



**CHARACTERISTICS OF INFORMATION SUPPORT FOR STATE
POLICY IN THE FIELD OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN THE RUSSIAN
FEDERATION ON SOCIAL MEDIA**

***CARACTERÍSTICAS DO SUPORTE DE INFORMAÇÕES PARA A
POLÍTICA ESTATAL NO CAMPO DO ENSINO SUPERIOR NA
FEDERAÇÃO RUSSA NAS MÍDIAS SOCIAIS***

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ABSTRACT

Objective: The article presents an investigation into the implementation of information support for state policy in the field of higher education in the Russian Federation. The relevance of the problem is determined by the specificity of the powers imposed on state bodies, which have recently undergone a series of changes. The study aims to test the congruence between the responsibilities assigned to the Ministry of Science and Higher Education of the Russian Federation (as a key player in this policy) and the information policy it carries out.

Method: The research method includes a content analysis of materials posted on the main media resources of the Ministry.

Results and Conclusion: The conducted content analysis shows that the information support of state policy in the field of higher education in the Russian Federation on social media carried out by the Ministry as the key subject partially corresponds to the assigned responsibilities. However, the content posted can only indicate formal management of social networks without recognition of their social significance. Therefore, while the Ministry's presence in the social media landscape aligns with its responsibilities, the content it shares could be seen as lacking in substantial social impact.

Keywords: Blog; Communication tools; Communication channels; Ministry of Science and Higher Education of the Russian Federation; social media.

RESUMO

Objetivo: O artigo apresenta uma investigação sobre a implementação do suporte de informações para a política estatal no campo do ensino superior na Federação Russa. A relevância do problema é determinada pela especificidade dos poderes impostos aos





órgãos estatais, que passaram recentemente por uma série de mudanças. O estudo tem como objetivo testar a congruência entre as responsabilidades atribuídas ao Ministério da Ciência e do Ensino Superior da Federação Russa (como um dos principais participantes dessa política) e a política de informação que ele executa.

Método: O método de pesquisa inclui uma análise de conteúdo de materiais publicados nos principais recursos de mídia do Ministério.

Resultados e conclusões: A análise de conteúdo conduzida mostra que o suporte de informações da política de estado no campo da educação superior na Federação Russa nas mídias sociais realizado pelo Ministério como o assunto principal corresponde parcialmente às responsabilidades atribuídas. No entanto, o conteúdo postado pode indicar apenas o gerenciamento formal das redes sociais sem o reconhecimento de sua importância social. Portanto, embora a presença do Ministério no cenário das mídias sociais esteja alinhada com suas responsabilidades, o conteúdo que ele compartilha pode ser visto como desprovido de impacto social substancial.

Palavras-chave: Blog; Ferramentas de comunicação; Canais de comunicação; Ministério da Ciência e Educação Superior da Federação Russa; Mídia social.

1 INTRODUCTION

Contemporary higher education has gone beyond the framework of purely professional education. As a social institution, higher education contributes to a person's personal growth and the formation of their individuality. Together with scientific research, it now constitutes an essential component of the cultural, socio-economic, and environmentally safe development of individuals, communities, and nations (Studopedia, 2022).

In Russia, the functions of the development and implementation of state policy in higher education are performed by the Ministry of Science and Higher Education of the Russian Federation. Given the emerging trends, the Ministry is charged with the task of transforming society – to take it beyond mere economic considerations and teach it to embrace the deeper aspects of morality and spirituality. This task involves close interaction with the target audience, including communicative interaction.

Under the Federal Law of February 9, 2009 No 8-FZ "On Providing Access to Information on the Activities of Government Bodies and Bodies of Local Self-Government" (as amended on December 1, 2022), public bodies, the Ministry being one of them, must maintain open information support for their activities that does not concern government or





other secrets protected by law. This support should rely on the principles of openness, accessibility, and reliability of the information on activities, the timeliness of its provision, and freedom of search, acquisition, transfer, and dissemination of information by any lawful means (State Duma of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation, 2009).

The channel for information distribution depends on the audience. When it comes to higher education, the audience for this public policy is vast, ranging from schoolchildren in search of professional self-determination to people of "the third age", for whom education is a resource for the preservation and development of social community and an opportunity to change the nature of their professional pursuits.

