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Social Implications of Media Education in the Curriculum of a Future Teacher

Inga Zashikhina ^{a, *}, Margarita Postnikova ^a

^aNorthern (Arctic) Federal University named after M.V. Lomonosov, Russian Federation

Abstract

The article highlights the social implications that determine the use of media in contemporary education. Features of a new post-industrial society advance the necessity to redefine professional competences, taught within all kinds of curricula. Pedagogical schooling is no longer viewed from the perspective of the teacher-centred approach. Students find themselves in the centre of all educational practices. Learners are given a right, and consequently, responsibility to make choices. They receive the opportunity to enjoy a rich assortment of media, which is profoundly used as a learning source by most teachers today. Students can either judge media texts, and manage their content, by themselves, or rely upon teacher's professionalism. In such a context media competence acquires limitless importance. The authors theorize the necessity of mastering media literacy for future teachers. The experience of implementation of the knowledge of media studies is exemplified by the course "Philosophy and Psychology of Education". The curriculum was developed in the framework of the international master programme "Foreign Language Acquisition and Teaching" taught at Northern (Arctic) Federal University (NARFU). In conclusion, a dependency of modern education participants on their understanding of the mechanism and impact of media is pointed out.

Keywords: education, media education, teacher education, educational aspect of media, pedagogical philosophy, psychology of education, media literacy.

1. Introduction

Educational beliefs and approaches undergo alterations in tune with the demands of society. In terms of historical development, we may recall that Greek paideia envisioned the development of an ideal member of the polis that included subject-based and practice-oriented schooling, focused on liberal arts, arithmetic, and medicine as well as socialization of learners within the aristocratic hierarchy of polis. Moral upbringing, musical education, and physical training were also much valued and presented part and parcel of a refined Greek citizen. Societal demands, cultural and economic requirements of the time determined such an educational ideal. Nowadays educational ideals incorporate different skills and competences as compared to, for example, 20 years ago. According to K. Schwab today, at the time of the fourth industrial revolution, which has begun at the beginning of the XXI c., professionals need social and creative skills, "in particular decision making under uncertainty and the development of novel ideas" (Schwab, 2017: 40).

A dramatic turn of the fourth industrial revolution, "characterised by a much more ubiquitous and mobile internet, ... by artificial intelligence and machine learning", defined a new paideia, a new challenge for educationalists, who faced the necessity to approach the issue of

* Corresponding author

E-mail addresses: zashikhinaim@mail.ru (I.M. Zashikhina), post-margarita@yandex.ru (M.I. Postnikova)

appropriate curriculum development. It became obvious that the curriculum was to encompass a wide range of competences that were not taught previously, like the competences of professional adaptability, critical reflection, pragmatic logic and creative thinking. However, it was not so clear, which subjects had the potential content for the upbringing of these skills. The traditional subjects, that looked fit for the mission, e.g. Philosophy, Psychology, Logic, Ethics, Mathematics, associated with a cemented set of values, which were definitely necessary for studying, but useless from the point of view of changing perspective.

2. Materials and methods

This research has been conducted within the process of curriculum development for a new international programme at Northern (Arctic) Federal University, Arkhangelsk. The staff of Northern (Arctic) Federal University continuously analyses features of new educational discourse for the development of educational programmes. The developers of the international master programme “Foreign Language Acquisition and Teaching” followed the principal aim of meeting the perspectives of the contemporary historical, social, economic, and cultural contexts, as well as new labour market demands. The necessity of building critical thinking skills and ability to teach future teachers to work in the changing educational system has been considered imperative. This factor advanced the course of “Philosophy and Psychology of Education” as highly influential for the construction of professional teacher's competences. The course curriculum equals 9 ECTS and is taught during the first and second semesters online. It should also be noted that the master programme highlights learning outcomes according to the Dublin descriptors, European competence framework and the requirements of the professional community. The programme has undergone international expert assessment and was credited as valid for teaching.

