EXPLORING NEW MEDIA STUDENTS' ATTITUDES TOWARDS THEIR EDUCATION

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This study complies with research and publication ethics.

Abstract

Digitalisation has profoundly reshaped the education landscape, with the pervasive influence of communication technologies acting as a catalyst for these ongoing transformations. 'New Media', which emerged as a distinct academic discipline resulting from this transformation, is a phenomenon that continues to develop and evolve. This study, which was conducted using semi-structured in-depth interviews with 20 new media students from various public and foundation universities, explores their perspectives on new media education. The primary focus of this research is centred on students' experiences; however, it also seeks to contribute to the broader discourse surrounding new media education. From the perspective of new media students, the study's findings emphasise the need to develop a balanced curriculum that integrates theoretical knowledge with practical application, addresses technical training and equipment needs, categorises courses based on specific fields, and adapts swiftly to digital advancements. Participants noted inconsistencies in existing curricula across universities, which affect the overall quality of education. They recommended incorporating current industry practices and innovations into the curriculum to enhance theoretical and practical knowledge transfer. Moreover, the study offers recommendations from participants for a more standardised curriculum in new media education, as well as for the enhancement of collaboration between industry, academia, students, and fresh graduates. These suggestions aim to enhance the educational experience of new media students, better prepare them for the industry, and strengthen collaboration among all stakeholders in the field, thus significantly contributing to the ongoing discourse on new media education and providing data for future research.

Keywords: new media, digital media, theoretical courses, practical courses, new media curriculum.

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YENİ MEDYA ÖĞRENCİLERİNİN EĞİTİMLERİNE YÖNELİK TUTUMLARININ İNCELENMESİ

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Bu çalışma araştırma ve yayın etiğine uygun olarak gerçekleştirilmiştir.

Öz

Dijitalleşme, eğitim alanını büyük ölçüde yeniden şekillendirmiştir ve iletişim teknolojilerinin yaygın etkisi, bu süregelen dönüşümleri etkileyen faktör olmuştur. Bu dönüşümün sonuçlarından biri olarak ayrı bir akademik disiplin olarak ortaya çıkan 'Yeni Medya', gelişmeye ve evrilmeye devam eden bir olgudur. Bu çalışma, çeşitli devlet ve vakıf üniversitelerinden 20 yeni medya öğrencisiyle yapılan yarı yapılandırılmış derinlemesine görüşmeler aracılığıyla, öğrencilerin yeni medya eğitimi hakkındaki perspektiflerini incelemektedir. Bu araştırma öğrencilerin deneyimlerini yansıtmakla birlikte, aynı zamanda yeni medya eğitimi etrafındaki daha geniş tartışmalara katkı sağlamayı amaçlamaktadır. Yeni medya öğrencilerinin perspektifinden bakıldığında, çalışmanın bulguları, teorik bilgiyi pratik uygulamayla entegre eden, teknik eğitim ve ekipman ihtiyaçlarını ele alan, dersleri belirli alanlara göre sınıflandıran ve dijital ilerlemelere hızla yanıt veren dengeli bir müfredatın geliştirilmesine duyulan ihtiyacı vurgulamaktadır. Katılımcılar, mevcut müfredatların genellikle üniversiteler arasında tutarsızlık gösterdiğini ve bu durumun eğitim kalitesini etkilediğini belirtmiştir. Sektördeki güncel uygulamaların ve yeniliklerin müfredata entegrasyonunun, teorik ve pratik bilgi transferini güçlendireceğini önermişlerdir. Çalışma, katılımcıların, yeni medya eğitimi için daha standartlaşmış bir müfredatın yanı sıra sektör, akademi, öğrenciler ve yeni mezunlar arasında iş birliğinin artırılması gerektiğine dair önerilerini sunmaktadır. Bu öneriler, yeni medya öğrencilerinin eğitim deneyimlerini geliştirebilmeyi, öğrencileri sektöre daha iyi hazırlamayı ve alandaki tüm paydaşlar arasındaki iş birliğini güçlendirmeyi hedefleyerek, yeni medya eğitimi üzerine devam eden tartışmalara önemli bir katkı sağlamayı ve yapılacak diğer çalışmalar için veri sunmayı amaçlamaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: yeni medya, dijital medya, teorik dersler, uygulamalı dersler, yeni medya müfredatı.

