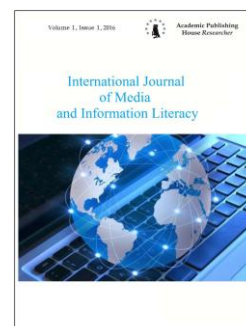


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Research of the Informational Needs of State and Municipal Employees in the University Environment

Tatyana Balina ^{a,*}, Elena Dagaeva ^a, Irina Novi ^a

^a Taganrog Institute of Management and Economics, Russian Federation

Abstract

The study is devoted to the problem of the formation and development of informational needs of state and municipal employees in the university environment. Needs are a necessary prerequisite for any activity. Taking into account the increasing role of media literacy and improving the informational and communicational competencies of state and municipal employees, the task is to study various aspects of media literacy of students in the training direction 38.03.04 – "State and municipal administration" ("GMU") and working employees in this area of professional activity.

In the course of the analysis of scientific sources reflecting aspects of the formation of media literacy of state and municipal employees, a deficiency of empirical research in this area was found. This led to the organization and conduct of a questionnaire survey of students in the direction of training 38.03.04 – "GMU" and current state and municipal employees. As a result of processing and analysis of the data obtained, it was found that the level of informational needs and the range of media resources used by students is much lower than that of working specialists. The conditions for the formation and development of informational needs in the university environment are not enough, and they do not fully meet the requirements for the level of development of "digital competencies" of a modern civil servant. Acting employees regularly use media resources in their professional activities and understand the importance of developing media literacy at the earliest stages of professional training. Based on the results of the scientific interpretation of the results, the paper identifies a mechanism for the formation of a student's personal sense of mastering media literacy, which is able to form a stable tendency towards further self-study and professional development. Content filling of the proposed mechanism with specific teaching tools is considered as a prospect for further research.

Keywords: state and municipal employees, media literacy, information literacy, informational needs, informational resources.

1. Introduction

In all spheres of social and economic development, the intensity of information processes is steadily increasing; the range of application of information and communication technologies is expanding. They are becoming the fundamental factor in the transformation and optimization of management activities at all its levels. The transition of Russia to the digital economy in accordance with the federal program creates the need for the formation and development of a unified information space for state and municipal government, within which state and municipal

* Corresponding author

E-mail addresses: t.balina@tmei.ru (T.N. Balina)

authorities can introduce new forms of organizing their activities, modernize public administration procedures. Therefore, there is an urgent need to develop the competencies of state and municipal employees in the field of information and communication technologies. In particular, the study by E.V. Vasilyeva et al. showed that advanced competencies and skills in the field of information and communication technologies (ICT) should include the following:

- 1) skills in working with systems of interdepartmental interaction and electronic document management;
- 2) the ability to work with state information resource management systems;
- 3) skills in working with information and analytical systems that allow the collection, processing, storage and analysis of data;
- 4) the ability to work with regulatory information systems;
- 5) knowledge of the basics of information security in relation to personal data, storage and processing of official information, as well as the use of the Internet for official and personal purposes (Vasilieva et al., 2018).

In the context of digitalization, the need for the formation of these and other similar competencies, starting from the university bench, is reflected in the latest, pleasant in 2020, Federal State Educational Standards in the direction of preparation 38.03.04 - "State and Municipal Administration" (bachelor's degree, OPK-5) and 38.04.04 – "State and Municipal Administration" (Master's degree, OPK-4). In particular, the standard provides for the formation of skills in the use of e-government technology and the use of state and municipal information systems (Order..., 2020). However, in order to implement these and similar requirements of the Federal State Educational Standard, the educational community itself requires a wider range and quality depth of educational communication skills in the information and digital environment (Moran et al., 2011). This requires on the part of teachers and students the awareness and development of their own information needs, which are a necessary prerequisite for any activity.

Interest in the problem of the formation and development of information needs in scientific literature is actively growing (Naumer, Fisher, 2017; Sevignani, 2017). According to the definition of Finnish scientists S. Tuominen, S. Kotilainen, information needs are the needs of a particular user (or a group of users) for information on a particular topic (Tuominen, Kotilainen, 2012). In this case, one should take into account the opinion of psychologists that a need is an internal state of a psychological or functional feeling of insufficiency of something. In accordance with the position of S.L. Rubinstein, a person's awareness of what he needs or is interested in, gives rise to an orientation towards the corresponding subject. A rather vague dynamic tendency that arises at the same time turns into an aspiration. As such a tendency becomes objectified, it becomes an increasingly conscious motive of activity, which prompts one to take concrete actions. Consequently, the educational environment should purposefully create conditions for the formation and development of the information needs of the future specialist, especially if the profession is related to the management of society and the state (Sevignani, 2019).