There are 127.6 million Internet users in Russia, which amounts to 88.2% of the country's total population (Churanov, 2023). According to a survey conducted by the Russian Public Opinion Research Center (VTsIOM), "Young people can be rightfully considered a digital generation: the share of Internet users in the 18-24 age group is 66% and in the 25-34 age group – 52% and there are almost no active television viewers among them: 0 and 1%, respectively". Yet the older generation actively uses the Internet as well. Among respondents aged 35-44, 34% use the Internet at least once a week, in contrast to watching television only once a month or less. Among people aged 45-59, the share of active Internet users is 19% (Table 1). Considering the active use of both the Internet and television, here the numbers among the audience of 25 and older are also high. Additionally, according to Mediascope's August 2022 analysis, users ages 12 to 65 and older spend between 1 and 6 hours a day online, and most of that time is spent on smartphones (3 to 6 hours) (Borozdina, 2022).

Therefore, we believe that communication with its audience using online tools is of relevance to the Ministry.

The use of online instruments by state bodies in covering their policies already has a legal foundation. Russia legislation, namely Article 8 of the Federal Law No. 149-FZ of July 27, 2006 "On Information, Information Technology, and Information Protection" (as amended on December 5, 2022) and Articles 6 and 10 of the Federal Law of February 9, 2009 No. 8-FZ "On Providing Access to Information on the Activities of Government Bodies and Bodies of Local Self-Government" (as amended on December 1, 2022), sets out the requirement to ensure that citizens are provided with accessible, open, and





transparent information about the activities of state bodies, including through the use of information and telecommunications networks, such as the Internet. However, it is necessary to establish what online tools are popular with every age to ensure that this communication is effective.

Table 1. Results of the VTsIOM poll on media consumption by Russians. Distribution of respondents' answers to the question "Do you watch TV or not? If so, how often do you watch it? Do you use the Internet? If yes, then how often?" (% of respondents; closed-ended question, one answer) (Russian Public Opinion Research Center (VTsIOM), 2022)

Respondents' answers	All respondents	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-59	Over 60
Active TV viewers – watch TV at least several times a week but use the Internet only a few times a month or less	16	0	1	3	13	43
Active TV and Internet users – watch TV and use the Internet at least several times a week	53	32	46	61	66	47
Active Internet users – use the Internet at least several times a week but watch TV only a few times a month or less	29	66	52	34	19	7
People hardly using TV and the Internet – watch TV and use the Internet once a month or less	2	2	1	2	2	3

Note: A total of 1,600 Russians over 18 took part in the survey. The survey method was a telephone interview using a stratified two-branch random sample of landline and mobile numbers. Date: September 19-25, 2022. For this sample, the maximum margin of error with a 95% probability does not exceed 2.5%.

The importance of social media as a communication channel continues to grow every year, despite the emergence of new trending methods, mechanics, and tools. According to a report by WeAreSocial and Meltwater, at the beginning of January 2023, there were 106 million social media users in the Russian Federation (73.3% of the total population). Overall, in January 2023, 83% of all Internet users in Russia (regardless of age) used at least one social networking platform. The most frequently used social networks in Russia are (in % of the total number of social network users): VKontakte — 75.3%, Telegram — 64.4%, and Odnoklassniki — 43.5% (Figure 1).

According to Decree No. 2523-r of September 2, 2022, "State bodies are required to create and maintain their official accounts in the social networks VKontakte and Odnoklassniki" (Government of the Russian Federation, 2022). This requirement came into force on December 1, 2022. Thus, we can also observe a rise in the trend for the





presence of public institutions in the social media space. In this connection, the present study focuses on the social networks used by the Ministry to provide informational support for their policies.

