

## MEDIA EDUCATION FOR FUTURE MEDIA PROFESSIONALS: DESIGNING AND IMPLEMENTING A TRAINING PROGRAMME

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The paper presents the experience of the media education project for journalism students at Sumy State University. The workshops dealt with different media categories (media agencies, media technologies, media languages, media audience, media representations) and necessary components of communicative competence (technical information competence, information competence, social information competence, technical media competence, media competence, social media competence). During October 2017 – January 2018, five workshops and seminars were held. For each activity, input and output survey was conducted to assess the extent to which the level of knowledge and skills of the participants on a particular topic increased, as well as how the participants evaluated the project. On average, 32 people took part in each workshop, 78% of them filled in the questionnaires (in total 140 input and 112 output questionnaires were analysed). The results showed that despite the high level of initial knowledge of the participants, the training course contributed to their understanding of certain media categories and other specific issues. The participants also pointed out the importance and relevance of the information for their professional activity. The survey of 29 regular project participants and 27 professional journalists working in the mass media of Sumy Region was conducted to assess the project effectiveness. The participants highly assessed their knowledge of media literacy. The students' results were similar to those of professionals' (in the assessment of knowledge acquired, understanding the notion of media literacy, determining the main tasks of media education and the most effective ways of acquiring media competences). However, the students evaluated their analytical skills lower and rarely applied them. Further workshops will be aimed at dealing with this issue. The analysis of survey results proves the efficiency of the combination of formal and non-formal teaching methods for journalism students. It is important both for the training participants and the universities as they have become more competitive and able to face the challenges of academic education nowadays. The experience described can be implemented by other academic institutions to improve the quality of journalism education in Ukraine.

**Keywords:** media; media education; media literacy; media competence; journalism students; workshops.

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### Introduction

Nowadays, the implementation of media education is of high importance due to the rapid development of media technologies, widespread informatisation and mediatisation of diverse spheres of life. Since the middle of the XX century, the United States and Western European countries have been implementing formal and non-formal media education programmes. They are designed to help students and adults acquire media and information literacy skills and, therefore, adapt to the modern information world, media culture and learn to interpret media content critically. In the early 1990s, Aufderheide (1992) emphasised that “[a] media literate person ... can decode, evaluate, analyse and produce both print and electronic media. The fundamental objective of media literacy is critical autonomy in relationship to all media. Emphases in media literacy training range widely, including informed citizenship, aesthetic appreciation and expression, social advocacy, self-esteem, and consumer competence” (p. 9). In fact, it means that acquiring media competence is meaningful personally as well as socially. This is especially important for Ukraine, the country that has been experiencing information influences and manipulations in the information space at least since 2010 (Jaitner, 2015, p. 90), and young people have a rather low level of citizen activism and are not always able to withstand destructive media effects (Bondarevskaya, Krzywosz- Rynkiewicz & Bondar, 2017, p. 189).

Nowadays, media education is broadly viewed as a branch contributing to the development of a wide range of individual types of literacy, including media literacy, literacy involving critical analysis of media content, digital and information literacy, film literacy, news and reading literacy, Internet literacy and online safety, digital game literacy and media communication literacy (Petranová, Hossová & Velický, 2017). The main issues of modern media education include the methods of critical thinking development as well as data and online privacy, engagement in civic life, creativity and production of media content, and digital media literacy (Abreu, Mihailidis, Lee, Melki & McDougall, 2017, p. 1).

It is important to adhere to the ethical principles and the high level of media competence for the specialists who are to create a high-quality media product. The latter is impossible without critical thinking development, which “helps control the flow of incoming information, classify, categorise and generalise it,

formulate independent judgments and reason them” (Paliienko, 2013a, p. 44). A journalist’s ability to think critically is an opportunity to fully exist in a dynamic information environment, to perceive diverse information flows, to comprehend them and, if necessary, to apply them in professional activity (Paliienko, 2013b, p. 103).

Nowadays, journalism is rapidly transforming as never before due to the development of new communication technologies. Not only the ways of producing news, but even professional standards and ethics are changing (Ross, 2017). In this situation, the classic university journalism education is sometimes “inadequate when it comes to keeping up with the new communication technologies” (Ercan, 2017, p. 1), and education over the world has to change significantly in order to adapt to the “ongoing technological evolution” (Ismail & Ismail, 2017).

In addition to the general global trends, there is a continuous reformatting of the media market in Ukraine and updating of the news presentation format (Osiukhina, 2016, p. 98-101). Regular media users, as well as professionals have to adapt to these dynamic conditions. Therefore, media education is an effective way of such adaptation.