Building the course curriculum, the developers followed the idea that media education possesses crucial importance as a fundamental part of pedagogical schooling. Many media educators have discussed features of teaching media literacy, for example, A. Fedorov (Fedorov, 2001), I. Chelysheva (Chelysheva, 2016), N. Khlyzova (Khlyzova, 2011), Y. Tyunnikov (Tyunnikov et al., 2016), N. Chicherina (Chicherina, 2008). In this study we follow the European commission approach to media literacy and define media literacy as “the ability to access the media, to understand and to critically evaluate different aspects of the media and media contents and to create communications in a variety of contexts. It includes all media. Media literacy aims to increase people's awareness of the many forms of media messages encountered in their everyday lives. Media messages are programmes, films, images, texts, sounds, and websites that are carried by different forms of communication. Media literacy is a matter of inclusion and citizenship in today's information society. It is a fundamental skill not only for young people but also for adults and elderly people, parents, teachers and media professionals” (Ding, 2011: 5).

In the course Philosophy and Psychology of Education, we apply a long list of media sources in various topical areas for study. These sources are connected with the subject areas of the discipline and relate to such themes, as history of philosophy and psychology, modern philosophical and psychological theories, contemporary educational issues, state educational policy, educational reform, school life, parenthood. Most of the texts are selected by professors teaching the course. Others are chosen by the students in the process of home task preparation. Students are provided with recommendations on text analysis aimed at making their reflections professionally qualified and grounded. Theoretically, we build upon the method developed by L. Masterman, who points out four areas of critical study of a media source (Masterman, 1985). The scholar claims that in the course of a media text analysis it is vital to encompass the following questions: 1) Who is responsible for the media text production? Who is the owner and controller of the mass media? 2) How is the necessary effect reached? 3) What are the values of the environment created by the media? 4) How does the audience perceive such values?

Both individual and group analysis of the media follow Socratic tradition and use a dialogical approach, developed by many philosophers, psychologists and educationalists, e.g., M. Bakhtin, D. Elkonin, L. Vygotsky, P. Freire. Thus, discussions are guided by the principles of collective participation, reciprocity and mutual support. We also rely upon seven rules of an exploratory dialogue pointed out by Grugeon E., Hubbard L. and formulated as follows:

- everyone in the group is encouraged to contribute;
- contributions are treated with respect;
- reasons are asked for;

- everyone is prepared to accept challenges;
- alternatives are discussed before a decision is taken;
- all relevant information is shared;
- the group seeks to reach an agreement (Grugeon, Hubbard, 2006).

The research included a series of surveys conducted in order to obtain information on a number of course's outcomes. Questions for analysis related to the students' levels of interest in specific learning activities, use of different types of media texts, satisfaction with the course's endeavors and its results. The surveys were organized both by the teachers of the module and by the University administration via the University learning management system (LMS) Sakai. The present paper studies findings of three years of the course's progress. The total number of students who took part in the assessment procedures equals thirty six. Both local and international course participants were interviewed with the help of written questionnaires. The results of the surveys are kept at the department of English Philology, Nordic Languages and Language Pedagogy and on Sakai LMS, NARFU.

3. Discussion

At the beginning of the XXI century pedagogs realised that most of the curriculum subjects, included in educational programmes of different levels, followed Descartes' rational logic and defined knowledge in terms of «correctness» or «incorrectness» The teacher transferred a strictly defined, unarguable knowledge and the learners accepted this information without questioning it. Such a pattern, the core of the famous triad of knowledge, skills, and abilities, grew unviable, as it fostered educational technologies aimed at the transfer of an existing set of knowledge and informational patterns. Such an approach to teaching restrains the growth of a learner's creative potential, the construction of an independent personal identity, which impacts societal and economic development (Zhao, 2015). The continuously increasing volume of information requires new forms of its presentation and innovative knowledge acquisition technologies.

At the end of the 1990ies, more and more Russian scholars started discussing the growing role of media in the educational process of students of various levels. That was the time when traditional for this country television and mass media underwent a process of profound changes. The nature of media became entirely different, acquiring entertaining, even hedonistic component and growing heterogeneous and versatile in its content (Chelysheva, 2005). Whereas before that period media shouldered all responsibility for its reliability, even if a more significant part of it was ideologically bound, starting from the end of the XX century, a load of responsibility was shifted to the reader. However, the reader was not equipped with any skills, necessary for his/ her new role (Buckingham, 2015).

