INFORMATION AND MEDIA COMPETENCE: CONTENT AND STRUCTURE

Toyirova Rayxona Ismatjon kizi
Scientific researcher, Uzbekistan

Abstract: In the contemporary digital era, information and media competence has become one of the most essential competencies for learners, teachers, and professionals. Rapid technological development, the expansion of digital communication, and the increasing influence of social media platforms have significantly transformed the ways individuals access, analyze, evaluate, create, and disseminate information. Consequently, educational systems around the world are increasingly focusing on developing information and media competence as an integral component of lifelong learning and professional development. This article examines the concept, content, and structural components of information and media competence from theoretical and practical perspectives. The study analyzes major international frameworks and scholarly approaches related to information literacy, media literacy, digital literacy, and critical thinking. Particular attention is paid to the interrelationship between information competence and media competence, emphasizing their role in fostering analytical thinking, responsible communication, ethical behavior, and digital citizenship. The article also discusses the pedagogical significance of integrating information and media competence into educational curricula, especially in higher education and foreign language teaching. Furthermore, the paper highlights the importance of developing students' abilities to critically evaluate media messages, identify misinformation, use digital technologies effectively, and participate responsibly in the global information environment. The findings demonstrate that information and media competence is a multidimensional construct consisting of cognitive, technological, communicative, ethical, and critical components that collectively support effective learning and professional success in the twenty-first century.

Key words: information competence, media competence, information literacy, media literacy, digital literacy, critical thinking, digital citizenship, education

The twenty-first century is characterized by rapid technological advancement, globalization, and the unprecedented expansion of information flows. In modern society, information has become one of the most valuable resources influencing education, economics, politics, science, and culture. Digital technologies and media platforms have transformed communication processes and created new opportunities for access to knowledge. At the same time, these developments have generated

numerous challenges related to misinformation, information overload, cyber threats, and unethical media practices. Under such conditions, information and media competence has emerged as a fundamental requirement for effective participation in social and professional life. Information and media competence refers to an individual's ability to search, analyze, evaluate, interpret, create, and communicate information through various media and technological channels. It encompasses not only technical skills but also critical thinking, ethical awareness, communication abilities, and responsible digital behavior. Modern educational systems increasingly recognize that learners must possess these competencies in order to adapt successfully to the demands of the information society. Researchers emphasize that information and media competence is closely associated with lifelong learning and independent knowledge acquisition. According to UNESCO (2018), media and information literacy enables individuals to make informed decisions, critically engage with media content, and participate actively in democratic processes. Similarly, the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL, 2016) defines information literacy as the ability to recognize when information is needed and to locate, evaluate, and use information effectively. The growing significance of information and media competence has led scholars and educators to investigate its conceptual foundations, structural components, and pedagogical implications. In this regard, the present article aims to analyze the content and structure of information and media competence and to identify its key dimensions within the educational context.

The concept of information competence emerged primarily from studies on information literacy and digital literacy. Initially, information literacy focused on library skills and the ability to locate academic sources. However, with the development of information technologies and digital communication, the concept expanded to include analytical, evaluative, and technological competencies. Paul Zurkowski first introduced the term "information literacy" in 1974, describing individuals who are capable of using information resources effectively for problem-solving and decision-making (Zurkowski, 1974). Later, scholars broadened the concept by integrating critical thinking, technological literacy, and media analysis. Media competence, on the other hand, developed from media literacy studies that examined individuals' ability to interpret and critically analyze media messages. Media literacy gained importance due to the increasing influence of television, newspapers, advertising, and later digital and social media on public opinion and behavior. Potter (2018) argues that media literacy helps individuals become more conscious consumers and producers of media content.

Today, information competence and media competence are often integrated into a unified concept known as media and information literacy (MIL). UNESCO (2021) considers MIL a combination of knowledge, attitudes, skills, and practices required to

access, critically evaluate, create, and share information and media content responsibly. The theoretical foundation of information and media competence is based on constructivist and learner-centered educational approaches. Constructivist theory emphasizes active learning, independent inquiry, and critical reflection. Learners are not passive recipients of information but active participants in the construction of knowledge. Therefore, information and media competence encourage students to engage critically with information sources, compare perspectives, and generate informed conclusions.

The content of information and media competence is multidimensional and includes several interconnected areas. Scholars generally identify *cognitive, technological, communicative, ethical, and critical dimensions as the main components of this competence*. ***The cognitive component*** involves the ability to understand, analyze, synthesize, and evaluate information. Individuals must be capable of identifying reliable sources, distinguishing facts from opinions, recognizing bias, and interpreting information critically. Cognitive skills also include problem-solving, analytical reasoning, and decision-making abilities. In educational contexts, cognitive competence enables learners to conduct research, process academic information, and develop evidence-based arguments. Critical thinking plays a central role in this component because learners must evaluate the credibility and relevance of information in digital environments where misinformation and manipulation are common. ***The technological component*** refers to the ability to use digital devices, software, online platforms, and communication technologies effectively. Modern learners are expected to navigate digital environments, utilize search engines, manage digital content, and employ technological tools for learning and collaboration. Digital technologies have become indispensable in education, particularly after the global shift toward online and blended learning. Therefore, information and media competence requires individuals to adapt to technological innovations and use them productively and safely. Gilster (1997) describes digital literacy as the ability to understand and use information from multiple digital formats. This perspective highlights that technological skills are not limited to technical operations but involve meaningful interaction with digital content. ***The communicative component*** focuses on effective interaction and communication through media and information channels. Individuals must be able to express ideas clearly, participate in discussions, collaborate online, and communicate appropriately across diverse cultural and social contexts. Social media platforms, blogs, podcasts, and digital communication tools have expanded opportunities for interaction. However, they also require users to understand communication ethics, audience awareness, and intercultural sensitivity. Effective communication in digital environments contributes to collaborative learning, professional networking, and social participation**.** ***Ethical awareness*** is a crucial aspect of information and media