Onkovych (2008) divides media education into two large blocks – the mass (for all media users) and the professional, university media education (p. 166). Fedorov (2003) distinguishes media education of future professionals among six directions of media education (p.6). Although the goals of all the directions are similar, the media education of future media professionals has certain features studied by Ukrainian scholars. For example, Bobal (2013) deals with the general patterns of socio-cultural competences formation of journalism students and Nahorniuk (2008) studies the role of media education in this process (the scientist believes that the use of media education in the training of the future journalists forms their cultural memory and cultural competence). Asiutina (2013) describes media education in the context of the development of future television executives.

Demianenko (2017) notes that special academic courses aimed at forming the future journalists’ professional ability to use mass media, comprehending their role in the ideological education of the audience are designed in Ukraine due to the attention of Lviv and Kyiv journalism schools to the issues of media education of journalism students (p. 70). The media education technology used during university training undoubtedly fulfils important educational tasks, such as informatisation of the educational process, activation of students’ learning and cognitive activity, increasing of students’ motivation to education; interactive learning; monitoring of the educational process, improving the efficiency of educational material assimilation by students, enhancing the creative activity (Dukhanina, 2015, p. 41). University media education also forms students’ worldview and contributes to the development of their own life attitudes. Media competence, which is the result of acquiring media literacy skills, develops the skills of professionally oriented critical thinking (Onkovych, 2014, p. 83), which help the future media professionals form their own judgments and make professional decisions.

Having specific professional skills is not enough for journalism students to work with information, and create news items. Students should also know general rules of the information space, understand social, cultural, and political implications that determine the media content, be able to assess the ethics of impact on the audience, etc. According to Kutsenko (2010), media education can help journalism students develop audio and visual perception, develop critical thinking, master mass communication technologies and form their own system of values as the basis for the media texts creation (p. 191). Thus, if professional courses are designed to teach the technique of journalistic work, the media education, in general, should help a future journalist apply his professional knowledge consciously, critically and creatively.

As far as special courses in fundamental media literacy are an exception in Ukrainian universities, one of the possibilities for future media professionals to get media education may be workshops, summer schools, special courses. Such activities are based on the methods of enhanced learning that “give students an opportunity to deepen knowledge, improve language skills, share their experience, inspire searching for the additional information according to a specific task, enable the development of flexibility, initiative, independence in decision-making, as well as the ability to work in a team” (Fialka, Onkovych & Baliun, 2017, p. 62).

This study **aims** to provide the results of the implementation of media education for future media professionals with the help of non-formal learning activities (training courses).

We hypothesise that supplementing the formal education received by journalism students with non-formal events such as workshops can improve media literacy as well as increase the level of skills and knowledge of participants in non-formal learning activities to the level of professionals.

Achievement of the aim implies giving answers to the following research questions:

- What is the level of media literacy among journalism students before the beginning of the training course?
- Will the participants' level of media literacy improve after they complete the training course?
- Do future journalists feel the need in and the benefit of participating in workshops aimed at developing their media competences?
- Is there any difference in perceiving the concepts of media education and media literacy by workshop participants and professional journalists?

### **Method**

The study involves two stages. At the first stage, journalism students and individual motivated participants took part in a series of workshops and seminars aimed at increasing their media literacy. As a part of the project, the trainers used case study methods, training in workgroups, storytelling, and simulation games. Supplementing the formal education (which students acquire at the university) with non-formal one should promote the activation of knowledge of the participants, the formation of practical skills of a media-competent personality. Before and after each activity, participants filled in questionnaires containing diagnostic knowledge questions on a specific topic and overall assessment of the training.

At the second stage of the study, the level of media literacy of the trained students within the framework of the programme was compared to the media literacy of the mass media journalists of Sumy region. The purpose of this comparison was to determine the difference between the level of knowledge and skills of students and professionals. Universities should provide as much practical knowledge as possible, and therefore the level of knowledge and skills of practitioners may be set as a benchmark for educating students.

### **Experiment 1**

#### *Participants*

Those who took part in the experiment are participants of the workshops and seminars of the Media and Information Literacy Centre at the Sumy State University. Most of them are journalism students (due to the topic of the event). However, since the events were open to all motivated participants, several postgraduate students and teachers of the Department of Journalism and Philology participated in separate workshops. On average, 32 participants took part in the workshops. The organisers did not intend to arrange groups of a certain number of people for each event; therefore, the number of participants at each workshop differed and can be explained by the motivation of the participants, and their interest in a specific topic. 87.5% of the participants agreed to fill out the questionnaires prior to the beginning of workshops (140 people), 70% at their completion (112 people). Most of the respondents were women (81.4% of the questionnaires), participants with higher education (85.7%). The age of the respondents ranged from 17 to 53 years old, but the absolute majority of questionnaires (97.2%) were from the respondents aged 17-23.

