

# *The impact of online social communication on the training of social workers and educators (Ukrainian universities)*

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**Abstract.** With the growing need to revise approaches to the educational process, educational institutions are increasingly turning to the digital opportunities and needs of the modern society. By closely monitoring the trends in the use of ICTs, engaging in various pilot projects for Ukraine to ensure digital literacy, develop digital competence, and use of Web 2.0 and VR social media, educational institutions are increasing their presence in the digital space of the Internet. From our point of view, this is a good basis for the declared changes in the educational paradigm at all levels of the educational process, including the training of specialists who will ensure the social, economic and cultural growth of the nation in the future. That is why it was important for us to study the theoretical database of scientific, research and pedagogical literature on the use of social media for education; compare the challenges mentioned in global trends in the use of social media and in Ukrainian practice; compare the *presence* and interaction of universities in social media with their *value* in the market of professional training of specialists, in particular, social and pedagogical profile. Based on the analysis of the above components, we have drawn conclusions about the challenges facing the Ukrainian higher education system, their root causes, and presented a number of tips and solutions that will allow universities to achieve not only a *presence* in the network, but also to be competitive both in the national environment and in the international arena.

**Keywords:** higher education, social communication, social networks, teacher training, training of social workers.

## I. INTRODUCTION

*Nation needs information.*

*Pryamy TV channel*

It is impossible to imagine the society of the 20s of the XXI century without technology and its inherent solutions in all sectors of human life. And the more we immerse ourselves in technology, use ICT, virtual and augmented reality, artificial intelligence and improve information search algorithms, the more it affects the individual and his or her professional self-determination. The impact occurs at all levels of social interaction and in all age groups of society. From infants to people of the third age. Of course, the level of well-being in a particular territorial community should be taken into account in this aspect.

However, the main message of our scientific research is that the world is changing and changes lead to new forms of communication, which in turn affects social *media and information migration* and the need for rethinking and professional reset of certain fields of science, training in accordance with the current challenges and needs of both society and the individual who wants to realise his or her potential in social interaction.

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This process of professional reset, in our opinion, concerns primarily social workers and educators, in particular the process of their training. After all, the psychology of the modern personality is changing in the process of cognition, which is associated with the free flow of information on the Internet and open, partially or completely anonymous communication in social networks, messengers, etc. Although the question of absolute anonymity may be rather questionable, based on the arguments of Dimans and Kotler that Internet companies *are already in your home, working with artificial intelligence and have long been experts in collecting and analysing your data* [1].

## II. MATERIALS AND METHODS

In our opinion, one of the main stages in the training of specialists, as in previous years, is advertising. It means the presentation and dissemination of information that would help attract young people to professions such as teachers or social workers. And in this case, social networks are becoming the most adequate advertising platform in modern conditions. After all, any post goes viral and multiplies and reproduces challenges, comments, emoticons, etc. And this, of course, increases the recognition of the profession, educational institution, individuals and their professional qualities.

That is why the topic of the impact of social communication and the Internet on the training of social and pedagogical staff is important. And in this review, we will turn to data analysis and comparison:

- In particular, at the first stage, we analysed the trends of international and Ukrainian research in the field of social communication and their impact on the educational process.
- Next, based on the analysis of the ranking lists of Ukrainian universities, we identified the top three leaders according to the overall ranking [2] and the ranking of pedagogical universities [3] that train teachers and social workers in Ukraine in 2023. We also added Vinnytsia Mykhailo Kotsiubynskyi State Pedagogical University (VSPU) to this list, and thus obtained a list of seven higher education institutions in Ukraine (Table 1), which we tracked and analysed in real time.
- In the third stage, we analysed the presence of the universities we selected in the most popular social networks in Ukraine (Facebook, YouTube, TikTok, Instagram) and analysed the most popular educational institutions based on hashtags, depending on the number of mentions, and then compared these figures with official rankings.

Below we present the results of our research, conclusions and challenges, which, in our opinion, are facing universities in the context of information accessibility and social communication online.

TABLE 1 A SAMPLE OF UNIVERSITY RANKING INDICATORS

№	University	Location	General rating	Pedagogical rating
1	Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv	Kyiv, Kyiv region	1	-
2	Ivan Franko National University of Lviv	Lviv, Lviv region	2	-
3	National University Lviv Polytechnic	Lviv, Lviv region	3	-
4	Ternopil Volodymyr Hnatiuk National Pedagogical University	Ternopil, Ternopil region	60	1
5	National Pedagogical Dragomanov University	Kyiv, Kyiv region	66	2
6	Ivan Franko Drohobych State Pedagogical University	Drohobych, Lviv region	67	3
7	Vinnytsia Mykhailo Kotsiubynskyi State Pedagogical University	Vinnytsia, Vinnytsia region	79	5

## III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Turning to the first point of our study, we have conducted a brief review of freely available materials that present research on social communication and the Internet.