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Introduction

New media increasingly replaced traditional forms of media as digital technologies advanced. However, the term 'new' and its meanings have become contentious in media studies (Levinson, 2013; Lievrouw & Livingsone, 2005; Lister et al., 2009; Manovich, 2002). While 'new media' is commonly used today to describe communication tools such as the internet, social media platforms, and digital content production, it is often criticised for oversimplifying the complex interplay between technology, culture, and society (Peters, 2009). In other words, new media is at times critically regarded as more powerful tools in shaping society. In contrast, on different occasions it is celebrated for its potential to enhance daily life and facilitate more effective interpersonal communication through technological evolution. These debates raise important questions regarding the clarity of the distinction between 'new' and 'old' media, and how these two forms of media mutually transform one another.

The term 'new media', first coined by Marshall McLuhan in 1950s and popularised in 1960s, originally referred to technological characteristics such as electronic information gathering and global reach and has since evolved into a prominent concept in understanding the digital and communicative transformations of the 21st century (Peters, 2009, p. 16). While the definition of what is considered 'new' has been debated, the term gained widespread popularity in the late 1980s and early 1990s as digital technologies via the internet and computers –particularly in developed countries and certain regions– transformed media production, distribution, and consumption, fundamentally shifting our understanding of media. Today, as noted in the 'Media' entry of the TÜBİTAK Encyclopedia of Social Sciences, media is largely defined as 'new media' due to the inclusion of technologies such as the internet, smartphones, satellite technology, computers, teletext, videotext, and CD-DVD, distinguishing it from traditional media (Dağtaş, n.d.). In her article *Introduction: Did somebody say new media?*, Wendy Hui Kyong Chun (2006) explores the historical origins and development of the term 'new media', examining the digitisation of old media and the rise of digital forms. According to Chun (2006, p.1), although new media depended heavily on computerisation, new media was not simply "digital media": that is, it was not digitised forms of other media (photography, video, text), but rather an interactive medium or form of distribution as independent as the information it relayed. Similarly, Manovich (2002, p. 46) argues that new media can be understood as comprising two distinct layers –the cultural layer and the computer layer– with the computer layer, which governs the creation, distribution, storage, and archiving of new media, exerting a significant influence on the traditional cultural logic of media, thereby suggesting that the logic inherent in the computer layer will inevitably shape and affect the cultural layer.

In recent years, there has been an increase in research on digital technologies within the context of new media and their impact on society and communication. Studies on new media show that both affirmative and critical

perspectives are evident. These viewpoints highlight the multifaceted nature of new media as a phenomenon. The affirmative perspective emphasises the potential of new media to empower individuals (Mehra et al., 2004; Yong Park, 2007), democratise information (Batool et al., 2020; Bokor, 2015; Raejimaekers & Maeseele, 2015), and encourage participation (Carpentier et al., 2013; Cortés-Ramos et al., 2021). On the other hand, the critical perspective suggests that this potential may be limited, pointing out that the use of new media could lead to various societal inequalities (Lai & Widmar, 2021; Robinson et al., 2015), data exploitation (Cain & Imre, 2022; Nguyen & Beijnon, 2024) and changes in cultural norms. According to the critical perspective, new media is both a technological tool and a factor that reshapes power relations, economic structures, and cultural norms. For example, while social media platforms allow individuals to voice their opinions, they are also viewed as platforms controlled by powerful media companies -or at times governments- (Stockmann, 2023; Tworek & Buschow, 2016), susceptible to manipulation (Reisach, 2021), and used for commercial purposes (Etter & Albu, 2021; Hudders et al., 2021). Based on these perspectives and studies, it is essential to emphasise the need for a thorough examination of the societal and cultural impacts of new media, in addition to its technological characteristics.