#### *Apparatus and materials*

The experiment was carried out using paper questionnaires that students and other training participants filled in. A separate questionnaire was prepared for each workshop (five questionnaires for five events). The organisers (employees of the Media and Information Literacy Centre) and the trainer who conducted the event took part in the development of each questionnaire. An entry form contained questions about age, gender, region of residence and education, as well as the questions that would help to identify the level of the participants' knowledge on a specific topic of the workshop. The coaches could choose the questions, which were closed-ended (for example, a proposal to assess the level of knowledge of a participant about the discrimination in mass media on a scale from 1 to 10) and open (for example, a question about journalism standards known to the participants). In the output questionnaires, the participants had to answer the questions that correlated with the questions of the input questionnaire and allowed to assess how their level of knowledge and understanding of the topic had changed. The questions common to all five questionnaires after the training programme were whether the participants are ready to recommend the workshop to their friends, relatives, colleagues (with options "Yes", "No", "I do not know"); how the level of communication between trainers and the audience is assessed (on a scale from 1 to 4) and what was the overall level of organisation (on a scale from 1 to 4). The final question of each questionnaire was "Requests, remarks, tips and comments on the event," which did not require a structured answer. Such a construction of the questionnaire is conditioned by the need to assess not only the degree of knowledge increase on a particular topic but also to determine the overall evaluation of the training course by the participants. Microsoft Office Excel was used to process the results.

### *Procedure*

Training Courses of the Media and Information Literacy Centre of the department of journalism and philology of SSU were being conducted in October 2017 - January 2018 and included five events to improve the media literacy of future professionals in media. They involved the movement of media literacy from general concepts (manipulation truthful news, journalistic standards, etc.) to specific (media coverage of particular social groups, linguistic level of media text, etc.). Certified media coaches, practicing journalists from Kyiv, Zaporozhzhia, Sumy, media analysts, and Sumy scholars were the coaches of the project. Prior to and at the end of each event, the participants had to fill in the input and output questionnaires. Although the organisers and coaches asked to fill out the questionnaires, they did not insist on doing this. Therefore, the received answers are most likely voluntary and sincere, and adequately reflect the degree of engagement of the participants in the events.

The surveys for individual workshops were distributed as follows:

- Workshop “Mass Media and Manipulation” – 19 input and 16 output questionnaires;
- Workshop “Modern Convergence Standards of Ukrainian Media: Experience of the Day” – 35 and 29 questionnaires respectively;
- Workshop “Self-presentation and persuasion in journalism” – 42 and 25 questionnaires;
- Seminar “Rebranding and inbreeding of the Ukrainian education: Anglicism in the lexical system of modern mass media” – 13 and 13 questionnaires;
- Seminar-workshop “Guiding principles for the creation of journalistic materials about representatives of socially vulnerable groups” – 31 and 29 questionnaires.

252 questionnaires were collected during the seminars and workshops: 140 questionnaires were collected prior to the workshops and 112 questionnaires – after the workshops.

## **Experiment 2**

### *Participants*

In order to understand whether the approach of using training courses to teach media competences to students is efficient, 29 regular participants (those who had attended at least three out of five workshops) of the events pertaining to the general subjects of media education and media literacy were surveyed. Their responses were compared to the results of an identical survey of 27 professional journalists who have work experience in mass media in Sumy Region. Approximately every tenth respondent was male (both among training participants and journalists), the rest were females. Training participants were aged 18-53 (9 out of 10 being 18-23 years old); journalists were aged 18-48 (nearly half of them being 18-25 years old).

### *Apparatus and materials*

At this stage, training participants and journalists were asked to complete one questionnaire, which included seven questions (besides the information about age, gender, a region of residence and education level, and for practicing journalists the media in which they work). The questions were not specific, they were aimed at revealing the general level of media literacy of the respondents. Most of the questions were closed-ended (choosing one or more options from those proposed or scoring on a scale from 1 to 10) and were designed for the participants to assess their level of skills in checking the truthfulness of media content, distinguishing between fake and manipulations, identifying the ways of acquiring these skills and respondents' ideas about the main tasks of media education. In the last open question of the questionnaire, the respondents were to give their own definition of the concept of media literacy.

The students who participated in the workshops were surveyed using paper questionnaires, and the results were processed with the help of Microsoft Office Excel. The responses given by professional journalists were collected through Google Forms and later processed with the help of Google services (Google Tables in particular).