All that framed a new area of educational research and practice. By the beginning of the XXI century, the concept of media education developed in full swing in Russia. A. Fedorov generalised and systematized the experience of scholars working in the denoted area (Fedorov, 2001). Media education was defined according based on UNESCO documents and problematized as part and parcel of the curriculum at different educational levels. The subject of media education was claimed and argued to be a vital integrative component of various educational models. The discipline aimed at personal development through mass media, "i.e. the development of the communicative culture with media, creative, communicative skills, critical thinking, skills of the full perception, interpretation, analysis and evaluation of media texts, training of the self-expression with media technology, etc." (Fedorov, 2001: 38).

High frequency of contacts of an individual with media in the contemporary world is highlighted by many social scientists (Buckingham, 2015; Fedorov, 2007). Such an influence has its roots and causes and presents logical dependence based on historical, social, political, and technical factors (Masterman, 1985). The educational aspect of media is pointed out as one of the critical features of its presence in the life of a modern person (Korochensky, 2003). The culture of understanding of media sources comprises a vital part of human development in the areas of communicative and creative skills, independent analysis and assessment of a media text, critical thinking. Development of media culture is considered to be a counterpart of liberal education (Gerbner, 1995). Humanitarian and democratic nature of such education lies, at the same time, at the core of media culture development, as well as the culture of an individual in general.

Teaching is not Knowledge Transfer

In his work *Ignorant Teacher* a French philosopher Jacques Rancière investigates the notions of *knowledge, pedagogy, teaching* and raises the problem of a teacher's professional qualities (Rancière, 1991). In the scholar's opinion, the absence of knowledge is the most valuable feature of a teacher's professionalism. The original approach underlines the idea that it is not necessary, and even unwanted to possess knowledge. Knowledge is abundant and easy to access nowadays. A teacher's task is to foster learning, to facilitate the inquisition process and to direct a student in his/ her search. The highest expertise lies in the teacher's ability to reveal the boundless opportunities for a learner, uncover the gaps in the learner's knowledge, help analyse information or prove an assumption. J. Rancière calls such practices "intellectual emancipation" (Rancière, 1991: 6) and focuses on the importance of learner's critical skills development. Pedagogical expertise does not equal a teacher's knowledge, and this should be imperative while choosing a teaching strategy. Today this point of view is supported by many scholars (Hauke, 2019; Miller, 2018; Mößner, 2017; Olofson, 2016).

The facilitation of critical skills is a comparatively new vector in teaching, though quite often discussed in the educational debates of these days. In the last decades, critical thinking skills have been proclaimed to be essential qualities of an individual and prerequisite for successful social and professional activities. Critical thinking brings a person to the opening of such features of an object (or situational characteristics, or a context of an issue) that have previously been hidden from him/her. When a student reflects over a problem critically, a whole new perspective evolves, new opportunities and new restrictions for the chosen research methodology appear, new methods and approaches can be applied, even the aim and tools for the problem study may change (Dahl, 2018).

However, critical reflection and its benefits are easier described than taught. Following the famous sociologist Ch.W. Mills, we live on the world of second-hand knowledge, which we acquire not through our personal experience, but other people (Mills, 2008). This means that in today's world, the world of digital technologies and social networks, which makes information instantly available for a vast majority of people, we are severely dependent on the meanings and interpretations produced by other people. However, how have those people formed their knowledge, how verifiable is it and what is its contextual framing? What state of mind did those knowledge providers have? What is the psychological environment of the knowledge transmitter? These challenging questions were not attended before the new educational paradigm started evolving.

Philosophy and Psychology of Education for Soul Navigation

At the end of the XX century - beginning of the XXI century these and other questions connected with new realia started to resurface regularly, which gave way to the appearance of a new subject area (Sandoval, 2016). This subject area covered a wide range of questions which were rooted in the feelings of approaching global catastrophe, instability, and insecurity (Gershunsky, 1998). These feelings triggered the search for general ideas which could help to deal with the challenges of our days. The necessity of new solutions caused the demand for new professionals able to cope with the difficulties. Then it became clear that the existing professional training programmes were not efficient for the purpose.

Moreover, the gap between the new life realia, new social, cultural and economic demands required an in-depth, systematic analysis leading to appropriate solutions in the area of education. That was the time which gave way to the subjects of Pedagogical Philosophy and Psychology of Education in Russia. To specify, it is necessary to notice, that even if these branches of science appeared much earlier than at the divide of the XX and XXI centuries (XIX and XVIII respectfully), they manifested themselves in our country only with the decline of Soviet Pedagogy.