Considering the above, it seems very relevant to conduct a sociological study of the information needs of state and municipal employees, where the respondents would be working specialists and students studying in the direction of training "State and Municipal Administration".

2. Materials and methods

The assessment of the information needs of state and municipal employees and students enrolled in the 38.03.04 "State and Municipal Administration" training direction was carried out in two stages using the author's questionnaire posted on the basis of the digital resource "Google-forms", which contained filter questions.

Stage 1 – identifying the information needs and media literacy of students in the direction of training 38.03.04 "State and Municipal Management" of the private educational institution of higher education "Taganrog Institute of Management and Economics" (<https://forms.gle/ZiAhfNH7itifhgw7>). The purpose of this stage of the research is to determine the actual needs in the field of using digital resources in mastering the future profession and to understand the priority areas of improving the educational process of students of the specified direction of training, including through the processing of programs for the direction of training 03.03.04 "State and Municipal Administration". The respondents were students of the Taganrog Institute of Management and Economics, studying in the direction of "State and Municipal

Management" (respondents age 18-24 years). In total, 125 students of various courses took part in the survey, including 28.8 % – male students, 71.2 % female students.

Stage 2 – determination of the information needs of state and municipal employees. 92 state and municipal employees of the Rostov region took part in the survey, including men – 12 %, women – 88 %. As for the age of the state and municipal employees we surveyed, slightly less than half (46.2 %) are respondents aged 36-45; 26.9% – 26-30 years old, 15.4 % – 46-55 years old. The respondents were asked 15 questions to determine the current level of media literacy of modern state and municipal employees and to identify difficulties in the implementation of information needs for the effective performance of professional activities (<https://forms.gle/uVUwxyzAXftiNfzK9>).

3. Discussion

The rapid digitalization and the rapid development of social media have led to an avalanche and uncontrolled spread of inaccurate information, which indirectly and directly affects all spheres of society. The widespread prevalence of fake news is partly a consequence of the changing business models of media and technology companies in the era of digital capitalism. As D. Buckingham correctly noted, “the democratic political process depends on the dissemination of reliable information. If the information can no longer be trusted, citizens have little basis for making political decisions (Buckingham, 2019).

Based on this, the development of information needs and media literacy of students enrolled in the direction of "State and Municipal Administration" is of particular importance. To avoid terminological confusion, the concepts of media literacy and digital literacy should be clarified.

Traditionally, media literacy has been defined as a critical thinking skill that is applied to the source of most of the information - mass communication channels. This critical thinking skill enables people to identify messages that are conveyed in the media (Silverblatt, 2018).

Taking media literacy in a broader context involves taking into account the economic, social, technical and intercultural consequences of the “information society” (Tuzel, Hobbs, 2017). Media literacy is seen as a requirement for an adequate understanding of media communication, it allows the user to confidently handle new information processing capabilities, participate in progress and navigate it (Stix, Jolls, 2020).

Digital literacy is interpreted as “knowing how and when to use certain technologies, as well as knowing which forms and functions are most suitable for your purposes” (Greenhow et al., 2011).

Also, media literacy can be considered as a component of soft-skills. As E.A. Dagaeva, the key to success in the development of students' soft-skills, and, consequently, to increase their competitiveness, is the formation of a special educational environment of the university, which makes it possible to ensure the implementation and support of "flexible skills" in practice, including in the digital environment, starting from the first year (Dagaeva, 2019).

There is no doubt that a civil servant must have a well-developed critical thinking that allows him to navigate the media environment and filter out inaccurate information. However, in our opinion, this is a too narrow interpretation of media literacy. We offer an expanded understanding of the media literacy of a civil servant, relying on the definition of digital literacy given by R. Hobbs and J. Coiro (Hobbs, Coiro, 2016). By media literacy of a civil servant, we mean a set of competencies: and creating credible and consistent media messages in a variety of forms.

In addition to the skills of working with systems of interdepartmental interaction and electronic document management; ability to work with state information resource management systems; skills of working with information and analytical systems that allow collecting, processing, storing and analyzing data; ability to work with regulatory information systems; knowledge of the basics of information security in relation to personal data, storage and processing of official information, as well as the use of the Internet for official and personal purposes (Vasilieva et al., 2018), a civil servant, as a public person, is directly responsible for providing accurate information to the public, including through the media.