### *Procedure*

After the last of the five workshops in January 2018, the organisers requested regular participants to fill out an additional summary questionnaire. The announcement about surveying professional journalists was circulated in social media of the Media and Information Literacy Centre and the Department of Journalism and Philology at Sumy State University, as well as sent out via e-mail to individual alumni of the department and local mass media journalists. The questionnaire was open for completion within one week at the end of January 2018.

The experiment assumed that professional journalists possessed the necessary skills for the analysis and creation of media content, and therefore would show results that could be used as follow-up answers in relation to the answers given by students-participants of the training course.

## Results

The Media and Information Literacy Centre of the Department of Journalism and Philology at Sumy State University held a series of activities aimed at raising the level of analytical thinking and media literacy among the students of North-Eastern Ukraine. To achieve the aim, regular seminars and workshops for students and other motivated participants (postgraduate students, lecturers, and professionals) were held.

The manual "Media Education and Media Literacy: A Brief Review" edited by Ivanov, Volosheniuk, Kulchynska (2011) refers to the idea of British scholars C. Bazalgette and A. Hart that media education should deal with six key categories: media agencies (analysis of the functioning system, goals and information sources that create and distribute media texts), media categories (analysis of media texts types according to types, genres, etc.), media technologies (analysis of technological process of media texts creation), media languages (audiovisual means of expression, codes and signs, style, etc. of media texts), media audience (analysis of audience typology, level of media texts perception), media representations (analysis of media texts content by authors/ information sources/ agencies) (p. 7).

The German media psychologist Winterhoff-Shpurk (2006/2016) distinguishes the following essential components of the communicative competence, which should be formed with the help of media education: technical information competence (knowledge and skills to create and maintain information technology equipment, for example, the skill to post information on the Internet sites); information competence (the ability to use information technologies actively and consciously); social information competence (the ability and readiness to critically interpret information technologies and consciously use them for interaction); technical media competence (an active and passive application of media codes, for example, the skill to create videos to post it on the Internet); media competence (the ability to perceive the media selectively and reflectively); social media competence (the awareness of how media and their consumption can affect the society) (pp. 218-219).

While developing the plan of seminars and workshops, the Media and Information Literacy Centre focused on the coverage of all six mentioned categories. This may facilitate the profound and comprehensive development of media competences of the students. The analysis of the results showed the success of the chosen strategy of the Centre to adjust its work and to assess the level of comprehension of material by the respondents.

### Experiment 1

The survey analysis found that participants had a rather high level of basic knowledge, which seems logical, as most of them were students getting a professional education in the media sphere.

For example, 88.6 % of the respondents mentioned three or more standards of news reporting (out of six) while answering the question about the news reporting standards (the topic, which is studied in the first year of study during the Introduction to Journalism course). While answering more specific professional questions, the respondents also demonstrated a rather high standard of knowledge. For example, 76.9 % of the participants explained the meaning of the term "transliterated English loan words", 80 % of the participants defined the main purpose of convergent media activity more or less correctly, 59.5 % of the participants named the methods, which help them hold the attention of their audience, and 50 % of the participants named the techniques of involving the audience.

We predicted that students while answering specialised questions of some workshops should demonstrate a lower level of knowledge. For example, less than half of the students understood the term "inclusion" (the workshop dealt with the specificities of media coverage of the issues of vulnerable groups); although most of the respondents knew the term "convergent media", only one third could give definition to media convergence (the workshop demonstrated the experience of the newspaper "Den" ("Day") in creating a convergent editorial office); none of the students gave the correct definition of the term "meta-message" (the workshop dealt with self-presentation and persuasion techniques in television journalism).

The survey analysis after the workshops showed the students' engagement, improvement of comprehension skills. Let us consider some examples.

After the workshop on manipulation in mass media, 68.8 % of the participants evaluated their knowledge and skills in the analysis of the truth of media content at 8-10 points on a scale of 1 to 10 (6-8 points before the training), 93.7 % of the participants noted that they would analyse the news using the tools received during the training, check news more often, look for facts in the news and 100 % of the participants noted that they would pay more attention to the news source.

After the workshop on issues of socially vulnerable groups, 86.2 % of the participants evaluated what they knew about the specificities of a journalist's work with the representatives of such groups at 8-10 points on the 1-10 scale; 72.4 % of the participants assessed the benefit of the knowledge gained for creating their

own journalistic materials at 8-10 points; 62 % of the participants highly evaluated their own ability to identify a stereotyped coverage of the issues of socially vulnerable groups.

After the workshop on self-presentation, 92 % of the respondents could name the methods of audience motivation.

