## MODERN MEDIA TECHNOLOGIES IN THE EDUCATION OF JOURNALISM STUDENTS

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*Abstract: The reform process in higher education has introduced significant changes in the way of studying, teaching organization and in the use of different work methods. Consequently, the questions of application of modern media technologies in the process of studying are attracting more attention, which is especially important in the university programs educating future journalists. In fact, the profession of journalists and communication experts relies heavily on the use information and communication technologies, which implies the need for students to acquire adequate knowledge of the various ways of using modern media means during their studies. The main goal of this research is to examine students' opinions on the application of new media technologies in the process of studying at the Department of Communication and Journalism at the Faculty of Philosophy in Nis, Serbia. The study sample consisted of 50 undergraduate students, and the main survey instrument was a structured interview. Research data were analysed using qualitative and quantitative methods. The research results show that the new media technologies are present in the process of teaching, that certain subjects are directed precisely towards developing the necessary media and information literacy, and that there are subjects that still insufficiently use the advantages of new technologies. Answers show that students identify use media technologies in lectures and exercises commonly for presentation purposes, while much less for other purposes. The research results indicate high level of media technology use for students' pre-exam requirements - search for the information for the purpose of writing articles, etc. Based on the analysis of students' answers it can be concluded that modern media technologies play an important role in the education of students. Also, there is a necessity for constant effort in order to increase the implementation of media technologies into study programs of the Department of Communication and Journalism in time to come.*

*Keywords: The Internet; Learning resources; Potentials and limitations; Higher education.*

## I.    INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, the teaching process at the universities is significantly improved through the application of new media which modernise the teaching process, while the knowledge that students acquire remains functional and applicable in their future work. Although new media technology tools have been used in the education of different professionals, certain professions, such as the profession of a journalist, find these tools especially significant [1], [2]. Namely, an increasingly topical use of electronic sources and tools in journalism imposes a continuous need for improvement in this field by keeping up with the achievements in the digital world. In that context, it is necessary that even at the level of undergraduate studies, future journalists and communicology experts acquire competences which would enable them to use and apply new media tools. Due to an intensive advancement of new media technologies, this field requires a continuous development of knowledge and skills which assure the use of modern tools for the purposes of performing the work of a journalist or communicology expert. When one discusses the necessary changes in journalism one usually bears in mind the development of various skills, especially multi-media and research skills. The profession of journalists has significantly changed in recent years. It is possible to distinguish different tendencies which have

caused the aforementioned changes. First and foremost, journalists nowadays resort more to technical solutions (blogging, video editing, programming, etc.). Secondly, journalists do not exactly produce the news nowadays. They rather gather it from citizens, social media and the like, and then edit and manage its form and presentation. As a result, a large number of journalists no longer seek media employment, but rather decide to remain independent [3], [4]. Bearing in mind the significance of media competence for their future profession it is quite justified to seek the opinion of the young people who study journalism and communicology with respect to the application of new media tools in the process of their education.

## II. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

For almost two centuries journalism has been positioned as an important profession in a modern society. Development of the society was running concurrently with the need for an adequate education of journalists as important public individuals who ensure the necessary amount and quality of information for public consideration of all matters regarding significant social changes. The education of journalists has developed through several stages starting with the belief that, prior to the establishment of higher education institutions for journalists a news office provided the best possible education [5].

Development of competences for using digital tools is of an enormous importance for journalism, because this profession has gone through tremendous changes under the influence of new technologies. Namely, the media which had not been able to keep up with the trends of digital technologies either closed down or suffered tremendous losses [6]. As a consequence, journalists faced much more serious requests and they were expected to adjust to new circumstances in the real time. They are expected to skilfully use various tools and applications in order to be able to rapidly and efficiently obtain the latest news and follow the development of certain events and situations [7]. Furthermore, they are required to be proficient in new technologies in order to adequately prepare the news which needs to be put in particular format in order to be released. Modern requirements relating to the journalist profession have resulted in journalists who frequently collect and moderate news instead of producing it [8]. This development of events has produced new types of journalism, such as multimedia journalism [9], and data journalism [10], as well as citizen journalism [11]. The aforementioned new types of journalism imply that journalists possess highly developed competences for the use of ICT, because only highly skilled journalists can survive the competition of a demanding media market.

Study programmes for journalists are diverse and they imply general education, professional education – in theory and practice, as well as permanent professional improvement. Development of new media technologies increases the need for specialised courses which would prepare the students of journalism for an active use of new media [12], [13]. Year in and year out the curricula include courses the aim of which is to develop media competence, i.e. to educate students of journalism in applying new digital tools. Everywhere around the world there is a general agreement that new media should be included in the education of journalists [14], [15]. However, this approach poses new dilemmas, such as the following: what kind of content and in what amount and manner should be presented to the students of journalism with respect to new technologies, and especially with respect to different applications and software? Which percentage of the teaching material should be dedicated to technical aspects? An author Schwalbe believes that the focus should be placed on enabling students to independently acquire new skills in technical fields, because that is the fastest developing and changing field and it is of an essential importance for the future of journalist profession to be able to adjust to new situations and standards [16].