The changes observed in the digital environment, parallel to the development of contemporary information and communication technologies, particularly underscore the necessity for updates in the field of education. As a result of this necessity, new media departments have been established to equip students with a comprehensive education in areas such as digital media, communication technologies, audiovisual production, and digital marketing. As a relatively new academic discipline, new media is closely related to various fields, including communication, computer science, information technology, cultural studies, media studies, and sociology, reflecting its interdisciplinary nature. According to Lev Manovich (2002), new media can be defined as a revolution that transforms all of culture towards computer-mediated forms of production, distribution, and communication, driven by the digitisation of media. This revolution affects various stages of communication and all types of media, making texts, images, sounds, and spatial constructions computable, reflecting a profound shift in cultural communication. In her book *Young People and New media*, Sonia Livingstone (2002) emphasises how new media is perceived in a social context, highlighting that cultural representation and usage practices that need to be considered are still evolving, while also expressing the significance of familiar technologies alongside innovation. To overcome this challenge, Livingstone highlights four themes that suggest how new media contributes to the changing social environment for researchers working on new media: multiplication of personally owned media, diversification of media forms and content, convergence of information services, and shift to interactive communication (2002, pp. 19-21). This recognition of the various dimensions of new media can help us understand the emergence of media

education as a distinct academic discipline, which seeks to explore and analyse these themes in depth, preparing students to navigate and critically engage with the evolving media landscape.

This study focuses on the perceptions of students receiving education in new media departments of various public and foundation universities towards new media education. This study is believed to contribute to both new media as a phenomenon and new media education. The findings obtained in this research are evaluated to provide a perspective on the direction and improvement of new media education through the lens of young individuals experiencing the new media phenomenon.

Overview of New Media Education in Türkiye

The education in the field of media in Türkiye began with the establishment of the Journalism Institute of the Faculty of Economics at İstanbul University in 1949. This was followed by establishing a program in press and publication at the Press and Publication High School of the Faculty of Political Sciences at Ankara University, in 1965 (Tokgöz, 2003). In 1990, the Press and Publication High Schools were converted into Communication Faculties. In 1993, the Council of Social Sciences Education of the Higher Education Council established three departments within the Faculty of Communication: Journalism, Radio-Television, and Public Relations and Advertising (Atabek & Atabek, 2014, p. 151). This decision further strengthened the interdisciplinary structures of Communication Faculties, and thus, together with technological innovations, the new media department was established for the first time in Türkiye at Kadir Has University in 2009 (Kadir Has University, 2024).

New media emerges as a relatively new discipline compared to other undergraduate programs, situated at the intersection of various fields such as computer science, information technologies, communication, cultural studies, media, and visual arts. It continues to evolve and change in response to advancements in internet technologies. Additionally, the media sector, which has been increasingly recognised for its potential to generate high economic value, has undergone profound structural and functional transformations driven by technological progress. In recent years, this sector has been increasingly classified within the realm of creative industries/economies (Department for Culture, Media & Sport, 2024; United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, 2024).

As a consequence of the significant transformations in the field of education resulting from the rapid advancement of digitalisation and communication technologies, the establishment of new media departments should be considered within the framework of the Bologna Process, joined by Türkiye in 2001 (Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Yükseköğretim Kurulu [YÖK], nd.). Accordingly, the program should include clear statements of the qualifications defining

the knowledge, skills, and competencies students are expected to acquire by graduation. Furthermore, the program should contain the learning outcomes that students should achieve upon completing each course (YÖK, 2010). The Bologna Process, seeks to standardise and harmonise higher education across Europe, facilitating closer alignment among the educational systems of participating countries.