The high assessment of the workshops by the participants is worth mentioning. This is indicated by the analysis of the answers to the three questions that were common in all output questionnaires. Thus, to the question, "Would you recommend this workshop to your friends, relatives, and colleagues?" 83.4% of the respondents gave a positive answer (2.1% chose "No", 14.6% – "I do not know"). To the question, "How would you rate the communication during the event?" 85.7% of respondents chose the highest score on a 4-point scale. (12,5 % – 3, 1,8 % – 2).

The participants' answers to the survey questions showed a positive assessment of the workshops (the last of the three repeated questions, regardless of the training topics). Besides the general emotional comments like "Thank you", "Everything was great", "I enjoyed everything", "It was very interesting", "I would like to take part in one more workshop", the participants also gave feedback concerning certain content and formal aspects of workshops. For example: "The training programme changed my attitude to stereotypes", "Some specific examples of fakes were interesting and useful", "There was a lot of information, I needed more time to explore the issue", "I would like more communication with the participants". Despite the fact that not all comments are positive, they reflected the participants' engagement, critical re-evaluation of the workshops, which is generally positive.

Also, the participants emphasised the importance and significance of the received information: "It was a very important seminar for a journalist", "I spent my time profitably", "Practical experience gained is the great advantage of this course".

## Experiment 2

Professionals and those mastering media skills gave similar answers to the questions about the definition of their perception of the main categories of media literacy and media education. A considerable difference was noted in the replies to individual questions only.

The question of whether it is necessary to verify media information in other sources gained similar responses, however, journalists proved to be more scrupulous – 88.9% believe that it is necessary in most cases (while only 72.5% of surveyed training course participants are of the same opinion), 17.2% of students consider it necessary to check mass media messages; nobody thinks it is necessary in certain cases or unnecessary at all (10.3% of surveyed students responded that only questionable news needs to be verified on rare occasions).

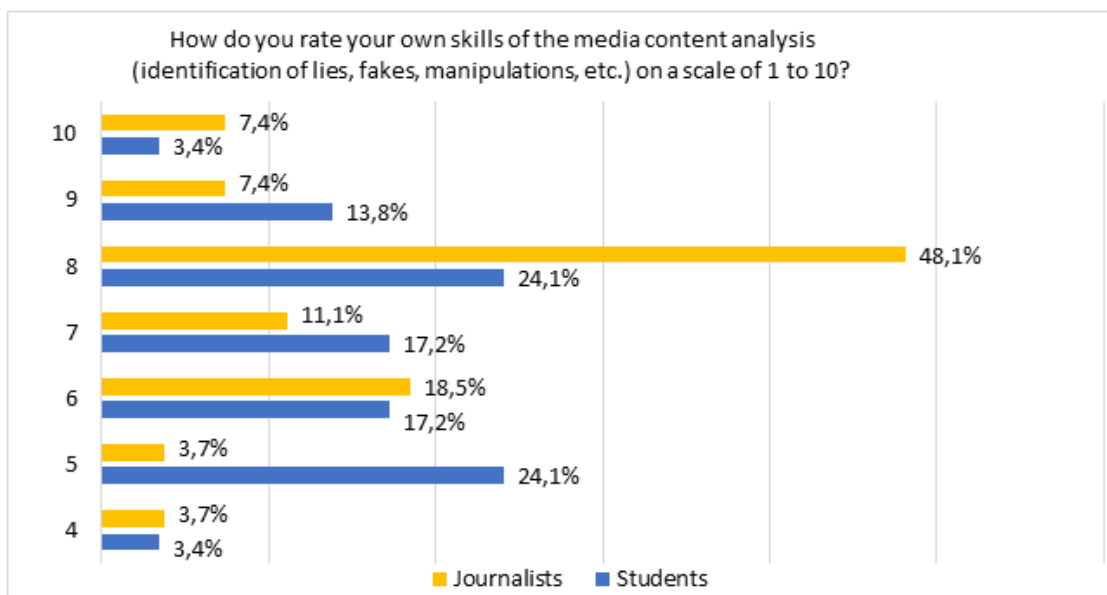
Similarly, journalists proved to be scrupulous media users – 51.9% stated that they almost always check media messages (a considerably smaller percentage of students claimed the same – 20.7%). Approximately 4 out of 10 respondents from both groups claim to check mass media messages occasionally. One-third of students hardly ever do it (with only 7.4% of journalists claiming the same). There were no respondents who never check information sources. Complete details are given in Table 1.

