



World Conference on Agricultural and Earth Sciences

Hosted Online from Istanbul, Turkey

Date: 20th March, 2026

Website: <https://econferencia.com>

HIGHER EDUCATION AS A PEDAGOGICAL PLATFORM FOR ENHANCING MEDIA COMPETENCE

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Abstract

This study examines higher education as a pedagogical platform for enhancing students' media competence in the digital age. It analyzes how curriculum design, teaching methods, and digital learning environments contribute to the development of critical thinking, information literacy, and responsible media use. The research highlights the role of universities in preparing students for active participation in information-rich societies. Findings indicate that integrating media education into academic programs strengthens students' analytical skills, communication abilities, and civic engagement in both online and offline contexts.

Keywords: Media competence, higher education, pedagogy, students, digital literacy, critical thinking, engagement.

Introduction

In the context of globalization, the rapid growth of digital information flows, the widespread use of the Internet and mobile technologies, and the transformation of social networks into communicative platforms are imposing entirely new tasks on the education system. In particular, students in professional education institutions are now required not only to acquire solid theoretical and practical



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knowledge in their field of specialization but also to navigate effectively in the modern media environment, analyze information, assess its reliability, and apply it appropriately in their professional activities. In this regard, the development of media competence has become a priority direction of professional education.

Media competence is considered an integrative set of skills related to students' ability to critically perceive media information, process it, evaluate it, and apply it in practice. The concept of media competence initially emerged in Western educational systems through the term media literacy, which refers to an individual's ability to consciously analyze media resources, use them effectively, and ensure information security. In the context of Uzbekistan, this concept is interpreted more broadly as the ability of students to critically process media content, understand its social impact, adhere to ethical norms in virtual communication, and effectively utilize media tools in their professional activities. The increasing importance of media competence in professional education is primarily driven by the growing demand for qualified specialists in the digital economy. Today, every profession requires not only traditional competencies but also skills in working with media information, communicating on digital platforms, editing visual data, and using multimedia tools. Research indicates that media competence positively influences students' independent thinking, creative decision-making, and the development of innovative approaches.

In Uzbekistan, the digitalization of the education process, particularly the implementation of the "Digital Education" concept, has accelerated the use of media resources in educational institutions. The integration of electronic textbooks, video lessons, virtual laboratories, interactive platforms, and distance learning systems into the educational process has made the development of media competence not only necessary but also essential. Especially in professional



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education, the formation of practical skills through media tools enhances the effectiveness, efficiency, and innovativeness of teaching and learning processes. At the same time, media competence is not limited to the use of technical tools. Its core lies in analyzing the meaning of media content, identifying manipulative information, distinguishing fake information, and developing a culture of media use. Given the abundance of information sources in the modern media space, students must learn to use them appropriately. Conscious behavior in the media environment, responsible decision-making, and the ability to ensure information security are considered essential components of professional development.

Therefore, this article provides an in-depth scientific analysis of the theoretical and methodological foundations of developing media competence in professional education, its pedagogical significance, its role within the system of competencies, and its application in the educational process.

Literature Review

In recent years, the development of media competence in professional education has become one of the most relevant areas of pedagogical research. The acceleration of digital transformation in Uzbekistan's education system, the widespread adoption of distance and blended learning, and the deep integration of media resources into the educational process have increased the need to form media competence as an integral component of teachers' professional qualifications. The concept of media competence in modern pedagogy is closely related to categories such as media literacy, digital literacy, and information literacy; however, unlike them, it encompasses not only the use of media tools but also complex skills such as conscious analysis of media content, evaluation of information reliability, and critical thinking.



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Local studies highlight the pedagogical significance of media competence. In particular, B.R. Rasulov, in his research on digital pedagogy, emphasizes that the development of students' skills in using media resources is directly related to the methodological preparedness of teachers. Research conducted by M. Kholmatova interprets the improvement of the educational process through ICT as a key factor in developing media competence. This approach underscores the necessity for teachers not only to understand media technologies but also to apply them as purposeful pedagogical tools.