Most of the studies that are currently being covered by scholars focus on positive trends, summarising progress in a particular field due to the expansion of online education opportunities. However, with the global shift to online communications during Covid-19, public communication has included processes that we cannot and should not ignore.

In particular, we should not ignore three main disadvantages: blurring the line between personal and working time; decreased personal productivity; and increased cases of professional burnout (as we have written about in our other works). It is also worth noting that researchers have identified the following negative aspects of social media and the Internet, such as anxiety, stress, depressive disorders and other health problems in case of disproportionate use, setting unrealistic expectations that lead to stressful situations, and also among the disadvantages of use are brainwashing, absorption of fake news, breakdown of marriages, trolling, cyberbullying, violation of privacy, online witch hunts and wasting time; low digital literacy is associated with low motivation to use new ICT-based tools [4], [5]. As a result of this reloading, inclusion in a permanent digital presence, lifestyle and learning changes, skills and competences required in the knowledge society are also undergoing significant changes. After all, in order to cope with the information overload of the digital age, students (should) apply learning strategies that involve searching, sifting, managing, re-combining, verifying and contextualising information based on such cross-cutting skills as reflection, criticism, evaluation on the one hand; collaboration and communication on the other and the third side of the cross-cutting skills is innovation, creativity, and the ability to learn [4].

Of course, these are the theses that a teacher should learn for himself or herself, planning activities taking into account the individual characteristics of the younger generation that has grown up surrounded by digital media, demonstrates significantly different learning styles from previous cohorts, because they are those who are able to

control different sources of digital information simultaneously [5].

In addition, having analysed the scientific literature on this topic as part of our research, we found it interesting that for the European scientific space, for scientific institutions participating in international projects, studies of the impact of social media on processes in both the economy and education are quite common. However, if we look at the Ukrainian experience, it was only after the introduction of quarantine restrictions in 19 that scientists and academic staff began to study the issue of interaction with the audience through messengers. However, there are no significant national studies that would contribute to the development of a comprehensive action plan for PR companies and the dissemination of best practices of educational institutions (practices of innovative teachers, open lectures on television, information about projects involving not only Kyiv universities and state-funded projects, etc.) This, in turn, would help reduce the level of *inferiority* of Ukrainian citizens, raise the status of education, and reduce the outflow of young people from Ukraine (including scientists, researchers, developers, designers, etc.). In addition, the lack of a clear policy of the institutions themselves, as we will discuss below, regarding participation in the information space of social networks, giving priority to platforms used by teachers and avoiding interaction with youth also creates a vacuum of information for analysing the market of applicants and students.

In terms of thesis, eight years ago, researchers noted that teachers do not sufficiently prepare future teachers to use social media, and that despite the potential of social media for collaboration, teachers do not use them enough, thus losing many opportunities [6]. We partially confirmed this by interacting directly with groups of students through discussions of proposed creative works, interviews and questionnaires about their activity on social media. We were able to extract even more information by analysing the most used social networks for information about the universities identified for our study.

Thus, we have already presented in Table 1 the selected universities for the analysis of their presence. The selection algorithm was also described in the previous section. Therefore, we move on to the last question of our work on analysing the presence of these higher education institutions in the network.

For this purpose, we chose a simple algorithm for searching for information using hashtags, as this is a common way to create thematic areas for searching for information on the entire Internet.

The information search algorithm had the following steps:

1. on Facebook pages, we entered the full name of the university into the search feed. For example:  
*Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv.*  
This step was the first one, because according to the existing proposal, most of the university teaching staff belong to Generation X, some to Baby Boomers and another to Millennials (according to the distribution

by year of birth proposed in the field of social sciences [7]). Therefore, we easily found the official pages of universities, their individual structural units, and unofficial pages of students and alumni. In addition, this step gave us indirect information about the quality of information policy and its comprehensiveness.

2. Based on the results obtained for each institution, we received official and student publications that create a scientific, practical, creative, and research image of the university. That is, publications about the university's scientific achievements, conferences and events organised at the university, etc.

