

THE TRANSFORMATION OF MEDIA STUDIES IN LITHUANIA

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Abstract

Media Studies definition is complicated by the different media concepts in the areas of technology, communication and arts. To understand media as studies in higher education we need to deal with issues such as current implementation of relevant study programmes and the direction of changes. This paper is the second in a series. The first one *The Realization of Media Studies in Lithuania* [7] has analysed the perception of media from the prospect of higher education studies. This paper continues to examine the area of media studies in Lithuania.

Keywords: *media, higher education, study field.*

Introduction

Media studies in the Anglo-Saxon tradition are identified as continuation of cultural studies, while in the German tradition media studies are inferred from communication sciences with focus on philosophy and media interaction. Representatives of Sciences are more concerned for the technological nature of the media, while representatives of Social study area are more interested in media intervention at social space and media effects on humans. The artists use media as a tool of art (photography, video, audio, computer graphics technology). Concept of media can be interpreted very broadly – from the physical and technological definition (media as a data carrier/medium – paper, CD-ROM, etc.) to completely abstract definition when media is perceived as a whole set of communication (the system of sender-recipient). An examination of recent approaches reveals for us that media is not the same as technology or communication or art. We support the notion of media as use of technologies for communication or expression [4, 6, and 5].

The academic world is trying to achieve an agreement on *Media* as the structure of academic research and studies. *Media* is not an academic discipline such as *Physics*, where a person studies certain subjects of *Physics* and acquires a certain profession/qualification *Physicists*, and enhances sci-

entific knowledge. Thereby, the science, studies and profession are identical in substance. Concerning *Media* – it differs, therefore, there is an increasing number of discussions on the new discipline *Media science* (*Medienwissenschaften*), the discipline that should define the nature of media knowledge.

In Lithuania there is no unanimous opinion on *Media studies and science* [6]. While analysing national legislation on classification of fields of sciences one will not find Media Science in this classification. However, previous¹ and actual² national legislation on classification of study fields and branches mentioned Media. The legal act which is in force now includes Media term only once – study field Media art in the Arts, while previous classification of study fields and branches mentioned Media twice – in Communication field (Media Studies) and Arts field (Photography and Media studies). Therefore some reasonable questions might be possessed – what is the current situation with media studies and what direction they are moving?

Methods

Considering the conditions and the goal of the study, we decided to choose an exploratory approach that would allow us to study the manifestation of Media studies in higher education in Lithuania.

Concept of Media studies

Media – is a synthesis of different disciplines. On the basis of epistemological proximity, disciplines cluster into groups (or knowledge subsystems) such as: the natural sciences (e.g. physics, chemistry, biology), the social sciences (e.g. psychology, sociology, economics), the humanities (e.g. languages, music, visual arts), among others [2]. The different aspects of media phenomenon preoccupy representatives of different academic disciplines. It should be noted that they are pursuing their own objectives of certain academic level and area, but with parallel impact in one way or another on the other academic areas and fields, thus affecting the whole system of studies.

Disciplines can be represented as a geographical map of the world (map of disciplines). States may be near each other, while others – far from each other. They can be separated by mountains, rivers and even oceans. This

1 The list of study fields and study branches (Order of Minister Nr. V-222 on 19th February 2010) indicates Media twice – as Media studies (P910) included in the Communication field (P900) or Media Art (W630) included in the field of Photography and media (W600);

2 The list of study fields and groups of study fields (Order of Minister Nr. V-1075 on 1st December 2016) indicates Media only once – as Media arts (P07) included in the Arts group of study fields (P).

comparison is used to illustrate the convergence and divergence of disciplines [1]. Convergence and divergence processes are exactly where disciplinary boundaries meet [3], for example, an empirical methodology of science can be applied to the social disciplines. Limits of the disciplines are similar to physical walls of territories, however, they need to be understood as certain social interaction products. Converging disciplines might mingle thus creating a new discipline such as Bioinformatics (the discipline resulting from interoperability and synergies of computer science, molecular biology and biochemistry).