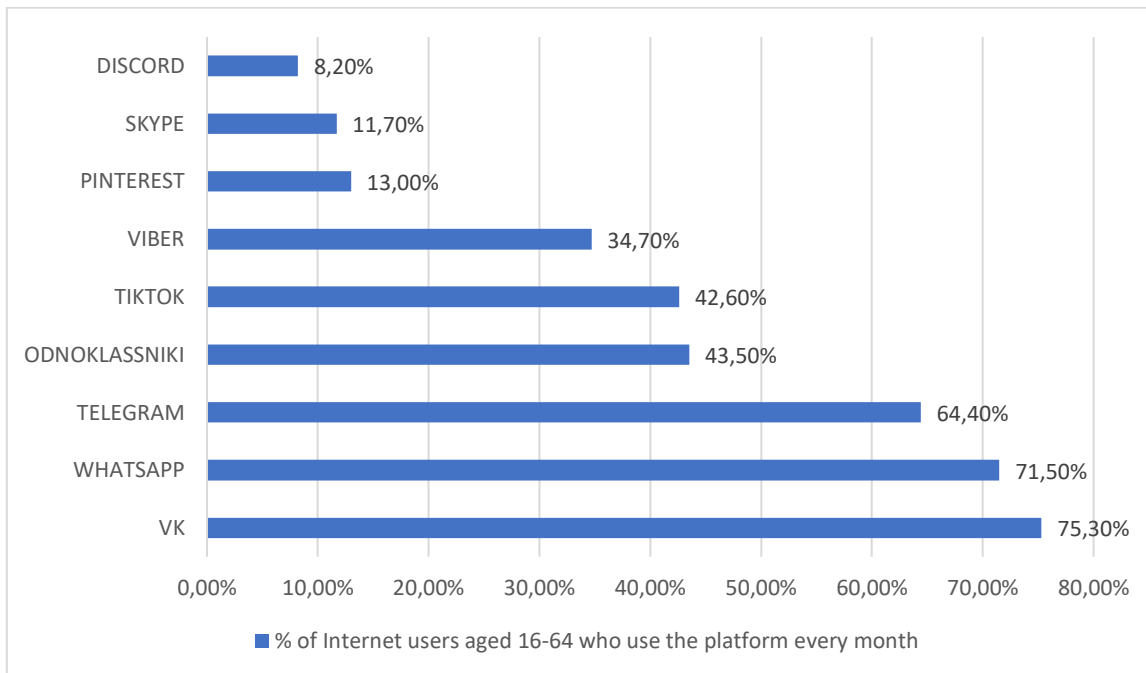


Figure 1. Statistics from WeAreSocial and Meltwater on social networks popular among Russian users (January 2023) (Churanov, 2023)

2 METHODS

According to the established structure of higher education in Russia, the primary actors of information policy are federal government bodies and state authorities of the constituent entities of Russia that exercise public administration in the field of education, as well as local self-government bodies and organizations engaged in educational activities. The Ministry of Science and Higher Education as the key subject sets the guidelines for educational policy. Therefore, to characterize information support for state policy in the sphere of higher education, we conducted a qualitative content analysis of the main social networks used by the Ministry. Based on the results of content analysis, the materials published were compared with the goals and powers vested in the Ministry to determine the consistency of the ongoing information policy.





3 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

To explore the information policy carried out by the Ministry of Science and Higher Education on social media, we study the content posted by the Ministry on the platforms VKontakte, Odnoklassniki, Telegram, and Dzen, where the state body is registered under the username "Minobrnauki Rossii". Given the recent decree stating the need to use social media, we focus on the period from December 2022 to January 2023.

General characteristics of the Ministry's communities on the considered platforms in the indicated period are given in Table 2.

Comparison criterion	Community on VKontakte	Community on Odnoklassniki	Telegram channel	Dzen channel
Year of creation	2018	2018	2020	2022
Number of subscribers (as of February 20, 2023)	61,375	18,748	45,534	15,300
Number of posts in December 2022 – January 2023	80	102	192	174
Types of content posted in December 2022 – January 2023	Text Photos Videos Links Articles Podcasts Reposts from other resources Vote	Text Links Videos Photos Podcasts Repost	Text Photos Videos Live broadcasts	Text Photos Videos Links Compilations
Opportunity for users to leave comments (as of February 20, 2023)	Available	Available	Comments turned off (emoji reactions available)	Available

Table 2. Characteristics of social media communities of the Ministry of Science and Education of the Russian Federation (Official Dzen channel, n.d.; Official Odnoklassniki community, n.d.; Official Telegram channel, n.d.; Official VKontakte community, n.d.)