On the Faculty of Philosophy in Niš, at the Departments of Journalism and Communicology, development of digital competences has been implemented in all years of study. Aside from general courses, the curriculum has in recent years been expanded with the courses which aim to develop digital competences in students of journalism and communicology: Information Technology, New Media Technologies and New Media. Information Technology is a course taught at the first year of studies and its aim is to form general knowledge of students on technologies, the Internet, browsing, as well as on text preparation and editing. As a natural extension, the course of New Media Technologies is especially focused on deeper comprehension of electronic media, their prospects and functions, as

well as on the acquaintance with a certain number of software and applications which are used in the process of audio and video editing. In the research conducted in 2014 students specially emphasised the importance of this course in terms of acquiring abilities for future independent education. Through YouTube tutorials students are encouraged to independently acquire new techniques of audio and video editing, which would be of great importance once they have left classrooms and needed to adapt to circumstances in order to pursue their careers [17]. The last course dealing with new technologies is New Media which introduces students to a large number of applications which might be important to future journalists [18]. The aim of this course is to develop students´ competences in terms of independent search for new software and applications which are yet to emerge in the future, as well as techniques of mastering the principles of functioning of new programmes. Aside from these specialised courses which aim to develop students´ digital competences, the curriculum of the undergraduate academic studies offers possibilities for acquiring knowledge and skills within other courses as well. In that context, within a larger number of courses, the Departments of Journalism and Communicology resort to new media technologies during lectures and seminars. The use of new media technologies during lectures has multiple functions. Aside from modernisation of the teaching process, it also develops the awareness of students of the necessity of media competence in the process of preparation for their future profession. By following trends in journalism and communicology one increasingly confirms the attitude that modern journalism is almost unthinkable without new media technologies. From the standpoint of future journalists this is an important argument in favour of curricular changes towards a greater implementation of media technologies in the teaching process.

## III. METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

### 3.1 Research goals and hypotheses

The main aim of this paper is to inquire into the opinion of students of journalism and communicology on using new media technologies in the teaching process. In accordance with the set aim the following hypotheses have been defined: General hypothesis (1) – Students believe that new media technologies are sufficiently present in the teaching process at the Departments of Journalism and Communicology; Special hypotheses (2) – Students believe that presentations are most frequently used in lectures and seminars, while tutorials and some such forms are rarely used. (3) Students believe that media technologies are most frequently used for the purposes of communication regarding pre-exam tasks, as well as for the purposes of browsing information, writing texts and so on.

### 3.2 Methods, samples, and research instrument

In accordance with the set aim the authors of the paper used the descriptive method. The research sample is intentional and it comprises the students of the fourth year from the Departments of Journalism and Communicology on the Faculty of Philosophy in Niš (N= 50). In choosing the sample the authors deliberately selected the students of the final year because, after completing the lectures in the previous years of study, they should have a clear idea of the application of media technologies in the process of education. The presented results are a part of a much wider research study conducted in 2016 on the Faculty of Philosophy for the purposes of establishing how widespread the use of new media technologies was in the study process. The research instrument was a structured interview comprising twenty questions. For the purposes of this paper the authors used the data obtained on a student sample from the Departments of Journalism and Communicology. The research data were processed by using the descriptive statistics, quantitatively – by calculating frequencies and percentages, and qualitatively – by analysing the answers of respondents.

### 3.3 Presentation and interpretation of the data

The results of student survey have been presented on the basis of the set aims and hypotheses.

1) By analysing students´ answers to the question regarding the use of new media technologies in the teaching process the authors obtained the data which show that students believe that media technologies are regularly used in the teaching process. More precisely, from the total of 50 surveyed students 100% of them stated that new media were always used during the courses Investigative Journalism, Television Journalism and New Media Technologies, as well as during theoretical

courses. Namely, students state that the use of media technologies is present during other courses as well. In favour of these statements we provide concrete answers:

„New media technologies are always used during lectures in New Media Systems, Information Technology, Television Journalism and New Media Technologies, while they are often, but not always, used during some other lectures" (Aleksandra, IV year of studies).

„Teachers especially use media technologies during lectures which deal with new media. Specifically, there are courses dealing with information technologies and new media where we get practically acquainted with modern technological innovations and their application in our future profession. They are used during other lectures and seminars, but significantly less, which is expected" (Anđela, IV year of studies).