Media concept forming disciplines may diverge (or have weak inter-relations) or converge (or be replenished with new disciplines that lead to new inter-relations). Separate areas of science and studies are not able to provide solutions for the global problems of society as such problems require a holistic and integrated approach [3]. Harmonious interaction of scientific areas allows the media field (with regard to profession and academics) to be a viable existing by producing and ensuring high quality of education and training of media professionals.

Without loss of any essential features we might define a simplified and generalized view of reality as an abstract model of media studies. Such model allows to understand the phenomenon of media studies and to define the disciplines constituting the structure of the media, to analyse their interactions and mutual impact, to find out how media study system responds to internal and external stimuli.

Internal stimuli are considered as the behaviour of the system - how well it works, how to find problems solutions and how to improve the system. The analysis of external stimuli enables monitoring of the system behavioural changes over time; as well it allows predicting the future behaviour of the system and its impact on the development of society.

At the abstract level fields of studies are equivalent – the structure of academic media consists of the same level elements or disciplines. When the system consists of elements of different levels, a lower-level element makes less impact that is not decisive at given point in time due to possible delay. However, even a minor impact on system's behaviour might change external behaviour, which accordingly might affect the given system (feedback).

However, disciplines are not just abstract structures. The British higher education anthropologist Becher [1] in his theory of academic cultures claimed that disciplines can be defined as knowledge structures, which create different cultures in social life. High consensus and strong paradigm development tend to characterize the physical sciences. Lower consensus and

weaker paradigm development characterize the social sciences; and lowest consensus and paradigm development characterize the humanities.

These are areas where media studies move in different directions. In Arts media used only as a tool to achieve the objectives or get the result. Therefore, these studies acquires very strong applied character. Media in Technologies field are studied as the basic knowledge thus acquiring character of fundamentality. Even though Media as an Arts studies are explicitly welcomed in Lithuania, we consider it as studies with very narrow areas of professional specialization (e.g. Bachelor/Master of Design or Media and Photography). Knowledges acquired in the area of Technologies allow to obtain Professional Bachelor/Bachelor of Informatics Engineering or IT technologies that might enable a person to continue studies in other fields (or to practise the profession) thus providing more stable framework for the specialist.

Media studies in Lithuania universities and colleges

Media studies in Lithuania are provided by higher education institutions. Universities and colleges implement study programmes related to the media and award degrees/qualifications according the rules founded in statutory law. In some cases, the media are reflected in the programme's title, sometimes – in the qualification awarded. Information on the Study programmes related to media studies is provided in the table below.

While searching in AIKOS (the database that is managed by Ministry of Education and Science) we might assume that there are 27 study programmes that cover media subject matter – 9 programmes leading to the professional bachelor degree, 13 to the university bachelor degree and 5 to the master's degree³. The scope of the programmes varies depending on the cycle and type. The first cycle programmes in colleges and universities are covering accordingly 180 and 240 ECTS credits, while the scope of the second cycle programmes is 120 ECTS credits.

Note, that media related study programmes are currently falling within various study areas⁴ (physical sciences (2 programmes), technological sciences (8 programmes), social sciences (1 programme), arts (13 programmes), humanities (3 programmes)) and 14 study fields (see Table below).

3 We analysed programmes that were placed in AIKOS up to 1st March 2017

4 No study areas since 2017. Implementation of the new legislation starts with re-coding the programmes for admission procedure 2017/2018.

3Table. Media study programmes in Lithuania Higher Education institutions*

| Study area | Title of study programme | Qualification degree | Institution |
|---------------------|--------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|
| Physics sciences | Media and computer games 2016 (new programme) | Professional Bachelor of Applied Informatics | Vilnius Business College |
| | Applied programming and Multimedia | Professional Bachelor in Programming | College of Social sciences |
| Technology sciences | Internet and Multimedia technologies | Bachelor in Information Technologies | Lithuanian University of Education Sciences |
| | Multimedia, Design and Publishing technology | Professional Bachelor of the Informatics Engineering | Alytus College |
| | Multimedia technology | Professional Bachelor of the Informatics Engineering | Kaunas College |
| | Multimedia technology | Professional Bachelor of the Informatics Engineering | North Lithuania College, Public Institution |
| | Multimedia technologies | Professional Bachelor in Information Technologies | Šiauliai State College |
| | Multimedia technology | Bachelor in Information Technologies | Kaunas Technology University |
| | Multimedia and Design | Bachelor of the Informatics Engineering | Vilnius Gediminas Technical University |
| | Multimedia and Internet technologies | Bachelor of Informatics Engineering | Vytautas Magnus University |