Review of sources on the research topic allows us to state the lack of methodologically grounded empirical research. There are only a few works, one way or another touching on this topic. In particular, individual authors have studied the motives for using digital resources, as well as the actual use of interactive media by young people (Den Beemt et al., 2011). From the point of

view of the authors, these aspects should be the subject of attention of educational practice, both at school and at the university.

The analysis of scientific literature on the research topic showed that the problem of the formation of such an important component of the professional competence of a civil servant, as media literacy, was out of sight of researchers. Only a small fraction of publications partially cover this issue. So, in the work of K.A. Karakovsky and L.A. Obukhova aspects of the management of professional development of civil servants in the digital economy are considered (Karakovsky, Obukhova, 2020). Also in the work of Vasilyeva E.V. and others analyze the development of digital competence of civil servants in the Russian Federation (Vasiliyeva et al., 2018).

An empirical study devoted to the study of the formation of media literacy of Russian students enrolled in the direction of "State and Municipal Administration" is undertaken for the first time.

4. Results

An analysis of the answers to the question identifying the most preferred type of education showed that the traditional type of education, namely classroom lectures and seminars, is preferred by the majority of the students we surveyed – 68 %. 19 % of respondents are inclined to a combined type of training (a combination of online and offline), 11 % choose the distance format, and finally, 2 % – distance learning led by a teacher (webinars).

In this distribution of answers, the tangible prevalence of the traditional teaching format over the modern, distance learning format does not look unexpected. It can be assumed that the results were influenced by the fact that the survey was conducted at the very beginning of the resumption of the offline format after a long period of distance learning associated with the epidemiological situation of COVID-19. At the same time, students' clear preference for the traditional teaching format in the context of the problem under study can be considered more a "minus" than a "plus", since this does not stimulate students to develop media literacy skills. The way out is seen in the expansion of the media competence of the teachers themselves, who, in the conditions of a sharp transition to distance learning, have not yet mastered a wide arsenal of media technologies in the educational process. This clearly requires a systematic approach to professional development and motivation of teachers in the development and application of media competencies.

Distribution of answers to the question "What publications of electronic media are useful for you?" shows that most often students turn to reference and information (66.1 %) and regulatory (54.2 %) sources. The least popular among students are historical (28 %), analytical (32.2 %) publications of electronic media (Figure 1). The results obtained indicate that the range of sources that future state and municipal employees turn to in the context of studying at a university is rather wide and diverse.

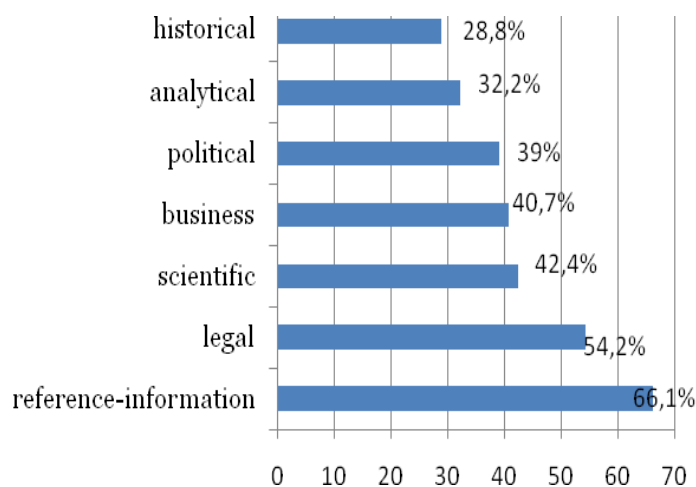


Fig. 1. Distribution of respondents' answers to the question: "What electronic media publications are useful for you?"

Analysis of the distribution of respondents upon registration on the portal of state services of the Russian Federation: registered – 74.5 %, not registered – 26.5 % also confirms the fact of active use of reference and information sources by the respondents.

Continuing to study the formation of students' media skills, we found out what problems students solve mainly using digital technologies. According to the results obtained, these are, first of all, communication tasks (communication – 79.7 %) and financial (payment for services – 69.5 %). Educational tasks with the help of digital technologies are solved by only 52.5 % of the students we surveyed, which, of course, needs to be corrected (Figure 2).