It is worth noting that this step gave us indirect information about the level of computer skills of the university's *representation* on Facebook. This may not be a significant point for our study, but it gives us an idea of why the information policy of the institution lacks comprehensiveness and innovation.

So, to return to the step above, we identified official publications and scanned them for hashtags, which helped us in our further work with other social networks and platforms.

3. Then, based on the *first* hashtag, we *walked* all four previously mentioned networks - Facebook, YouTube, TikTok, Instagram. Additionally, we used the Hashtags that arose in the process of searching for information from the results.

For example, using the example of VDPU, we took the most common hashtag #ВДПУ (corresponding to the abbreviation of the institution) and received the total number of posts on Facebook (12,000 posts), in addition to other variations of the main hashtag. For VDPU, it was #вдпу\_ім\_м\_коцюбинського. The second hashtag was not widely used, so it did not reflect the number of posts, and since it corresponded to the posts included in the posts under the first hashtag according to the preliminary visual analysis, we did not include it in the sample on this platform. While for the next step of our algorithm for analysing the university's presence on the Internet, the second hashtag was more widespread, in particular on TikTok and Instagram.

The same algorithm was used for the other six universities.

4. For the reliability of the results. We repeated all steps 1 to 3 with the search for results in English. For this purpose, the name of each institution was copied from the official web pages. This step allowed us to expand the scope of searching for information by hashtags on social media. It is also worth noting that this step had a root cause. Some of the short hashtags in Ukrainian provided information about Russian-language educational institutions. This was due to the use of abbreviations as hashtags without additional markings that could have corrected the difficulties in the search and database formation.
5. Thus, as a result of processing the information by hashtags, we received a number of repetitive materials and chose quantitative indicators as the basis for our analysis. After all, in the case of a qualitative analysis, taking into account the level of

publication (public relations office, structural unit, teacher, student; scientific, creative, volunteer, etc. event; direct, targeted or indirect advertising); its relevance to the subject of our research; its relevance to the topic of our research, its scientific nature or personal information, we should use appropriate software tools for simultaneous screening to obtain reliable data. Or make a request to the official representatives of social networks and wait for a response in accordance with the protocols of interaction with open/closed data. After all, the data is updated every few minutes, the number of publications increases, and this will affect the analytics of qualitative data more than the statistics of quantity.

The results of the analysis of the number of publications are presented in Table 2. In addition, the results of this study show that most students use social media and its tools themselves, with Facebook being the most popular social network for interacting with educational institutions. While the other three are used for personal purposes and show no signs of strategic communication with the public to expand the university's influence and audience.

TABLE 2 A SAMPLE OF QUANTITATIVE INDICATORS OF POSTS BY SEVEN UNIVERSITIES IN FOUR SOCIAL NETWORKS (FACEBOOK, YOUTUBE, TIKTOK, INSTAGRAM; REQUEST FROM JANUARY 2024)

№	University	TikTok (M)	Instagram (K)	YouTube (video)	Facebook (K)
1	Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv	85,7	47,7	215	23
2	Ivan Franko National University of Lviv	66,4	18,9	695	22
3	Lviv Polytechnic National University	37,5	5,2	318	2,6
4	Ternopil Volodymyr Hnatiuk National Pedagogical University	22	2,6	596	2
5	National Pedagogical Dragomanov University	5,2	1,9	35	1,6
6	Drohobych Ivan Franko State Pedagogical University	1,7	0,7	166	1
7	Vinnitsia Mykhailo Kotsiubynskyi State Pedagogical University	2,9	5,1	75	12

Of course, the presented here is only a part of the "iceberg" of social communication and its influence on the choice of a university, its position in official rankings and the OWS-system (one woman said). Of course, the second thesis is a joke, but today personal communication is still a priority for choosing the best educational institution in Ukrainian society - this is the first thing. And secondly, in the modern world, personal communication has migrated to the Internet environment within social networks, platforms and, of course, messengers (we do not touch on

them in our research because this is a completely different topic with its own principles and patterns of functioning).

After comparing the ranking indexes with the indicators of the institutions' presence on social media, we can conclude that TikTok's indexes coincide with the official lists, while other indicators are very different. Of course, we conducted an additional analysis of the number of students according to the licensed volumes according to official data [8], which is presented in Table 3.

And based on a comparison of the number of applicants in the last four years, we can see that when we converted all the indicators into a rating system from 1 to 7, we found the arithmetic mean for each of the identified educational institutions. all the indicators into a rating system from 1 to 7, we found the arithmetic mean for each of the identified educational institutions. Thus, there have been no significant changes among the first five positions in the ranking we have chosen. Although the gap between the third and fourth places is significant (2,3 points), all five institutions remained in their positions in the ranking. While the last two changed positions.