**Table 1. The confidence of students and journalists in the sources of information**

Answers	Students, %	Journalists, %
<i>Do you think it is necessary to check media reports in other sources?</i>		
Almost always	72.5	88.9
Sometimes	17.2	11.1
Very seldom, only when the news is very doubtful	10.3	0
No, it is not necessary	0	0
<i>How often do you check media reports in other sources?</i>		
Almost always	20.7	51.9
Sometimes	44.8	40.7
Very seldom, only when the news is very doubtful	33.5	7.4
Never check	0	0

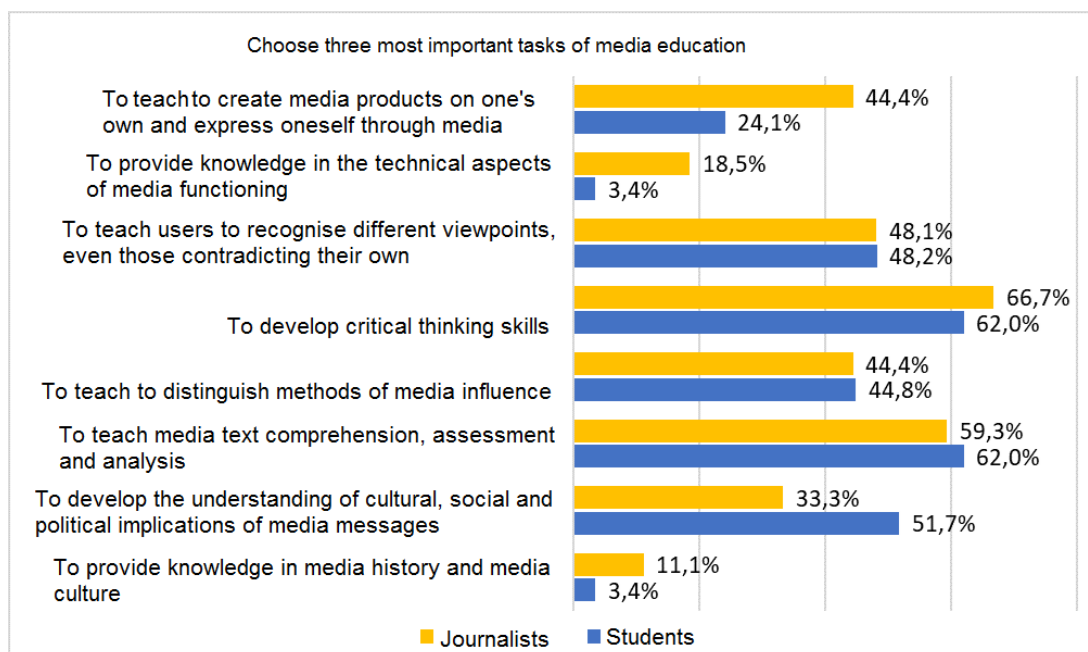
Figure 1 shows that in general, journalists have a higher level of data analysis skills (identification of lies, manipulations, fakes, etc.), nearly half of them rate their skills at 8 on the 1-10 scale. Two-thirds of journalists rate their skills at 8-10 points.

Top answers among the students are 5 and 8 points (these answers were given by an equal number of students, by nearly a quarter of total student respondents). Only about 40% of the students rate their skills at 8-10 points.



**Figure 1. Students’ and journalists’ self-evaluation of skills in the analysis of media content**

Answering to the rest of the questions, current and future media professionals showed similar results. In general, both groups of respondents are of the same opinion as to the most important tasks of media education (respondents could choose up to three answers, the data are presented in Figure 2). Journalists listed developing critical thinking skills (66.7%), learning to comprehend, assess and analyse media texts (59.3%) and learning to recognise different perspectives (48.1%) as the most important tasks of media education. Students mostly chose the answers such as developing critical thinking skills and learning to comprehend, assess and analyse the media texts (both 62%). Skills in understanding cultural, social and political implications of media messages were the third most common response (51.7%) among students. The only notable difference is observed in their views as to whether media education is aimed to teach students to create media products on their own and express themselves through media. As opposed to 44.4% of journalists, only 24.1% of surveyed students consider it an important task.