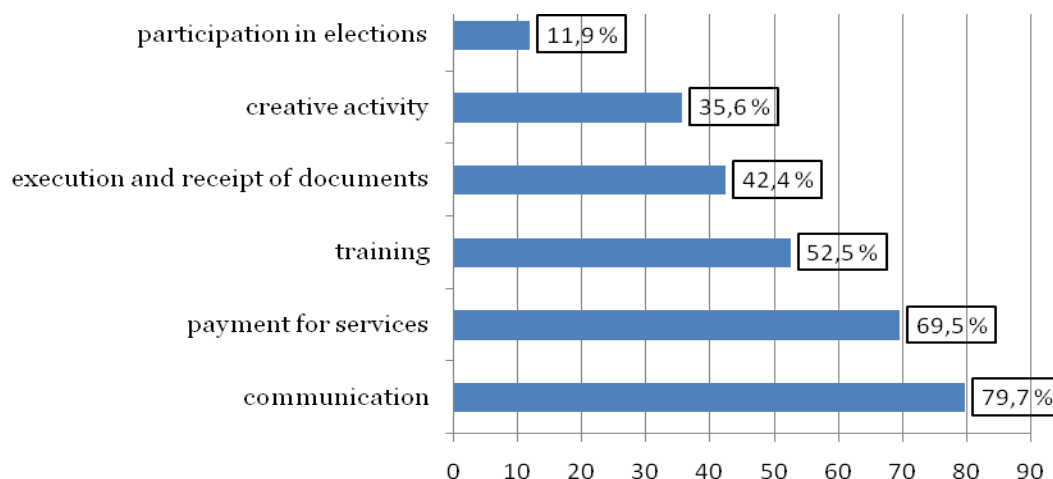


Fig. 2. Problems that students solve using digital technologies

An analysis of the frequency of using media resources to search for information in the framework of training in their specialty requires dividing the respondents into 2 large groups – those who use them daily (43.1 %), and those who use them from time to time (48.3 %), moreover, the second – more (Figure 3).

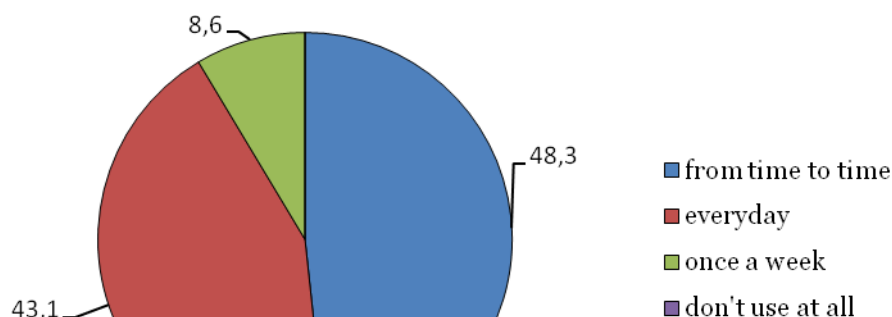


Fig. 3. Frequency of using media resources to search for information within the framework of training in your specialty

It should be noted that among the resources that students turn to solve educational problems, the leading place is taken not by a digital source, but by a competent person (teacher, specialist) – 84.7 %. At the same time, among the digital resources that students use for educational purposes, there are webinars (11.9 %), blogs (20.3 %), forums (20.3 %), as well as the electronic educational environment of the institute (72.8 %) (Figure 4).

Consequently, the carrier of educational information, experience of professional activity in the minds of students is still the teacher. Digital resources are considered as additional, auxiliary, optimizing the process of interaction in the teacher-student system.

Going deeper into the topic, it was found out in what disciplines of the curriculum future state and municipal employees turned to Internet sources most often. In the sample of answers to this question, the leading disciplines are legal and economic disciplines of both the basic and variable parts of the curriculum ("Legal system of the Russian Federation", "Economic theory", "Management of purchases and contracts", "Office work and interdepartmental document flow" ", etc.) The results obtained indicate that the teachers of these courses stimulate the media activity of students and thereby participate in the development of students' media literacy skills.