According to the 2023 data from the Council of Higher Education (YÖK) Atlas[1], there are currently 31 universities offering undergraduate programs labeled as 'New media' or 'New media and Communication' in response to the increasing need for digitalisation. Among these universities, 26 are located within the borders of the Republic of Türkiye. Specifically, of the 22 universities offering programs under 'New media and Communication', 4 are public universities while 18 are foundation universities. Additionally, of the 4 universities offering education under the name 'new media', 1 is a public university and 3 are foundations. The remaining 5 universities include 4 in the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus and 1 in Macedonia, which is classified as an international university. Furthermore, according to YÖK Atlas 2023 data, Atatürk University offers an associate degree (open and distance education) program in New Media and Journalism.

Another critical dimension at the intersection between new media and youth is the employment and job opportunities for students graduating from these programs. According to the 2022 results report of the "İstanbul Provincial Employment Market Research" by the Turkish Employment Agency, the sector expected to see the highest employment change in İstanbul is the Arts, Entertainment, Recreation, and Sports sector, projected to increase 4.3%. The Information and Communication sector follows, projected to grow 3.7% (2022, p. 45). The analysis of the employer expectations for employment changes over the next decade due to technological transformation, shows that the Information and Communication sector has the highest proportion of businesses, expecting an increase of 28.4% in employment rate (2022, p. 47).

Based on the assessment that 'regional differences in labour market dynamics necessitate region-specific policy approaches for youth employment', the Ministry of Industry and Technology of the Republic of Türkiye (2024) has stated that all development agencies should prioritise the theme of 'Youth Employment' for the 2022-2023 period. Furthermore, Türkiye's strategic document, the "Twelfth Development Plan" (On İkinci Kalkınma Planı) (2024-2028), includes objectives that supports the issues this paper addresses, including 'conducting research to measure the needs and expectations of young people and developing training programs aligned with their skills and abilities' (2024, p. 180).

According to the "Global Entertainment and Media Industry Outlook 2023-2027" report published by PwC, the entertainment and media sector market

[1] All data referenced from YÖK Atlas 2023.

in Türkiye generated revenue of 5.5 billion US dollars in 2022, with 1.6 billion US dollars of this revenue coming solely from internet advertising (Ballhaus et al., 2023). Furthermore, according to the "Estimated Media and Advertising Investments in Turkey 2023 Report" (*Türkiye'de Tahmini Medya ve Reklam Yatırımları 2023 Raporu*), published by Deloitte in April 2024, total (organised and direct) media and advertising sector investments in Turkey- including digital, television, out-of-home radio, press, and cinema- reached 140.69 billion TL for the year 2023. These data show a growth rate of 120% in media investments between 2022 and 2023 (Reklamcılar Derneği, 2024). Consequently, the growth in the sector necessitates a profound understanding through academic research. The emergence of innovative technologies brings to light the importance of young graduates from new media departments in universities receiving a current and competitive education that aligns with the media sector's expectations and requirements.

Given this context, the educational perceptions of new media students are of critical importance in understanding the social and professional needs shaped by the dynamics of the digital age. It is essential to emphasise the need to consider the needs and demands of young people regarding technology use in their education, particularly for those who have grown up in the digital age. This study aims to contribute to the evaluation of the effectiveness of educational programs by analysing students' thoughts and attitudes towards new media education. Students' perceptions are believed to be important in updating the curriculum and aligning it with industry needs. Moreover, understanding how students' knowledge, skills, and expectations in this field align with the innovations brought by digitalisation allows for the development of more effective education strategies in both academic and professional contexts.

Aim and Methodology

Research design

This study focuses on the perceptions of new media education among students enrolled in the new media department, aiming to facilitate an in-depth analysis by capturing the viewpoints of these young individuals in their own voices. To achieve this objective, a qualitative research methodology, grounded in an interpretive approach, has been intentionally selected. Qualitative research methods based on an interpretive approach focus on participants' perspectives to understand reality, involving a deductive analysis process that includes inductive reasoning (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). In this context, the general research question is as follows: "What are the educational perceptions, needs, and professional expectations of new media students shaped by the evolving technologies and trends of the digital era?"