**Figure 2. The most important tasks of media education according to students and journalists**

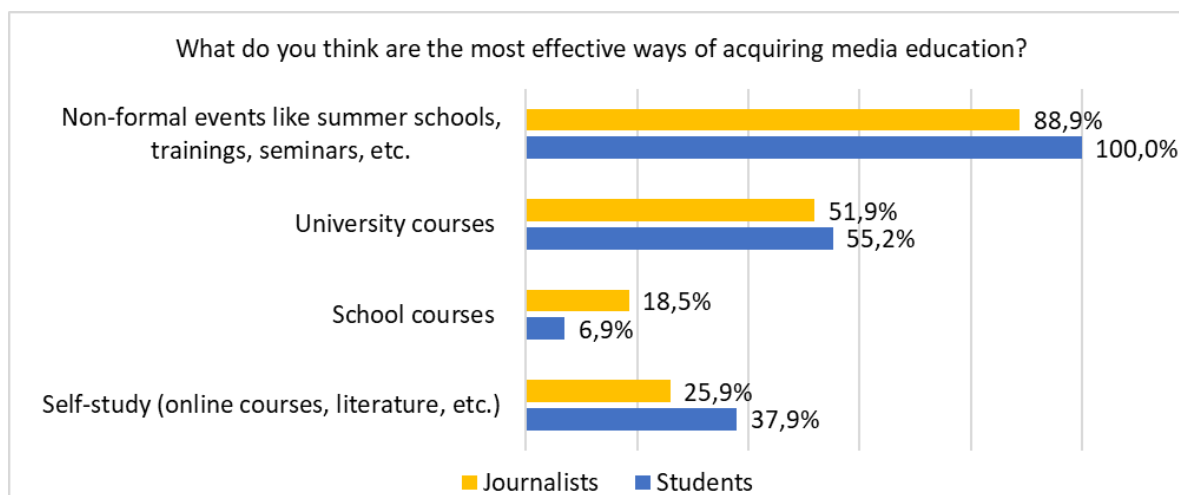
Another similarity is observed in the respondents' definition of the term "media literacy" that they were asked to give. The majority of both journalists and students define it as "critical re-evaluation", "critical analysis", "critical assessment", "objective assessment", "critical approach" to the media. The journalists use more forceful wording such as "immunity to mass media influence", "ability to use mass media with immunity", "when you use the information and not the information uses you".

Responses pertinent to the truthfulness of media messages are also common ("ability to distinguish fake news", "ability to check information", "ability to refine news", "ability to distinguish manipulative, fake and distorted news and messages", "ability to see truthful information and to check it", "ability to find the original truthful source").

Both groups point to the fact that media literate people can create content themselves ("ability to create proprietary content that can comprehensibly and fully inform people on what is happening in Ukraine and in the world", "a set of knowledge, skills and expertise that lets one create messages in various genres and forms for different types of media", "skills that help create materials in different genres").

Responses to the question about the most efficient means of gaining media literacy skills also match (respondents were offered to choose up to 2 out of 4 options, full data are presented in Figure 3), the vast majority (88.9% of journalists and 100% of students) claim that attending specialised events such as summer schools, workshops and seminars are of highest efficiency.

Approximately half of the respondents chose the options "academic course at a university" (55.2% of students and 51.9% of journalists); only about one third of students (37.9%) and a quarter of journalists (25.9%) chose "independent learning", while less than every tenth student (6.9%) and every fifth journalist (18.5%) chose "academic course at school".



**Figure 3. Effective ways of acquiring media education in the opinion of students and journalists**

The survey for journalists included an additional question asking how the respondents acquired media literacy skills themselves (they were asked to choose all suitable options). The survey demonstrated that journalists not only theoretically considered the efficiency of workshops and seminars but also could see their practical effect. Three-quarters of respondents claimed to have acquired media literacy skills due to the workshops. Two-thirds of respondents claimed to have acquired such skills at the university or school and only half of them have also done it on their own.

### Discussion

From scientific and practical points of view, not only journalism students are interested in media literacy today. Gillmor (2016) remarks that "[j]ournalism skills are core to media literacy, and media literacy would be part of our [journalism schools] mission. We would work to persuade the university that every student on the campus should learn media literacy principles and skills before graduating" (p. 817). This perspective demonstrates that the American system of journalist training considers media literacy to be an integral and necessary component of professional competence. However, media literacy courses for future journalists are not available in Ukrainian universities. It is apparently assumed that future journalists will be able to master all the necessary skills while studying major courses. However, many courses are designed for the students who have already obtained background media literacy knowledge before enrolling to the university or outside of it.



An attempt to complement major disciplines with a training course covering the aspects of media education and media literacy for journalism students and other motivated participants was made at Sumy State University. The analysis of survey results proves the expediency of conducting specialised workshops, which are not covered by the basic academic courses. Although students had a rather high level of theoretical knowledge, the practical application of such knowledge (revealed by each of the workshops) is new to most participants.

Universities should provide practically oriented knowledge; educate a specialist capable of performing practical tasks without additional training in the workplace. At the same time, it has to be admitted that academic training, especially in such dynamic areas as journalism, often does not catch up with practical experience. We evaluate the effectiveness of a training project on Media literacy by comparing the skills of our students-participants with the skills of practitioners. Such a comparison allows us to assess the extent to which a future specialist we teach is competitive in the labour market, whether they are ready to perform typical tasks of establishing the truth of media content, checking sources of information, etc. on a par with professionals. These are basic skills of a media literate person.