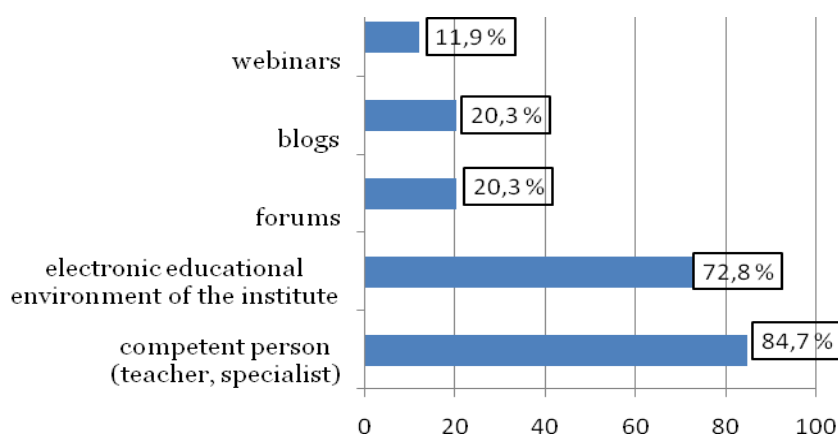


Fig. 4. Resources, that students turn to solve educational problems

However, on a par with this, the results of the survey indicate that less than half of the students (48.5 %) turn to state and municipal information systems as part of their specialty training. Among the state and municipal information systems used by students in the framework of training their specialty, there are: the Unified portal of state and municipal services (76.9 %), as well as the Unified system of interdepartmental electronic interaction (23.1 %), the National platform for distributed data processing (23.1 %), Information system of the head certification center (3.8 %) (Figure 5). Obviously, these specialized professional databases are not included in the educational process for active use.

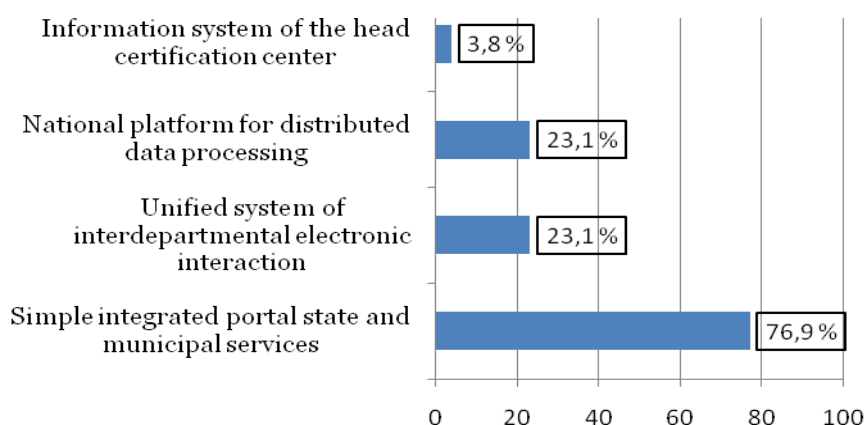


Fig. 5. State and municipal information systems used in the framework of training in the direction of training 38.03.04 – "GMU"

Assessment of students' satisfaction with a variety of types of information resources for the implementation of the educational process, as well as the degree of informing about the forms and possibilities in the process of implementing the educational process showed that student contentment in both cases is quite high (Figures 6, 7).

On the one side, this indicates that in the university environment, work is underway to form the media competence of students in this area of training, new information resources are being introduced, students will learn about the possibilities of digital technologies, the principles of their application in future professional activities. But apparently this work is not yet systematic and purposeful. Taking into account the above results that only 52.5 % of students solve educational problems using digital technologies, only 44.5 % daily use media resources to search for information within the framework of their specialty education, and at the same time, the most desirable source of information is actually the teacher and the university electronic educational environment, where the same teachers posted information in the most adapted form, we can conclude that the students' own activity in the digital environment is very low. How can you explain their satisfaction with the existing situation in the formation of their media literacy?

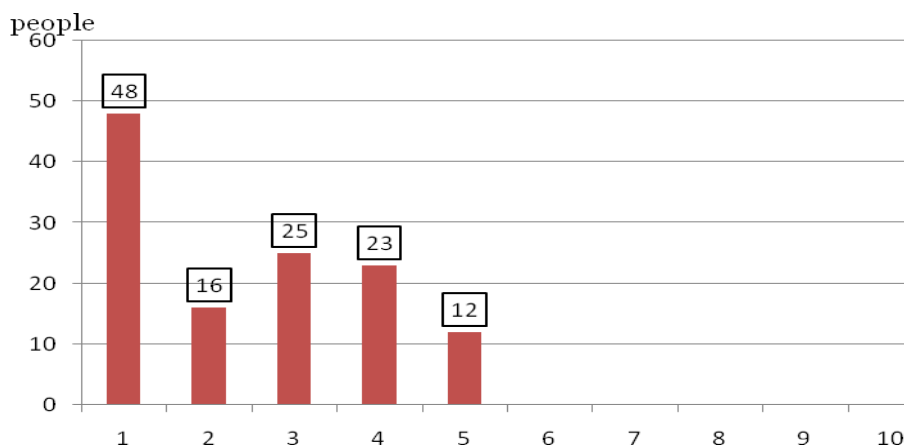


Fig. 6. Contentment of respondents with a variety of types of information resources for the implementation of the educational process