The content area of Pedagogical Philosophy encompasses issues relevant to both Philosophy and Pedagogy. It is concerned with the purpose of schooling, a teacher's and students' roles, and what should be taught and by what methods. It also studies aims, forms, methods, or results of the process of separate disciplines. Pedagogical Philosophy questions definitions and meanings produced in their professional debates by teachers, administrators, and policymakers. It builds on epistemology, axiology, and metaphysics, as well as a general philosophical approach to address the problems of learning and teaching, curriculum development and educational management, including education policy. As such philosophical debates aim at new educational logic and new schooling practices, we can see the boundless innovative potential of Pedagogical Philosophy in the area of education (Orchard, 2016).

Educational Psychology applies the findings of Psychology in the field of education. It studies human behaviour in educational settings: learner's motivation, cognitive, emotional and moral development, relationships between the participants of the educational process, a span of life development. Psychology of education researches on the existence and co-existence of individuals and society, the relationships between natural, social, cultural and individual aspects in human development. It also deals with the cultural factor of human development, explaining the correlation between the way we process new ideas and the cultural setting we were brought up in. This subject area includes issues connected with the impact of digital technologies or the choice of media platform on learning. Besides psychological knowledge is used for grounding reforms in teaching and schooling, aids investigations that are focused on teacher certifications and licensure. At last, Educational Psychology thinks about the possibility of adapting the content and methods of specific subjects to the needs and capabilities of an individual learner (Hilpert, 2018).

Covering the denoted subject area Pedagogical Philosophy and Psychology of Education aim at personal emancipation, social improvement, and collective well-being. These goals are reached through anthropological perspective, which focuses on a new human identity. In the XXI century personal identity is developed based on self-determination, self-organisation, self-regulation, and self-control. Autonomous behaviour building is placed in the centre of contemporary paideia as it is a pre-condition of abilities and professional qualities development (Ogurtzov, 2004). This means that education emphasizes the necessity to foster self-realisation and goal-oriented behaviour of a learner. Such goal-oriented approach refers to all areas of a student's life: starting from a person's attitude to his/ her own body, relationship with other people and outside life objects up to a person's relationship with state institutions and political and legal structures. The described perspective is expected to facilitate the development of a person who is free in his/ her actions and can make a grounded choice when it is necessary, at the same time ready to take responsibility and deal with the consequences of this choice. This approach to education is called anthropocentric and is viewed as a part of a value system, thus addressing the question of values in today's notion of paideia (Isaev, Slobodchikov, 2013).

According to V.M. Rozin, "in the new era (meaning the period after the IVth industrial revolution) a learner should be constructive and creative, as he/ she will face with the task of building a new reality, new world" (Rozin, 2007: 45). At the same time, he/ she is to belong to the area of culture and history, because new life cannot be constructed without a foundation, it needs to build on the invariant advantages of history and culture – labour division, cognition, machines, personality, etc. - which can be rethought and preserved for the benefit of future generations. This can be achieved if a learner manages his "soul navigation". The term coined by V.M. Rozin means self-observation, thinking through one's own life, its meaning and goal, the intention to realise the planned life script to the full, the assessment of what happens in the person's life, reflection on one's own life experience, and starting all over again.

Which skills and competences does a learner need to possess to cope with the task of «soul navigation»? These are abilities connected with the human aptitude to construct a new reality. They are abilities of: 1. imagination; 2. reflection; 3. self-education; 4. creativity; 5. communication; 6. self-identification.

The skills of "soul navigation" are aimed at deep understanding of the living environment, designing new forms and modes of living, at learning and self-modification, at human interaction, empathy, and collaboration. K. Schwab argues that the skills of "complex problem solving, social and systems skills will be far more in demand in 2020 when compared to physical abilities or content skills" (Schwab, 2017: 41). In the conditions of society becoming more and more perplexing one should be self-reliable and able to make logical assessments and grounded decisions (Chu, 2017). There are no ready-made answers anymore. It is by no way enough to follow a pattern for a typical situation or to read a manual to manage a process. With multiple changing factors an equation can be impossible to solve. In a rapidly changing environment, adaptability and critical thinking skills become vital.