Sampling

After receiving approval from the ethics committee[2] at İstanbul Nişantaşı University during its meeting on February 1, 2024, with the ethics committee meeting number 2024/02, a purposive sample of new media students was chosen. The selection criteria were as follows:

1. The participant must be an undergraduate student enrolled in a 'new media' program at a university within the Republic of Türkiye.

2. The participant must be an active student.

Determining the appropriate sample size for qualitative studies does not yield a definitive answer (Staller, 2021); however, it is generally accepted that researchers should aim for a sample size that is sufficient to achieve data saturation, where no new themes or insights emerge from additional data collection (Guest et al., 2006). To achieve data saturation through in-depth interviews, an in-depth interview guide with a uniform set of questions across participants (Erdoğan & Uyan-Semerci, 2021) was developed and pre-tested to ensure the questions were clear. All the interviews were conducted online in August and September 2024. The study sample (*Table 1*) consists of 20 participants aged 18 to 26, 9 of whom are male and 11 are female. These participants represent a total of 10 distinct universities. Of the 20 participants, 13 are students at foundation universities, while 7 are students at public universities. In the 2024-2025 academic year, 3 students will be in their second year, 9 students will be in their third year, and 8 will be in their fourth year of study. Graduates and associate degree students have been excluded from this study in terms of sampling criteria.

[2] This study was designed using a dataset from a different research project that investigated the motivations of new media students for using social media.

Table 1. The demographics of new media students participating in the study

Partic-ipants	Name	Age	Sex	University	Educa-tional /Class Level[3]	Usage within the text
Active undergraduate students in New media at a university within the Republic of Türkiye	P1	25	Male	Foundation	4	(P1, 25, Foundation)
	P2	22	Female	Foundation	3	(P2, 22, Foundation)
	P3	20	Male	Foundation	2	(P3, 20, Foundation)
	P4	24	Male	Foundation	4	(P4, 24, Foundation)
	P5	22	Male	Foundation	3	(P5, 22, Foundation)
	P6	22	Male	Foundation	3	(P6, 22, Foundation)
	P7	23	Female	Foundation	4	(P7, 23, Foundation)
	P8	21	Male	Foundation	4	(P8, 21, Foundation)
	P9	23	Female	Public	4	(P9, 23, Public)
	P10	23	Female	Foundation	3	(P10, 23, Foundation)
	P11	22	Male	Public	4	(P11, 22, Public)
	P12	22	Female	Foundation	3	(P12, 22, Foundation)
	P13	20	Male	Foundation	3	(P13, 20, Foundation)
	P14	22	Female	Foundation	3	(P14, 22, Foundation)
	P15	18	Female	Public	2	(P15, 18, Public)
	P16	24	Female	Public	4	(P16, 24, Public)
	P17	22	Female	Public	4	(P17, 22, Public)
	P18	26	Male	Public	3	(P18, 26, Public)
	P19	24	Female	Public	3	(P19, 24, Public)
	P20	24	Female	Foundation	2	(P20, 24, Foundation)

[3] The class levels specified indicate the year of study for the 2024-2025 academic year. All of the interviewed students are active students.

Data gathering

The author conducted each interview, which lasted between 55 and 70 minutes. All interviews were conducted via Microsoft Teams and were captured using an online recording platform and a digital audio recorder. All 20 in-depth interviews were recorded with the participants' consent. At the conclusion of each interview, participants were invited to discuss any additional topics that had not been addressed.