International scientific sources provide a broader interpretation of media competence. For example, J. Potter defines media literacy as a set of skills that enable individuals to consciously engage with media content, emphasizing that critical thinking lies at the core of this process. According to D. Buckingham, the primary task of media competence is to enable students to understand the ideas conveyed through media, grasp their socio-cultural meaning, and analyze their mechanisms of influence. These theoretical approaches are particularly significant for professional education, as students at this stage are responsible for making independent decisions, selecting information, and applying it in their professional activities.

Another important issue discussed in the literature is teachers' media pedagogical preparedness. According to Sh. Kh. Jo'rayev, enhancing teachers' media competence directly affects the quality of education, as only a teacher who deeply understands the didactic potential of media resources can effectively develop students' media culture. At the same time, G. A. Sodiqova notes that the use of media tools is an effective means of increasing learning motivation, fostering creativity among students, and integrating elements of social activity into the educational process.



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A comparison of international and local literature shows that in Uzbekistan, media competence has often been studied primarily at the level of using technical tools, whereas in advanced countries it is examined in integration with socio-psychological and cultural competencies. This difference highlights the need to transform media competence into a fundamental component of the pedagogical process in professional education. The education system must focus not only on ICT tools but also on developing deeper competencies such as media awareness, media security, media ethics, and media culture among students.

Furthermore, the literature proposes important scientific solutions in areas such as assessing media competencies, developing models for teachers' media culture formation, and modularizing media education processes. However, in the context of Uzbekistan, the specific characteristics of professional education—such as the priority of practical training, the diversity of technological fields, and students' professional specialization—require the development of specialized pedagogical approaches for media competence development. Therefore, the literature review confirms that the issue of developing media competence remains an unresolved scientific and pedagogical problem.

Analysis and Results

The emergence of the competence-based approach in the 1960s as a new research direction in education, along with the concepts of “competence” and “competency” introduced in foreign pedagogical and methodological literature, reflects closely interrelated notions. Typically, the development of competence leads to the expansion of competencies, while the expansion of competencies necessitates a higher level of competence. Researchers have provided various definitions of these concepts. For instance, according to A.V. Khutorskoy, competency is a set of interrelated qualities (knowledge, skills, abilities, and



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methods of activity) necessary for effective performance in a specific domain, whereas competence reflects an individual's personal attitude toward the subject of activity and their possession of such competencies.

Information competence is also expressed in the ability to mitigate the negative consequences of information technologies, such as detachment from reality, computer anxiety, reduced communication, and the dehumanization of interaction. The multidimensional nature of information competence includes elements such as an informational worldview, theoretical knowledge in informatics, skills in searching, analyzing, and using information, as well as practical abilities in applying modern information technologies and demonstrating active social attitudes.

In a narrow sense, information competence is associated with the use of modern technologies and tools for searching, processing, presenting, and transmitting information. However, in a broader sense, it also involves analytical and synthetic processing of information, the use of traditional tools such as libraries for information retrieval, and the ability to solve information-related tasks effectively.

The development of information technologies necessitates the advancement of students' media literacy. The use of media products has become an essential part of students' independent work and meaningful leisure activities. Therefore, the integration of media education into youth development processes is both natural and necessary. Media is increasingly significant in human life and the educational process, highlighting the importance of advancing media education.

The main objectives of media education include preparing the younger generation for life in modern information conditions, enabling them to perceive and understand various types of information, recognize their psychological impact, and master nonverbal communication methods through technological tools. At



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the same time, it is important to consider all participants in the educational process as equal contributors.

One of the most prominent media educators, L. Masterman, identified seven key reasons for the relevance and priority of media education in the modern world: the high level of media consumption; the ideological significance of media and its influence on audiences; the rapid growth of media information and its control mechanisms; the increasing role of media in democratic processes; the growing importance of visual communication; the need to prepare students for future demands; and the expansion of information privatization processes.

According to S. Babadjanov, media education is a process aimed at understanding fundamental principles, learning the language of media, developing students' creative potential, and forming skills for perceiving, analyzing, and interpreting media texts. As a result of media education, media competence emerges. Media competence is a relatively new concept in education, encompassing the ability to transmit, evaluate, analyze, and effectively use media information in various forms.