competence. Individuals must understand ethical principles related to information use, intellectual property, copyright, plagiarism, privacy, and responsible digital behavior. The ethical dimension also includes awareness of cyber security, digital identity, and online safety. Learners should recognize the consequences of unethical online behavior, including misinformation dissemination, cyberbullying, and violation of privacy rights. According to Hobbs (2017), ethical participation in digital culture requires individuals to engage responsibly with media and respect social and cultural diversity. Consequently, educational institutions must promote ethical standards and digital citizenship among students. ***The critical component*** represents the ability to evaluate media messages and information critically. This dimension is particularly important in the age of social media and algorithm-driven communication where fake news, propaganda, and manipulation are widespread. Critical media analysis enables individuals to identify hidden agendas, ideological influences, persuasive techniques, and stereotypes in media content. It also supports democratic participation by encouraging informed and reflective engagement with public discourse. Critical competence helps learners avoid passive consumption of information and become active, reflective participants in digital society. This competence is essential for maintaining intellectual independence and resisting manipulation.

The structure of information and media competence can be viewed as an integrated system of knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values that function together in educational and professional activities. Knowledge includes understanding information systems, media structures, communication processes, digital technologies, and evaluation criteria for information reliability. Individuals should possess theoretical awareness of how information is produced, distributed, and consumed in society.Knowledge also involves understanding the social, cultural, political, and economic influence of media. This awareness allows individuals to interpret media content within broader societal contexts.

Skills represent practical abilities related to searching, selecting, organizing, evaluating, creating, and communicating information. These skills include digital navigation, online research, multimedia production, communication, collaboration, and problem-solving. Modern education increasingly emphasizes practical competence because learners need not only theoretical understanding but also the ability to apply information effectively in real-life situations. Attitudes involve openness to learning, curiosity, responsibility, ethical awareness, and critical reflection. Positive attitudes encourage lifelong learning and adaptability to technological change. Individuals with developed information and media competence demonstrate intellectual independence, tolerance toward diverse perspectives, and willingness to engage responsibly in digital environments. Values reflect ethical principles, democratic participation, respect for truth, and social responsibility. Media and information competence supports values

such as transparency, fairness, respect for diversity, and responsible communication. Educational institutions play a vital role in fostering these values because competence development is not limited to technical proficiency but also includes moral and civic education.

Information and media competence has become a strategic priority in modern education. Educational institutions are expected to prepare learners for effective participation in knowledge-based societies. Consequently, curricula increasingly incorporate digital literacy, media analysis, and information evaluation skills. In higher education, information and media competence contributes to academic success, independent research, and professional development. University students must be able to locate scholarly sources, evaluate evidence, and communicate research findings effectively. Foreign language education also benefits significantly from information and media competence. Digital technologies provide learners with authentic materials, multimedia resources, online communication opportunities, and collaborative learning environments. Teachers can use media tools to enhance listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills while simultaneously developing critical thinking and intercultural competence. Furthermore, information and media competence supports lifelong learning because individuals continuously interact with evolving technologies and information systems. The ability to learn independently and adapt to new digital environments is essential for professional competitiveness and social integration.

Despite its importance, the development of information and media competence faces several challenges. One major issue is unequal access to digital technologies and educational resources. The digital divide limits opportunities for learners in disadvantaged communities. Another challenge involves misinformation and fake news. The rapid spread of false information through social media complicates the process of evaluating source credibility. Many learners struggle to distinguish reliable information from manipulative or biased content. Teachers also require professional training to integrate media and information literacy effectively into educational practice. In some educational systems, insufficient technological infrastructure and limited methodological support hinder competence development. Moreover, excessive dependence on digital technologies may negatively affect concentration, deep reading, and face-to-face communication. Therefore, educational approaches should balance technological integration with critical and reflective learning practices.

Information and media competence represents a crucial competency in contemporary society and education. The expansion of digital technologies and global communication has transformed the ways individuals access, analyze, and share information. Consequently, learners must develop not only technical abilities but also critical thinking, ethical awareness, communication skills, and responsible digital behavior. The analysis demonstrates that information and media competence is a

multidimensional construct consisting of cognitive, technological, communicative, ethical, and critical components. Its structure includes knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values that collectively enable effective participation in digital and information-rich environments. Educational institutions play a key role in developing information and media competence through learner-centered methodologies, digital technologies, and critical pedagogical approaches. Integrating these competencies into curricula contributes to academic achievement, professional readiness, democratic participation, and lifelong learning. In conclusion, information and media competence should be considered an essential element of modern education and human development. Strengthening this competence will help individuals navigate complex information environments responsibly, critically, and effectively in the rapidly evolving digital world.

References:

Association of College and Research Libraries. (2016). *Framework for information literacy for higher education*. American Library Association.

Gilster, P. (1997). *Digital literacy*. Wiley Computer Publishing.

Hobbs, R. (2017). *Create to learn: Introduction to digital literacy*. Wiley-Blackwell.

Potter, W. J. (2018). *Media literacy* (9th ed.). SAGE Publications.

UNESCO. (2018). *Media and information literacy: Policy and strategy guidelines*. UNESCO Publishing.

UNESCO. (2021). *Media and information literate citizens: Think critically, click wisely*. UNESCO Publishing.

Zurkowski, P. G. (1974). *The information service environment relationships and priorities*. National Commission on Libraries and Information Science.