Data analysis

All interviews were transcribed and carefully analysed by the researcher using thematic analysis which involves identifying recurring themes or ideas in qualitative data sets, focusing on how these themes relate to the research question and participants' experiences without incorporating statistical analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Researchers typically analyse interview data to inductively derive either all themes or focus on specific themes, ensuring consistency in their identification and development (Riger & Sigurvinsdottir, 2016, p. 34). In this research, the stages of thematic analysis proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006) have been employed: 'Stage 1' involves immersing oneself in the data through transcription and repeated reading; 'Stage 2' consists of generating initial codes from the familiarised data; 'Stage 3' entails searching for overarching themes by organising the codes; 'Stage 4' emphasises reviewing and refining the identified potential themes for coherence and relevance; 'Stage 5' focuses on defining and naming the themes, identifying their central ideas; and 'Stage 6' involves producing a detailed report that presents the analysis, addresses key questions, and illustrates the findings (p. 94). Thematic analysis revealed significant superordinate themes that recurred in the interviews, including perceptions of the current new media curriculum, the inadequacy of the number and/or content of practical courses, and the courses that are essential to be included in new media education.

Findings

When the data obtained from in-depth interviews conducted with new media students from various universities were analysed using thematic analysis, it became evident that certain fundamental themes emerged more prominently. This section will present the themes identified through the analysis, along with their central ideas.

Essential courses that must be included in the curriculum

As revealed through in-depth interviews with new media students, the integration of specific essential courses within the new media curriculum is crucial for fostering an environment conducive to digital empowerment. The findings underscore the importance of courses such as practical courses, So-

cial Media Management, Media Ethics, Communication Skills, and Storytelling.[4] The interviews revealed that students value hands-on experience, which allows them to apply theoretical knowledge to real-world scenarios.

One of the participants, who is a student at a public university and has completed their third year in new media education, highlights the importance of courses like Digital Literacy and Media Ethics in shaping their understanding of journalism and ethical practices in the media. *P16* expresses a strong interest in corporate communication, specifically in areas like brand management and crisis management, emphasising that these skills are crucial for success in the media sector. They note that their education has significantly enhanced their awareness of these topics, which are relevant to everyday life as follows:

> I have taken courses in many different fields, but one of the most impactful courses for me was 'digital literacy.' Additionally, what I learned about media ethics was very valuable to me; the things I need to do in journalism and the topics that people should consider when reporting are important to me. Furthermore, one of the subjects I enjoyed learning about was corporate communication. I had a strong interest in topics such as what I should pay attention to when I am a brand or a business owner, how to manage a crisis, and what I need to consider when advertising or building a brand image. In fact, these are things we are somewhat exposed to in everyday life, but I became more aware of them thanks to school (*P16*, 24, Public).

Participants discuss the courses that should be included in the curriculum while-expressing their expectations regarding the course content and the instructors. For instance, it has been noted that *P18* stresses the importance of Social Media Management course while perceiving the instructor's lack of experience in managing social media as a problem for new media students.

> The fields in which academics have completed their master's and doctoral degrees are undoubtedly valuable. However, I believe that many university professors have studied different subjects and do not fully understand new media. Do they have work experience in the industry? Do they have practical experience? If not, I think that's a problem. For example, I would expect the instructor of a social media course to have previously managed a social media account (*P18*, 26, Public).

The issues raised by the participants regarding the curriculum highlight the crucial necessity for instructors in new media courses to possess experience in the media industry. This perception also underscores the significance they place on not just the academic background of educators but also their industry experience and practical skills in the field of new media. As *P18* expressed their concerns, while the academic qualifications of professors are undoubtedly valuable, they may not adequately prepare educators to navigate the complexities of the digital landscape if their backgrounds lack practical engagement with new media. However, this matter constitutes the subject of various research studies that will explore academics' perspectives on new media education.

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[4] This list has been created based on the most frequently recurring course titles identified during the coding process.

Technical training and equipment needs

The data gathered from new media students highlight another significant concern regarding new media education: The inadequate provision of technical training and equipment within the new media curriculum. Most participants stress the necessity of integrating practical courses earlier in their academic journey to facilitate a smoother transition into real-world applications. For instance, while courses such as Sound and Image Techniques provide valuable technical knowledge, students feel that the limited duration of these classes restricts their ability to progress beyond a beginner level. The lack of depth in this training may lead to a superficial understanding of essential tools and techniques critical to preventing new media graduates from experiencing qualification mismatches and being under-skilled after securing employment in the media sector.