Media Texts in the Curriculum of the Course Philosophy and Psychology of Education

A vast array of media products on the contemporary information market has made educators alert and on guard. As it was decades ago, newspapers, magazines and journals, radio and TV broadcasts are still regarded as a cultural and educational source and profoundly used by teachers for their professional purposes. The influence of media on culture is pervasive. Media text presents social and cultural events through the prism of its own, thus making separate facts more or less

valuable. It is the audience's responsibility to judge the broadcaster's perspective and make conclusions. At the same time, as it has already been generally accepted, nowadays media cannot be treated as utterly reliable in many, if not most, cases. "Freedom of the press" has degenerated into freedom to buy the press, a free market for the truth: whoever has the most money, makes their version of the truth stick (Forte, 2018). Going further, Stahl R. uses the term «militainment» to show the manipulative and propagandist nature of media. These facts make educators realise an acute need for developing media literacy among a broad range of professional directions with a specific focus on teacher's education (Stahl, 2009).

Analysed experiences and literature review bring as to the conclusion that media competence is critical for future pedagogs as their skills of critical reflection and creative thinking will define the way they will teach the next generations of learners. Such competence is of crucial importance not only because an educator needs to analyse, assess, select, and present media texts for their audience, but also because an educator has to teach his/ her students the strategy of using media resources to their advantage. As Hazanov claims, "teachers were and remain today the main mediators in the process of immersion of the younger generation in the world of human culture" (Hazanov, 2018: 77). The responsibility of forming one's mindset and life attitudes is exceptionally grave. Media literacy allows enjoying the benefits of knowledge without being misled by false interpretations or personal biases. It also helps a teacher educate wise and conscientious citizens, able to make their own grounded choices. As Livingston has argued it, "media literacy manifests the promise of empowerment, critical literacy, democratic engagement and participatory culture in a thoroughly mediated world" (Livingston, 2011: 4).

Media competence is multifaceted and demands a sophisticated approach. Media literacy grants correct solutions when one seeks truth and makes choices. It provides knowledge in the situations of limited access (Fedorov, 2007). Media competence allows media texts to aid in our understanding of the outer world in various social, economic and political contexts. Once a person learns how to be media-literate, he/ she grows able to evaluate media texts along with the text's agency and cultivate a well-balanced personal opinion of the issues discussed in the media source. Through media analysis most controversial issues of the contemporary society, such as those of gender, ethnicity, race, class, age, identity, acquire additional discursive features. Additional information elicited through media literacy supports valid argumentation and makes one's decisions grounded and knowledgeable.

Another vital reason to use media texts is that they allow for the development of a teacher's personality presenting real-life illustrations of complex pedagogical situations common for the contemporary school. School pupils getting into conflicts or communication troubles need professional guidance and human sympathy. However, such skills manifest a Herculean task for the beginning teachers. In fact, they have to walk a long way to master interpersonal communicative skills and gain psychological maturity. Media texts, especially films and novels, give an opportunity to analyze professional cases and discuss characters' choices, dilemmas, disagreements and predicaments.

On the other hand, discussing psychological and ethical choices at the examples of artistic videos and fiction stories solves the problem of professional training that is connected with the features of the object of pedagogical impact. Pupils are vulnerable growing individuals who need to be spared of pedagogical mistakes inevitable for the beginning educators. Those professional errors may derive from the fact of personal immaturity and psychological callowness, which should unquestionably be developed (Postnikova 2008: 63). Though the use of media texts ethical and personal qualities of a future teacher are impacted by the force of art or documentary authenticity. The module "Philosophy and Psychology of Education" uses the pedagogical value of media for the upbringing of a teacher's moral and ethical qualities.

Giving examples of media texts selected for the course "Philosophy and Psychology of Education", we can name such famous samples of the world cinematographic art as:

Scarecrow (1984), directed by R. Bykov (the problems of bullying, teenage aggressiveness, communication between teenagers);

Practical Joke (1976), directed by V. Menshov (the issues of teacher-students relationship, the problem of moral choice);

The Emperor's Club (2002), directed by M. Hoffman (issues of a teacher's professional life);

The Art of Getting by (2011), directed by G. Wiesen (the problem of youth loneliness, first love, communication of teenagers).

