate: they are solely acquired in 'live' contact forms of educational research. In addition, digital learning excludes a cultural-communicative component of education, without which an appropriate personal socialization of the young students. That is why, where is every likelihood, that traditional and new educational technologies are sentenced to coexistence (Wissema, 2009, p.158).

4. Social media are widely used in different situations, related to education. Media have always been social, reading and writing have always been closely related to the structure of social relations. However in the case of the new social media the scale and the pace changes, produced by them in the social architecture, is unprecedented.

There is a subdivision of social networks into two types: those, which are important for education and those, which do not correspond with the process of education. YouTube – video hosting, where a lot of educational media texts on various areas of knowledge are available in open access; Facebook for the majority of English-speaking countries, social network 'Vkontakte' for CIS countries are classified under the first group. Instagram, Pinterest and Telegram – the resources, where an impressive amount of graphic materials, what makes their subdivision on the utility level for the educational process nominal, since every user selects the aims of their application independently (Moran, Seaman, & Tinti-Kane, 2012), fall within the second type of social networks.

Involvement of social networks in the sphere of education has transformed the image of educational process entirely. A growing number of lecturers in universities use social networks (digital media) for communication with students during the studies. Regardless of whether the lecturers appear to be 'digital migrants' or 'digital aborigines', they realize, that the time students spend in the modern media applications (Facebook, Twitter and others) may well be rationally redistributed and directed towards educational activities. It might become a beneficial resource to enhance the extent of students' involvement in the process of studies, organization of discussion problems' debating, exchange of information, creation of own projects in the net, establishment of educational Internet-communities.

5. Educational applications of digital media along with the new opportunities entail certain risks and hazards. It's mainly about the freedom of ways and styles of self-expression of users in social networks, which is not regulated by anybody or anything. This freedom not infrequently results in hyper acute criticism, open trolling and harsh (if not cynical and violent) comments from network actors. The said factors considerably depreciate educational possibilities of the new media, because they poorly correlate with the rules of academic discussion, pursuing fruitful objectives.

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## 4. Conclusions

'Network' freedom is in contradiction with the two paramount traditions, which found the operation of university community. The first one is attributed to its mission of being a societal space, which offers maximally broad possibilities of the freedom of speech and the freedom of research. In compliance with the second one, university proves to be a space, where reigns the spirit of respectful attitude and collegial care of one another. These two principles form a matrix, where, on the one hand, academic freedom and the freedom of speech are the values of the highest order, and on the other hand, the atmosphere of personal safety and benevolence, especially with respect to the youth, who come here to study, is being cultivated.

In the context of educational usage of social networks it is becoming obvious, that conflict situations in this regard could merely be evaded. That is why the shortcomings of network discourse, and, consequently, the risks occurring, should be leveled by virtue of using the potential advantages of the new media, not exceeding the acceptable risk level in doing so. It allows maintaining a comfortable educational environment.

Therefore, the new media (digital) environment introduces great possibilities and serious instruments, broadening its implementation in educational purposes. Cognitive activity, expressed through social networks, might be creative and productive, ensuring augmentation of subjectivity, and may well be superficial, overcritical, full of nihilism, morally unacceptable.

Digital environment Internet allows creating network communities, achieving the aims of constructive nature in the sphere of education through extensively spread channels of interconnections. The new educational opportunities arising are conjugate with risks, but they are not the reason to avoid new media technologies or neglect their potential for

education. It is significant to get involved into mastering of the new digital competencies with a critical understanding of their opportunities and hazards.

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[\[Index\]](#)

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