| Study area | Title of study programme | Qualification degree | Institution |
|-----------------|-------------------------------|------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|
| Arts | Audiovisual Production | Professional Bachelor of Audiovisual Art | College of Social Sciences |
| | Interactive design | Professional Bachelor of Multimedia Arts | Vilnius College of Technologies and Design |
| | Multimedia Design | Professional Bachelor of Multimedia Arts | Vilnius College of Technologies and Design |
| | Animation | Bachelor of photography and media | Vilnius Academy of Fine Arts |
| | Photography and media arts | Bachelor of photography and media | Vilnius Academy of Fine Arts |
| | Media and visual design | Bachelor of Design | European University of Humanities |
| | New Media Art | Bachelor of Media Arts | Vytautas Magnus University |
| | Film and Media Scenography | Bachelor of Fine Arts | Vilnius Academy of Fine Arts |
| | Visual Design | Master of Design | Vilnius Academy of Fine Arts (Klaipėda faculty) |
| | Arts of visual communication | Bachelor of Arts | Šiauliai university |
| | Audio and visual arts | Bachelor of photography and media | Šiauliai University |
| | Visual arts | Master of Arts | Lithuanian university of Education Sciences |
| | Photography and media artss | Master of Photography and Media | Vilnius Academy of Fine Arts |
| Social sciences | Journalism and Media Analysis | Master of journalism | Vytautas Magnus University |

| Study area | Title of study programme | Qualification degree | Institution |
|------------|---------------------------------|-----------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Humanities | Philosophy of Culture and Media | Bachelor of Philosophy of Culture | Klaipėda University |
| | Media Philosophy | Bachelor of Philosophy | Kaunas Technology University |
| | Media linguistic | Master of Humanities | Vilnius University |
| | 2017 (new programme) | | |

*based on information provided in AIKOS database

Each field in the area has its requirements defined by the descriptor of the field. Currently media studies as such should reflect requirements of 14 study fields. In a few years when the newly adopted classification will be put into effect, the only study field that refers to *Media* should be Media Art (P07). All study programmes registered in this study field will follow its requirements only and will award degrees of Arts (Professional bachelor of arts, Bachelor of arts and Master of arts).

The new classification of study fields does not allow to have study field “Informatics engineering” under the “Technologies” as this group of study fields now is including only natural resources, polymer and textile materials, marine technology, biotechnology, food technology, catering.

We do not have recent and reliable information on intentions of universities and colleges to assign media study programmes to certain study fields.

We might assume that most of the programmes would prefer to stay in the current study field – e.g. it’s difficult to envisage the study programme *Applied programming and multimedia* (that awards for their graduates Professional bachelor in Programming) or *Multimedia and design* (providing the degree of Bachelor of Informatics Engineering) moving to Arts study fields group and starting to award Professional bachelor of Arts or Bachelor of Arts. We predict that most current study programmes (in Applied informatics, programming, IT and Informatics engineering fields (in total - 12) and Multimedia arts, Audio visual arts, Design, etc., (13) might be re-registered in the field of Informatics sciences (providing Professional bachelor, Bachelor or Master of Informatics sciences) and Arts (providing Professional bachelor, Bachelor or Master of Arts).

Obviously, the new classification will require the new descriptors of study fields and study fields groups, thus predicting huge efforts in developing it for the academic community.

Conclusions

Recently adopted classification of study fields will reduce significantly number of types of degree acquired in media studies. Two most numerous study fields are predicted - Informatics and Arts. It might be reasonably expected that study programmes that award their graduates Professional Bachelor/Bachelor degree in Informatics engineering will be relocated from the Technology area to Informatics study fields group and will start awarding degrees of Informatics sciences.

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