To illustrate the use of a text resource we can present the article derived from a popular British newspaper *The Telegraph*, named “Russia Hit by Exam Cheating Epidemic”. The media source was chosen for the discussion of the issues of the contemporary educational system in the Russian Federation. The article ponders the situation with Russian State exam, held in our country starting from 2009 as a unified school graduation and college admission exam. The author tells of the problems of the exam procedure that Russian education faced in the process. The problems are connected with the vast territories of the country, various time zones of the state, control issues and the limitations of the tests. Systemic contradictions of the education system, corruption cases, and plagiarism issues are also covered.

Students receive a task to conduct a discourse analysis of the article in order to assess the unified state exam procedures at Russian schools. A set of questions to analyse in relation to the problem is developed. The questions are both closed-ended and open-ended. The first is aimed at the content revision and general understanding of the topic. The second set of questions is intended at the development of critical reflection skills and media competence. The latter is also assessed with the help of the criteria developed by A. Fedorov and including the following factors: 1) motivational, 2) contact, 3) informational, 4) perceptive, 5) interpretational, 6) practical/operational, 7) creative (Fedorov, 2007).

Another case, connected with the cinematographic experience of the students, is the modern film *Detachment* (2011) starring David Brody tells about the life of an American second-rate suburban high school, its teachers, administrators, and students. Students were asked to analyse parts of the film. Dialogues between a substitute teacher of the school, Henry Barthes, and students were chosen as illustrations of problematic situations in a teaching-learning context. Students were assigned to comment on the quotes, reflect on the teacher’s and students’ emotions and behaviour and work out their professional solutions using theoretical knowledge of the course “Philosophy and Psychology of Education”. The selected teacher's lines ran, for instance, like the following:

Henry Barthes: How are you to imagine anything if the images are always provided for you?

Henry Barthes: Doublethink. To deliberately believe in lies, while knowing they are false.

Henry Barthes: Examples of this in everyday life: “Oh, I need to be pretty to be happy. I need surgery to be pretty. I need to be thin, famous, fashionable.” Our young men today are being told that women are whores, bitches, things to be screwed, beaten, shit on, and shamed. This is a marketing holocaust. Twenty-four hours a day for the rest of our lives, the powers that be are hard at work dumbing us to death.

Henry Barthes: So to defend ourselves, and fight against assimilating this dullness into our thought processes, we must learn to read. To stimulate our own imagination, to cultivate our own consciousness, our own belief systems. We all need skills to defend, to preserve, our own minds”.

The described experience shows that the use of media sources benefits teaching and learning process to a considerable extent. Among the advantages, we identify the possibilities to:

1. apply professional knowledge in practical contexts of problem-solving, which allows getting rid of dry theorizing in the framework of the course “Philosophy and Psychology of Education”;
2. incorporate activity approach in the constructivist tradition of Jean Piaget and Lev Vygotsky, which adds to the course's academic value;
3. implement dialogical communication between teachers and students, which boosts the practical significance of the learning process;
4. approach real-life teaching and learning contexts, imitating possible professional situations;
5. develop the values system and professional life goals of the teachers-to-be.

In the course Pedagogical Philosophy and Psychology of Education students are taught to cope with the external unpredictability of complex life contexts. Such unpredictability is relevant for a limitless number of situations in a teacher's career. A teacher works with a living personality, whose future is tacitly shaped by his/ her professional philosophies. A teacher communicates with a pupil's parents, who seek support and assistance of an expert. A teacher is a member of a schooling system, which is inevitably a part of political discourse and a mediator between society and the state. To sum it up, a teacher's profession possesses a unique status, which evolves from an educator's role in a pupil's life, which implies high levels of influence on collective social well-being. Media literacy turns out to be a core competence for pedagogical expertise.

4. Results

Implementation of the course "Philosophy and Psychology" of education has shown the following findings:

- media resources are preferred to traditional resources as teaching resources by educationalists;
- media resources are preferred to traditional resources as learning resources by students;
- learners assess the usability and educational impact of media resources as higher than those of traditional resources;
- teachers of the course assess the educational potential of media resources as significantly more impressive as compared to traditional resources.

As it has been given earlier teaching resources of the course included a vast array of various media texts. **Figure 1** illustrates the distribution of media texts utilized in the course. The analysis shows that media resources were used with a serious prevalence as contrasted to traditional textbooks or paper journal articles.