TABLE 3 LICENSED VOLUMES OF HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS ACCORDING TO OFFICIAL DATA FROM THE PLATFORM VSTUP.OSVITA.UA

№	University	2020	2021	2022	2023
1	Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv	18082	18489	16822	16211
2	Ivan Franko National University of Lviv	18177	17837	18113	19134
3	Lviv Polytechnic National University	32224	30307	37007	38739
4	Ternopil Volodymyr Hnatiuk National Pedagogical University	7941	6275	5795	6510
5	National Pedagogical Dragomanov University	11767	11558	12829	*
6	Drohobych Ivan Franko State Pedagogical University	3985	3574	5052	4660
7	Vinnitsia Mykhailo Kotsiubynskyi State Pedagogical University	6012	6013	4883	4981

\* - данні відсутні у зв'язку зі змінами юридичного статусу закладу

Of course, we did not conduct an additional analysis of the number of subscribers, the presence of an official page and side pages, the activity of community members (comments, likes) or the number of views of the institution's videos. This, of course, can be the basis for a deeper analysis and research that will allow educational institutions to look at the problem of a high-quality information policy and a well-thought-out PR campaign. But most importantly, we have drawn attention to the equivalence and impact of the use of the relevant strategy on the visibility of the educational institution, which in the

near future can significantly increase or decrease the number of applicants and the scientific potential in general.

And in this aspect, we agree with the need for flexibility of the education system and its *response* to the demand of the information society, which is *to introduce social computing tools in higher education, such as:*

- *an institutional tool, replacing or extending the virtual learning environment (VLE);*
- *a communication tool among students and between students and teachers, supporting also the exchange of knowledge and material, but mainly creating an environment of understanding and assistance;*
- *a methodological or didactic tool within certain disciplines, courses and classes, with a focus on improving, facilitating and enhancing knowledge acquisition [9].*

This will entail the need to address the issues of integrating Web 2.0 tools into the educational process, making them publicly available or for internal use only; *whether to make activities student or staff led; and, how the use of SC tools will affect learning and teaching [9].*

#### IV. CONCLUSIONS

To summarise the results of our research, we analysed the impact of social communication on the Internet on the training of social workers and teachers on the example of seven universities in Ukraine. The conclusions drawn are almost identical to those of the official ranking and the data we obtained (in terms of average indicators).

Of course, among the discussion issues, we can single out the issue of relevance of the information that students post on social media with hashtags and in official groups that involve or can be joined by teachers, employers, etc. And the information that future specialists produce in personal communication, which is not subject to publication and dissemination. This is the side that will remain as long as society and social connections exist, like the 25th frame in a film.

It is also debatable that today there is a technological and educational transformation, involving artificial intelligence, materials presented by a *"talking head"* and visualised through various applications.

This change in the concept of education makes it necessary to rethink teaching approaches and provide a qualitative explanation of why it is necessary to know certain subjects, laws, etc. for the teacher or social worker profession. Although, in some cases, young professionals start producing content like this themselves through TikTok: *"Why didn't we learn this?", "We could use it!"*. We will discuss this in our next publications. And this is also part of the influence of social media on the choice of profession or advanced training courses.

But, among the main conclusions we can draw today within the framework of the outlined aspects of the study is the following:

- Social media have a significant impact on the choice of educational institution.

- Publications for social communication have an almost instantaneous reaction of the audience to certain events in the educational institution. Moreover, the lower the university's ranking in the general lists, the less reactions there are at the national level. Also, the number of reactions and the *power of influence* of social communication on the *politics* of an educational institution depends on the location.

It is also worth noting that the location of an educational institution may also gradually lose importance with the transition to the digital world, because today in Ukraine the choice of universities in the capital and cities close to the EU is more related to transport links, opportunities for further employment and the amount of resources that come to the educational institution from various sources, while less significant regions have fewer such resources and *goodies* for a wide audience. This will not matter at all with the transition to cloud technologies and online audiences. Especially if we can use virtual and augmented reality services or at least 3D technologies in preparation for our future professional activities.

In addition, the blurring of borders and globalisation in the educational space can and should lead to the fact that an applicant from anywhere in the world will be able to choose where to study to teach.

Thus, the main message that should be understood and picked up, in our opinion, is that in the digital world, every educational institution, as well as a financial institution or government organisation, must develop a strategy for digital interaction with participants in the educational process.

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