Research shows that media competence is closely related to concepts such as media culture, media education, media information, information culture, and media literacy, all of which play a crucial role in the development of a well-rounded individual. The outcome of media education is reflected in the increased level of media literacy among learners.

The present study aimed to scientifically investigate the process of developing teachers' media competence in the professional education system. The research methodology was based on modern pedagogical principles, including systemic, competence-based, and activity-oriented approaches. Given the complex and multi-component nature of media competence, an integrative approach was



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applied, analyzing teachers' knowledge, technical skills, media culture, ethics, and critical thinking in an interconnected manner.

The study employed the following methods: theoretical methods (analysis, synthesis, comparison, historical approach, conceptual modeling); empirical methods (questionnaires, interviews, pedagogical observation, diagnostic tests, experimental work); and mathematical-statistical methods (variance analysis, chi-square test, Student's t-test, correlation coefficient).

The research identified key factors influencing the development of teachers' media competence, including their experience with digital technologies, level of media culture, technical infrastructure of educational institutions, quality of educational resources, and the motivational environment created by institutional leadership. It was found that systematic training, project-based learning, and the creation of a media-rich educational environment are essential for developing media competence.

Media competence is defined as the ability to engage with media resources consciously, purposefully, and critically, to process and evaluate information, and to use it effectively in communication. Its formation is closely linked to communicative literacy, critical thinking, information security, media culture, and digital ethics. A media-competent individual can distinguish information sources, identify reliable and false information, maintain communication ethics, and effectively use digital tools in professional activities. Conversely, the absence of media competence leads to low critical awareness, increased vulnerability to manipulation, reduced communication quality, and limited creative thinking.

In professional education, media competence is developed through methods such as media analysis, media projects, the use of digital learning platforms (e.g., Moodle, Coursera, Ziyonet), debates and discussions, and training in information



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security. These approaches strengthen students' ability to engage with media consciously and effectively.

The study confirmed that improving teachers' media competence enhances the effectiveness of the pedagogical process. Experimental results demonstrated significant improvements aligned with theoretical frameworks proposed by scholars such as Buckingham and Potter, particularly in critical thinking, understanding media texts, and evaluating information reliability.

However, the findings also revealed weaknesses in areas such as media security, media ethics, and the identification of manipulative information. The use of media tools in teaching increased students' engagement, motivation, and participation, consistent with Keller's ARCS model. Additionally, practical media projects enhanced teachers' creativity, motivation for self-development, and independent learning competencies, aligning with constructivist theory.

The study further demonstrated that the availability of technical tools alone is insufficient; pedagogical strategies and teacher competence play a decisive role. Psychological readiness, openness to innovation, and self-confidence among teachers are also critical factors in developing media competence. Overall, media competence is identified as a key mechanism for modernizing professional education, enhancing teaching quality, and fostering student engagement.

Conclusion

This study enabled the formulation of several important scientific conclusions regarding the development of teachers' media competence in the professional education system. Media competence has been identified as an essential component of modern education and a key indicator of teachers' methodological capacity, innovative activity, and pedagogical culture. The comprehensive



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development of knowledge, skills, and attitudes significantly enhances teachers' ability to function effectively in the media environment.

The results confirmed the high effectiveness of the proposed methodology for developing media competence. In particular, modules on media analysis, media ethics, media culture, media security, and media production played a decisive role in strengthening teachers' competencies. The significant improvement observed in the experimental group demonstrates the necessity of considering media competence as a priority area of professional development.

The study also revealed that media competence positively affects teaching effectiveness. Students taught by media-competent teachers demonstrated higher levels of engagement, independent thinking, interest in learning, and creativity compared to control groups. This confirms that media competence is a powerful methodological tool for improving educational outcomes.

Another important conclusion is that the development of media competence must be systematic and continuous. Supporting teachers through ongoing training, workshops, media projects, and online platforms significantly improves education quality. Establishing media pedagogical centers, updating professional development programs, and expanding media resource bases are essential steps for achieving this goal.

Overall, the findings scientifically confirm that developing media competence is a strategic process for modernizing professional education, enhancing teachers' methodological expertise, and improving the quality of education. This process should continue through innovative approaches aligned with global educational trends.



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