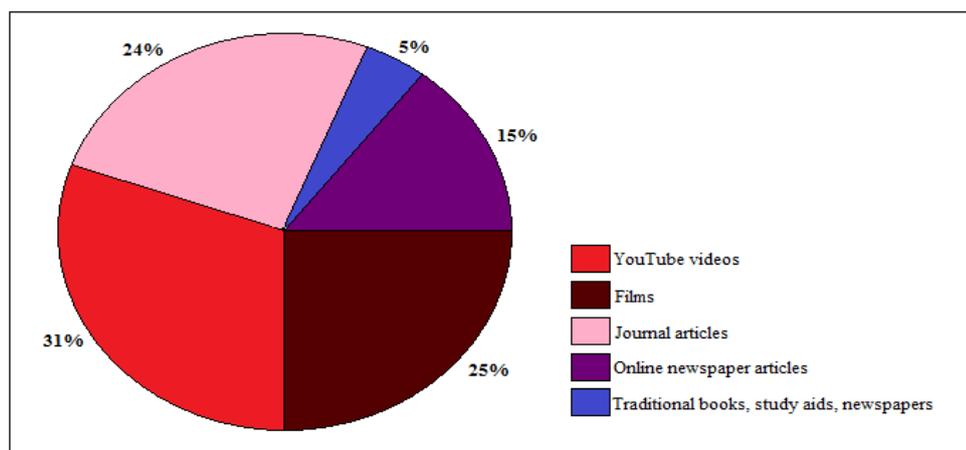


Fig. 1. Teaching resources in the course *Philosophy & Psychology of Education*

When students' choices of learning sources were measured in a survey, the results showed that the weigh of traditional texts was again minimal.

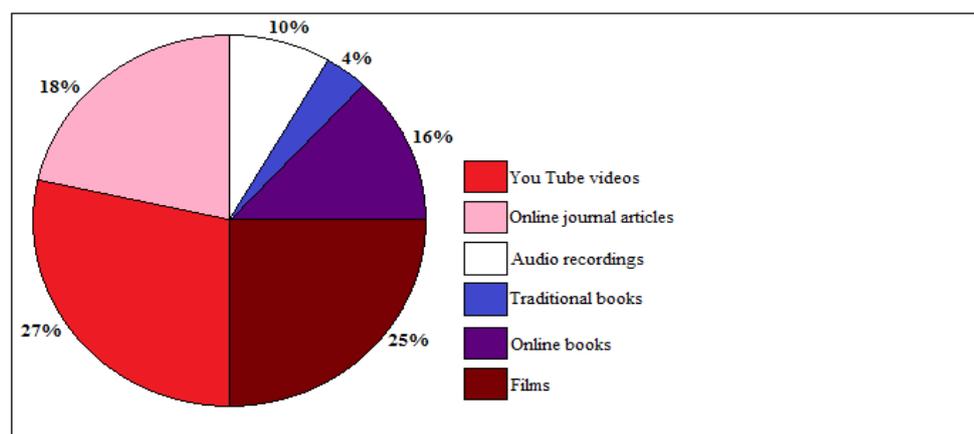


Fig. 2. Students' choice of media resources used for completion of creative tasks

In those cases students had freedom to choose between traditional and media texts, they demonstrated their readiness to employ media resources for studies. **Figure 2** depicts the distribution of media sources chosen by students for the completion of creative tasks in the module.

A separate end-of-the-course survey was offered to the students as a part of general evaluation of the module's usability and educational impact, which is traditionally held at NARFU for the

assessment of course efficiency. The survey focused on the analysis of a) the course's general impact, b) the course's content and c) the course's logic. Figure 3 indicates the results of the analysis.