2) Within the next survey question which dealt with the contents of new media technologies used in the education of future journalists, the largest number of respondents (95% of them) stated that presentations were the most frequently used forms during lectures. The respondents believe that presentations are used to a great extent, especially during theoretical courses when teachers tend to use presentations or videos for the purposes of illustrating a point or providing examples of good practice. However, a smaller number of respondents (5% of them) stated that it was not sufficient to use presentations and that it would be desirable for teachers to use some other modern forms which can be of some use to students who study journalism and communicology, such as various tutorials, for example. Some concrete answers illustrate students´ attitudes:

„Yes, the most frequently used forms are presentations. They are used during almost all lectures. Presentations are at times interesting, and at times they are not, when slides are filled with mere text. It would be nice if tutorials were used more often, not only during the lectures in New Media Technologies and Information Technologies, because nowadays one can learn everything through tutorials. I often find various tutorials which I need for my studies by myself, for example, tutorials on editing, and there are only few teachers who advise us to use them" (Lazar, IV year of studies).

„For now, teachers most frequently use presentations, but that is not enough. As to tutorials, they are less present and we mostly find them by ourselves. Apropos, I do think that they can be very useful for mastering skills necessary for a journalist" (Marija, IV year of studies).

3) To the question to what purpose the respondents use media technologies during their studies we have obtained mostly uniform and expected answers (Figure 1). Namely, the largest number of students (98% of the respondents) use media technologies for the purposes of communication relating to pre-exam tasks, and a slightly smaller percentage (78% of the respondents) stated that they used media tools to search for information, while more than a half stated that new media were necessary for writing essays, texts and the like. A smaller number of students stated that they used media technologies to produce presentations necessary for certain courses, to do research, to browse online libraries and archives, to search reference books, etc.

„For everything that I need to do by myself I browse the Internet. There I can find special reference literature, information, explanations, even some interesting facts, entire books, statistics, materials for seminar papers and other tasks. I almost always exchange my findings with my colleagues via social networks, since that is the opportunity to co-operate with them and exchange opinions on the information we obtain" (Marijana, IV year of studies).

„I often use new media technologies to conduct my pre-exam tasks, to write texts, make and edit TV materials and radio reports, as well as other practical tasks. I also learn to work on programmes, Vegas for example, to read books and newspapers. Likewise, I use new media to communicate with professors and colleagues, as well as with friends" (Milica, IV year of studies).
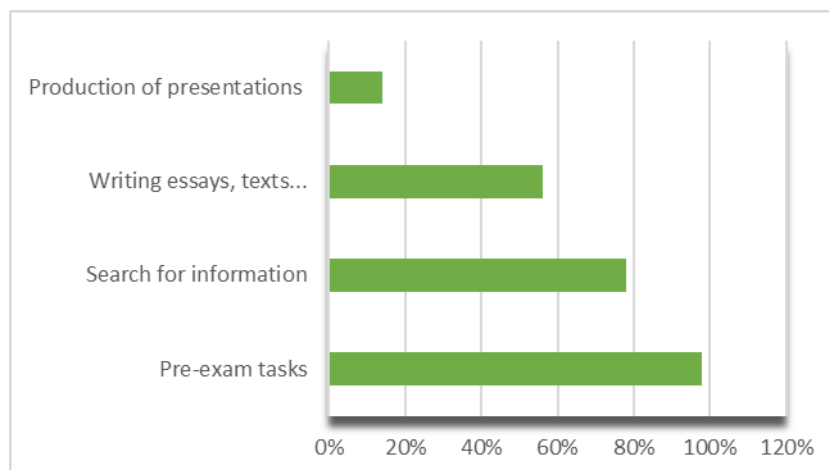
Figure 1. Using media tools in the process of studying

## IV.  CONCLUSIONS

On the basis of the obtained results one can assert that the general hypothesis which relates to the assertion that student believe that new media technologies are present during lectures in the Departments of Journalism and Communicology has been confirmed. Likewise, the authors have also confirmed the special hypothesis which state that students believe that presentations are the forms most frequently used during classes, while tutorials are used far less, etc. In accordance with students´ answers one can conclude that teachers mostly use presentations during lectures, while a smaller number of them use some other forms such as tutorials. The obtained answers are in accordance with our expectations and they reflect the current situation at the Departments of Journalism and Communicology. The next confirmed special hypothesis states that students believe that the largest degree of using media technologies is for the purposes of communications regarding pre-exam tasks, as well as for the purposes of browsing information, writing texts, etc. Namely, the obtained data show that students very often share pre-exam information by using social networks, which is positive from the standpoint of collaboration and networking. On the other hand, fewer students emphasise the role of new media in communication with teachers, which is also very important for their advancement and learning. Interesting answers are those which relate to the use of new media for writing texts and essays or for preparing the material for television or radio journalism because they show that students are acquainted with the possibilities which new media offer in their future profession.

Although, generally speaking, the results obtained through the research indicate a positive tendency towards using new media in the education of future journalists and communicology experts, we still cannot be entirely satisfied with those results. Such assertion primarily relates to the fact that new media are not fully implemented in all teaching courses, which should be expected bearing in mind the rapid and intensive development of new media technologies. Considering this fact, it is necessary to increasingly adjust the syllabi in the education of future journalists and communicology experts with the development of new technologies. This certainly implies better accoutrements in higher education institutions where future journalists are educated, but also the training of students for an independent utilisation of new media tools in the course of their studies.

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