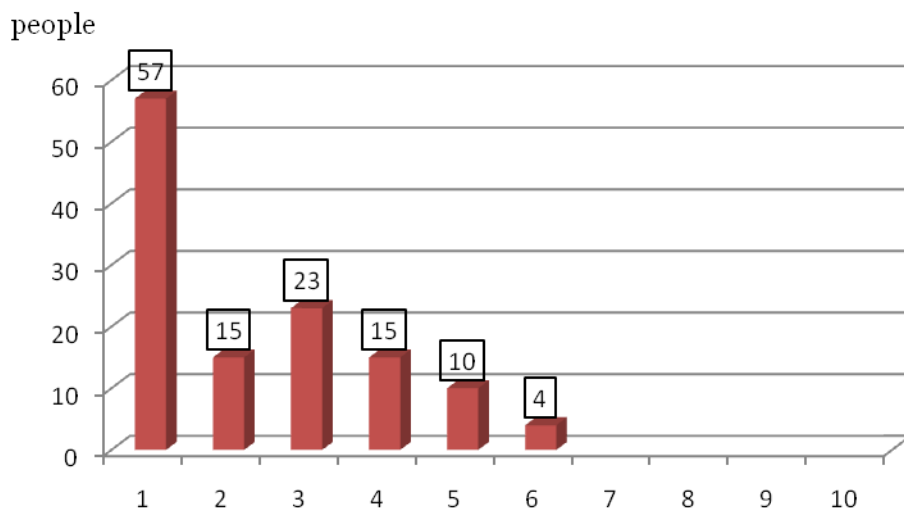


Fig. 7. Contentment of students with the degree of informing about the forms and possibilities in the process of implementing the educational process

A high level of satisfaction with something indicates a balance in the emotional-needs sphere of a person between what is expected and what is received. Those with a low level of information needs, the poor representation of media resources in the educational process will not be perceived as something critical, causing discomfort among students. Therefore, the satisfaction of students with those aspects of the media space and the possibility of using it in the educational process that are currently offered in the university environment does not yet indicate its richness and qualitative originality. Consequently, a natural question arises, to what extent this state of affairs is

adequate to the requirements for the level of media literacy in professional activities in the field of state and municipal administration.

In the scientific literature, it has not yet been possible to obtain an unambiguous answer to this question due to the weak representation of such studies in the sample of state and municipal employees. Therefore, at the second stage of this study, a questionnaire was conducted among the current state and municipal employees. The geography of respondents' coverage was quite wide, it includes the following cities of the Rostov region: Azov, Bataysk, Volgodonsk, Gukovo, Donetsk, Zverevo, Kamensk-Shakhtinsky, Rostov-on-Don, Taganrog. Among the organizations, whose representatives took part in the survey, are: the Government of the Rostov region, MAU MFC "My Documents", as well as the municipalities of the above cities of the Rostov region.

The survey results showed that the overwhelming majority of respondents (96 %) use the Internet resources in their professional activities. Distance learning technologies were mastered by 84.6 % of the respondents and actively participate in webinars, videoconferences held by state and municipal authorities in order to improve their skills and timely search and replenish professionally significant information.

As can be seen from Fig. 8, among the media resources that survey participants most often turn to in their professional activities, the most in demand are state and municipal sources (77 %), official sites of the constituent entities of the Russian Federation (73 %), as well as corporate sites and portals (61 %)

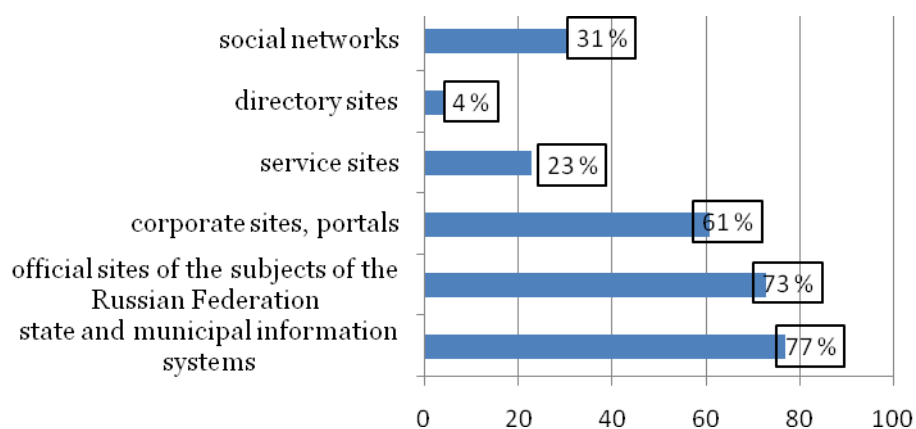


Fig. 8. Types of media resources that state and municipal employees most often use in their professional activities

As for the state and municipal information systems, which are most often referred to in their professional activities by the respondents, here the undoubted favorite is the Unified Portal of State and Municipal Services (76 %), the Unified System of Interdepartmental Electronic Interaction (50%) is slightly less in demand. The third most popular resource is the Unified Identification and Authentication System in the Infrastructure, which ensures the interaction of information systems used to provide state and municipal services in electronic form (15 %) (Figure 9).