In addition to the feed with posts, the community has a separate section for articles (detailed text with a high-quality layout and illustrations). During the studied period, the





Ministry posted 10 articles, although they were not original but fully duplicated the material posted on other electronic resources of the Ministry and the information in the VKontakte community feed. There appears to be no criterion for the selection of materials to be posted in this section. In addition, the community posts episodes of the Sila toka podcast, which discusses various issues in math, philology, contemporary art, the structure of the human brain, the popularization of science, and the development of education in the world. A total of six audio files have been published.

Same as on VKontakte, the Ministry's community on Odnoklassniki posts episodes of the Sila toka podcast, although fewer, four audio files in total, which examine the issues of the development of education in the modern world, humans' need for sleep, and what philology, bioethics, and socio-humanitarian expertise are.

Another platform gaining popularity among the Russian audience is Dzen, which is similar to social media (the monthly audience of Dzen in 2022 was 70 million (Kostereva, 2022)). This platform is also used by the Ministry as it has an official (verified) channel on it (Table 3).

Table 3. Statistics of publications in VKontakte, Odnoklassniki, Telegram, and Dzen communities by topics

Post topic	Number of posts			
	VKontakte	Odnoklassniki	Telegram	Dzen
Entertaining content for students (votes, challenges, contests, cases, compilations, articles from the youth magazine "NOS: Nauka, Obrazovanie, Studenchestvo" under the Ministry)	13	8	-	-
2nd Sirius Congress of Young Scientists in the Federal Territory	11	9	18	-
Support for research centers and studies (grants, scholarships, including those under the Priority 2030 program)	9	10	16	14
Scientific educational programs, competitions, national awards	9	5	13	6
Achievements of science (discoveries/developments of scientists, students, and university staff)	5	34	45	103
Construction/opening of research facilities (campuses)	5	5	7	8





Interviews with the Minister of Science and Higher Education V. Falkov, retreats, meetings	4	4	13	4
Scientific explanations of current phenomena	3	2	-	5
Announcements of upcoming events (meetings, lectures, workshops, press conferences, briefings)	3	3	7	-
Bills, laws	2	2	5	3
History of science	2	5	2	7
Upcoming scientific projects	2	4	12	12
Meeting summaries	1	1	7	1
Implementation of the Science and Universities national project	1	1	7	-
Reports of the Ministry, including the reports of universities	1	1	5	4
Professional guidance	1	1	-	2
Faces of Science project	1	-	-	-
Announcements of new appointments in the structure of higher education	-	-	9	-
Digest of the week's key events	-	-	7	-
Conferment of state awards	-	-	4	-
Meetings with President V.V. Putin on strategic development	-	-	3	-
Other	7	7	12	5

The obtained results suggest that the Ministry has the greatest number of publications on Telegram and Dzen.

According to the Public Declaration of Goals and Objectives, the goals of the Ministry for 2019-2024 are the development of the nation's intellectual potential, scientific, technical, and intellectual support of structural changes in the economy, effective organization and technological update of scientific, R&D, and innovation activities (Ministry of Science and Higher Education of the Russian Federation, 2019).

The first goal provides for activities to demonstrate and promote the achievements of science, identify talented young people, and attract world-class scientists. Judging by these criteria, the ongoing information policy corresponds to the set goal.

However, the powers of the Ministry also prescribe that, in cooperation with public organizations and movements representing the interests of young people, it creates conditions to ensure a healthy lifestyle, moral and patriotic education, and realization of professional opportunities, as well as develops requirements for personnel training based





on forecast about the needs of the labor market in the specified sphere of competence. Considering these criteria, there is a big gap in information support.

In addition to that, the information offered by the Ministry is not differentiated by age, while the younger generation could be informed about the importance and benefits of higher education and citizens of the third age could be encouraged to pursue lifelong learning.

4 CONCLUSION

The conducted content analysis demonstrates that information support for state policy in the field of higher education in Russia on social media, which is provided by the Ministry of Science and Higher Education as the key subject, is partially aligned with the powers vested in it. Because of the measures taken in the country, the policy has become more open, information channels popular among the population have started to be used, and the Ministry has picked up the trend of presence in the blogosphere. Nonetheless, the content posted speaks of formal management of the Ministry's social media without recognition of their social significance.

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