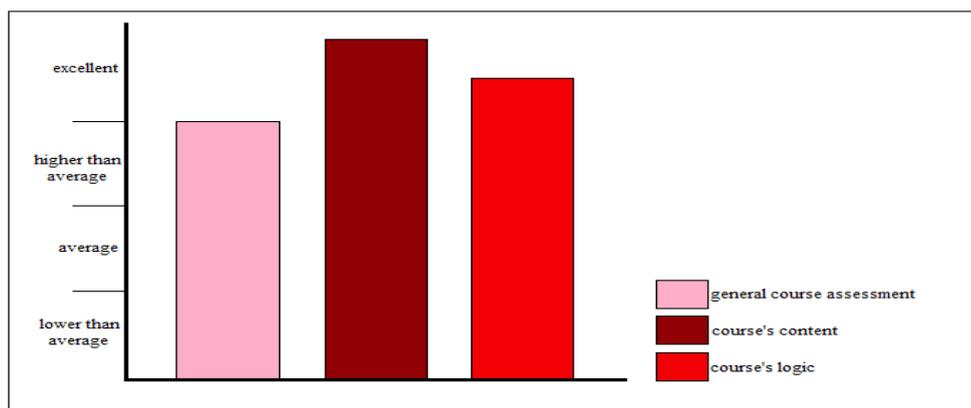


Fig. 3. Students' evaluation of course's usability and learning process

The most significant findings were made in relevance to the impact of visual forms of information as compared to the impact of traditional forms of information for the teaching of humanity modules, such as the course "Philosophy and Psychology of Education". Pedagogical competences fostered in the course are impossible to acquire, building on theoretical knowledge only. Professional expertise development needs real-life examples to demonstrate how theoretical ideas work in the situations of educational experience at school and beyond. Students have an opportunity to receive professional experience through training sessions at educational institutions. However, these opportunities are limited for two reasons. Firstly, the educational curriculum of the course presupposes just two professional training sessions during the whole course. Secondly, school pupils as the participants of educational practices are highly sensitive objects of the teaching process. Professional mistakes may be costly and entail unwanted consequences. That is why it is wiser to employ real-life examples taken from media sources like films and videos, which produce dramatic impression in the content areas relevant to complex humanity issues of education. Examples of them are numerous and quite easy to find both on TV and the Internet. In our course students showed visible willingness to refer to media samples analysing tasks and solving professional problems. The impact of works of art by world famous film directors and actors was really moving and promoted vivid discussions.

Other findings of our research highlight the following:

1. Changing social, economic and cultural context is reflected in the educational curriculum through professional competences taken as the outcomes of the educational course.
2. Professional competences widely required in the contemporary labour market are those including high levels of professional adaptability, critical reflection, pragmatic logic and creativity.
3. Media texts in a wide sense (newspaper and journal articles, narratives, films, etc.) have a crucial importance for the contemporary pedagogical process as educational (teaching and learning) resources.
4. Media text is a representation of social, economic and cultural historical conditions of the contemporary society. It reflects the present state of affairs in multiple life contexts.
5. A carefully planned methodology of the use of media texts in schooling practices becomes a determining factor of success. A teacher comes as an agent who defines a) the process of selection of media resources, b) the ways of their use in the educational process and c) the outcomes of educational practices involving the use of media texts.
6. Media literacy supports social inclusion and participation as it provides a basis of citizenship education, highlights and explains complex social constructs and enables learners to make balanced and grounded life choices.
7. The course of "Philosophy and Psychology of Education" presents a necessary part of the curriculum of a future educationalist, aiming at personal emancipation, social improvement and professional reflexivity.

8. Media resources provide a rich representative base for social, educational, cultural and political praxis and serve as a valid informational content for the curriculum of the course “Philosophy and Psychology of Education”.

5. Conclusion

Today information spreads instantaneously and becomes open for high numbers of people. We are severely dependent upon those meanings and interpretations which we acquire through media channels. Consequently, we are all gravely dependent upon our understanding of the mechanism and impact of media. Such an influence becomes even more alarming for growing minds, whose critical thinking skills are not fully developed. Accelerated mode of contemporary existence, cognitive and energy overload, constant lack of time makes today's learner (be it a school pupil or a high school student) take presented information for granted. Patterns and schemes of the curriculum are interiorised by them without much thinking or reflection. The absence of a planned and strategic stimulation of critical brain functions makes learners easy prey of mass consciousness mechanism, turning them into an obedient screw of life machine.

Contemporary practice of media education presents a serious step forward in the area of humanitarian and liberal education. Vulnerability and discrimination have become regular features of the contemporary political and social contexts. Lack of information places the underprivileged majority of the population in a disadvantageous position of being ruled, imposed and perplexed. Pedagogues speak of a strong need to instill media literacy among various groups of learners as this knowledge gets increasingly essential in today's world of high social risk. Whereas in previous eras media possessed great trust of a reader, nowadays the public has to develop specific skills to differentiate between right and wrong, objective and biased. The ability to critically assess media texts of a broad range and benefit from media sources is demanded by the changing labour market of the XXI century.

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