As part of the survey, the participants were asked to evaluate the work of the authorities in the field of increasing the media literacy of state and municipal employees. The answers were distributed as follows: 44.5 % – fully satisfied, 27.5 % – rather satisfied than not satisfied (Figure 10).

The data obtained indicate insufficient satisfaction of employees (as opposed to the data obtained on a sample of students) with the measures that the employer offers to improve media literacy. Consequently, the available insignificant training resources do not reflect the high demands of employees for the development of professional media competence. Therefore, it is necessary to improve this direction in the work of state and municipal authorities.

Analysis of answers to the question "How important, in your opinion, is the development of media literacy of a state and municipal employee during his studies at a university?" indicates that the majority of professionals working in this field, based on their own experience, emphasize the importance of the purposeful formation of this competence among students studying in the direction 38.03.04 "State and municipal administration" (Figure 11).

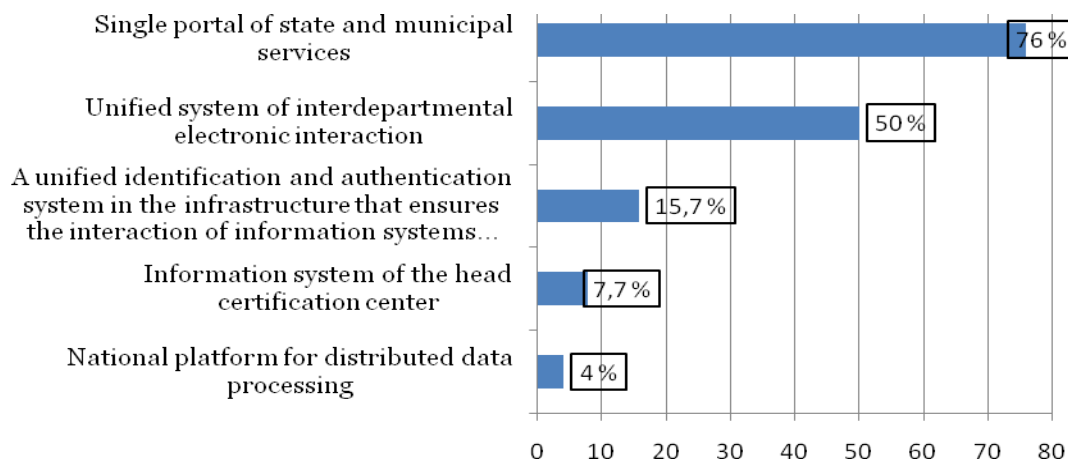


Fig. 9. State and municipal information systems used in the professional activities of state and municipal employees

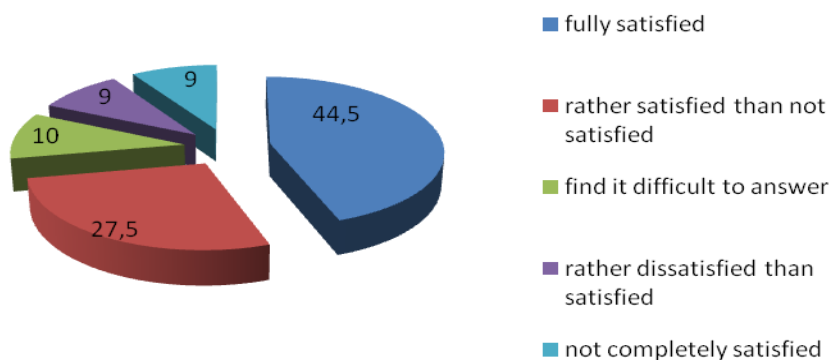


Fig. 10. Assessment of the work of the authorities in the field of increasing media literacy of state and municipal employees