The results of the survey of students and practitioners allow us stating that, based on their own work experience, journalists are more aware of the number of possible unwitting mistakes or acts of misrepresentation or outright manipulation spread by the media. Practitioners should also have reliable information processing skills. However, students, even those aware of the need to check information, may view this operation as one that requires considerable effort and time.

In general, it is worth considering that both groups mostly perceive mass media negatively and believe that they need to question and check its content. Professionals and Media students have similar ideas about the basic theoretical aspects of media literacy. In addition, students show a lower level of confidence in their practical skills and use them less frequently when consuming media content. Events that involve simulation games and application of the case method (which was actively implemented during the project conducted by the Media and Information Literacy Centre) are the means of developing necessary skills.

A similar approach has already proved practically effective not only in our experiment. For example, positive experience in implementing media literacy for students, including those in the school of journalism, was demonstrated by The State University of New York at Stony Brook (Fleming, 2014). Besides implementing formal media literacy courses into the educational process, the university has also established the Centre for News Literacy that holds workshops, conferences, summer schools for lecturers.

The non-formal approach to teaching media literacy is important not only for students, but for universities as academic institutions as well, as they have to compete with non-formal education organisations in the educational services market, which “among other reasons, is cause for the “traditional” providers to re-think their context, community, and role” (Berger & Foote, 2017, p. 245). Hence, when teaching journalists, universities have to change and break from the traditional teaching model, to look for hybrid solutions that combine the benefits of formal as well as informal approach to learning. Berger & Foote (2017) note that academic schools must admit that, sometimes, other organisations have a longer and more successful experience in some aspects of training journalists-practitioners, and therefore universities “should also be more open to using content originating from training organizations, educational content creators, and peer institutions. Although universities may continue to deliver most of the pedagogical process themselves, they will not necessarily create all content themselves” (Berger & Foote, 2017, p. 261).

Nowadays, Ukrainian universities still have a rigid framework for designing study programmes, and the modification process of these programmes is long and bureaucratised. Journalism practice is changing faster (especially under the influence of the latest digital technologies, and social networks) than university programmes for educating future professionals. That is why the supplementing normative courses with short-term courses, trainings, and workshops focusing on specific topics, which are not included in the study programme, can significantly improve the quality of students’ preparation. Thus, universities will be able to train future professionals ready for the challenges of hand-on journalism.

The practical importance of the results that we have obtained lies in the fact that they demonstrate a positive example of a Ukrainian university shifting to a Western model of teaching media literacy for future journalists. This experience can be used by other academic institutions to improve the level of journalism education in Ukraine.

However, it is worth noting that the results should be considered in terms of several restrictions. The results could have been affected by the sampling. Students were invited to participate in the workshops at will. Therefore, from the beginning, there could be those among the participants who had a very high level of knowledge and aspired to further professional development. In addition, the results obtained cannot be all-encompassing. Since media literacy is an extremely complex concept, it includes a wide range of

competences; we could not assess them all. In the study, we received more input questionnaires than the output ones, although they included only 6-8 questions. Obviously, had we included a few dozen questions to identify different aspects of the media literacy of the participants it would have made the study more profound, but could have also significantly reduced the number of questionnaires received.

### Conclusions

Despite the fact that media literacy, shaped through media education, is nowadays viewed as an important attribute of every media user, it is of particular importance to future journalists. Only several Ukrainian universities provide specialised media literacy courses for journalists, while the majority of them shape media competence through vocational subjects.

The experience in the implementation of a training course on media literacy at Sumy State University has shown that these competences can be augmented and expanded. The results of the survey demonstrate that augmenting the formal approach to shaping media literacy among future media professionals can deepen their understanding of certain media categories. In spite of the fact that the students demonstrate a rather high level of initial knowledge of basic professional topics, after the training they evaluate their knowledge higher and consider the improvement in the comprehension of some issues. The respondents' comments-also prove the success of the training project.

Comparing survey results demonstrates that both groups have a similar idea of the basic principles of media literacy, although students rate their level of practical skills lower and apply the skills less frequently. The Media and Information Literacy Centre at Sumy State University provides training courses aimed at bridging the skill gap between journalism practitioners and students. Monitoring the results of subsequent project implementation phases is of methodological and practical importance and will help lay down the guidelines for improving and expanding media competences of future media professionals with the help of informal learning methods. Further study of the system and technologies of non-formal journalism education in Ukraine, especially in universities, is also of scientific importance.

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