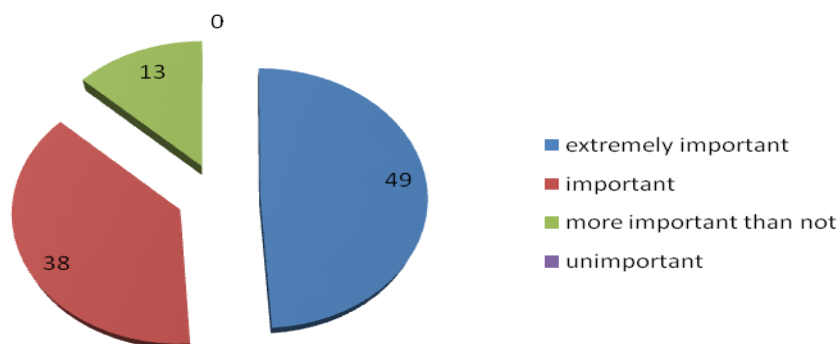


Fig. 11. Assessment of the importance of developing media literacy of a state and municipal employee during his studies at a university

Among the priority areas for training graduates of the specialty "State and Municipal Administration" in the formation of media literacy, the respondents named the following: the ability to work in specialized information systems (73 %), the development of search skills, systematization and analytical processing of media information (58 %), participation in training

and conducting communication activities of state and municipal bodies (36 %), increasing the general level of information culture (moral, ethical aspects) (35 %) (Figure 12).

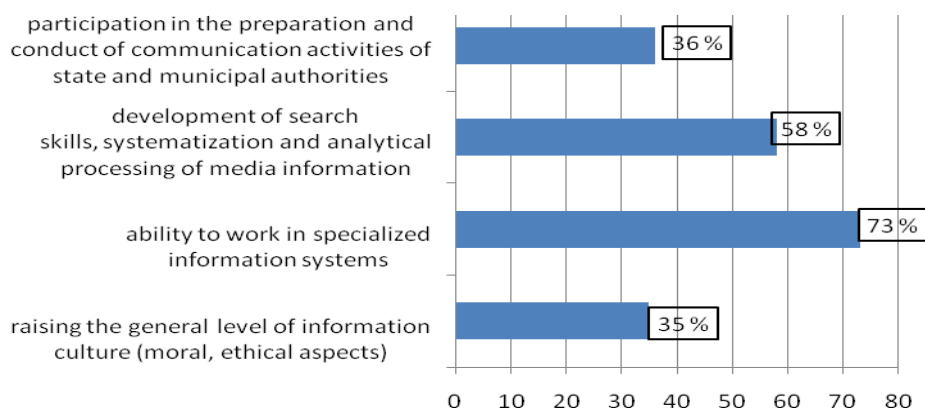


Fig. 12. Priority areas of training for graduates of the specialty "State and Municipal Administration" in the formation of media literacy

As the results of the survey shows, a high level of formation of media literacy skills is an integral condition for the effective performance of state and municipal employees of their official duties. Consequently, the development of forms and methods of increasing the media literacy of students studying in the direction of "GMU" is not a tribute to current trends, but an urgent need.

5. Conclusion

Interpretation of the results obtained on a sample of students allows us to conclude that high satisfaction of students with a variety of types of information resources and the degree of information about the forms and possibilities of using media resources in the process of implementing the educational process, with their objectively insufficient representation in the university environment, indicates a weak expression of the respondents' needs to the formation of media competence. Actualization of this type of needs becomes an important task in the system of formation of educational needs in general. Need is the original source of activity. Therefore, the development of media literacy in the university environment should begin with the actualization and expansion of the subject content of information needs, and then objectify the emerging needs through specific information technologies and resources. At the same time, it is important to emphasize in an emotional context the professional significance and socially useful effect of their future application in the field of state and municipal administration.

Nevertheless, it should be taken into account that digital technologies are developing so quickly and penetrating into human life that the task of the educational process becomes not so much to teach how to correctly use the resources and technologies available today, but to form a willingness to constantly self-learn, improving their media competence.

Therefore, on the basis of modern psychological research in the field of the formation of motives and meanings of activity (Leontiev, 2007), the following can be proposed. The educational process in the university environment should, firstly, form information needs as a source of activity in the media environment. Second, in order to objectify these needs (i.e., to form motives for mastering media literacy), offer a wide range of professional media resources and digital technologies. Thirdly, the regulation of the dynamics of students' activity should be carried out through emotional support of educational activities, providing an opportunity for social reflection of subjective emotional experiences in relation to new information. The implementation of this sequence makes it possible to form in the student a personal meaning of mastering media literacy, which is able to form a stable tendency towards further self-study and professional development in this direction. Content filling of the proposed mechanism with specific teaching tools is considered as a prospect for further research.

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