All participants in the study concurred that practical courses in new media education serve the purpose of becoming qualified graduates. Yet, these participants, who study at different universities, have diverse opinions on such courses' current availability. *P6* expresses a desire for practical courses to be introduced earlier in the first year, suggesting that a timely integration would enhance the learning experience and better prepare students for the demands of the industry. Another participant, *P10* acknowledges the value of the Sound and Image Techniques class they took, but notes that the limited duration of such courses results in a beginner-level understanding, thus inhibiting any substantial progress.

> I believe it would be better if we could take practical courses earlier in the first year (*P6*, 22, Foundation).

> I took a course in sound and image techniques; I'm glad I did. We gained technical knowledge there. However, this is not sufficient; since we only studied these subjects for one semester, the practical courses remain at a beginner level, and as a result, we cannot make much progress (*P10*, 23, Foundation).

Based on the participants' views, it becomes evident that students face significant technical challenges in their new media education, as highlighted by *P15*'s example of the lack of a dedicated studio at their university. According to *P15*, the absence of a studio hinders new media students' ability to actively engage in critical components of their educational curriculum, such as editing, montage, and photography. Without appropriate spaces to practice and develop these skills, students will likely struggle to acquire the competencies necessary for success in the media industry. This situation highlights a significant gap in their educational experience.

> There is no problem with the education itself, but we do have technical issues. I believe there is a need for a studio. Because someone graduating from this program will be involved in editing, montage, and photography. However, there is no space for these activities in our school (*P15*, 18, Public).

Another participant is strongly dissatisfied with the technical training offered in their new media education. Their primary concern centres on the perceived deficiency in instruction of fundamental technical skills, such as camera operation, lighting comprehension, and editing proficiency. *P1* underscores the superficiality of the training, pointing out the inadequate coverage of concepts like aperture and lighting. Drawing a parallel with a *TikTok* creator, they assert that their education falls short in equipping them with the essential competencies to distinguish themselves in a professional context.

> Technical skills are not being taught. I don't even know how to use a camera; maybe I don't have one. Cameras are not provided. We are unable to learn how to use light. What is aperture? From where should the light come? How do you avoid creating a shadow in the background? What is fill light? Light is an art form in itself. Sound is a separate art. Video is also a separate art. Editing and post-production should be taught separately, but they are addressed superficially. For instance, 'This is adaptation, and this is sound editing. You will make videos; this is how it works.' Okay, but I cut it and put it together. What difference is there between me and the person making this video on *TikTok*? There is none (*P1*, 25, Foundation).

The perception of new media education by *P17* is marked by a sense of frustration regarding the insufficient technical resources and hands-on training available. This frustration is particularly evident in *P17*'s observation of the outdated computers that impede their performance during exams and classes, negatively impacting their learning experience. Within the context of the photography class, the participant underscores the gap between theoretical instruction and practical application, struggling to comprehend fundamental concepts such as camera button functionality and white balance adjustment settings. This observation suggests a conviction that theoretical knowledge alone does not adequately translate into the practical skills essential for success in the realm of media.

> The computers at our university are very old. As a result, there are frequent freezes and crashes during exams and while working in class. Additionally, in our photography class, the instructor says, 'When you press this button here, let's assume it takes a picture,' but I don't know where that button is, nor do I know how to adjust the white balance when I pick up any camera. This is because theoretical concepts don't stick in my mind as much as practical experiences do (*P17*, 22, Public).

The classification of courses according to specific fields

A salient theme identified through data analysis on new media education is the organisation of courses within the curriculum into a coherent framework. Participants highlighted the diverse range of disciplines encompassed by new media education, including communication, journalism, advertising, and radio-TV cinema. As a result, they articulated a need for categorising courses based on these specified areas to guide the prioritisation of topics and skills in new media education. A detailed roadmap is expected to outline the courses

associated with each field and those instrumental in honing particular skills.

> I believe that the broadness of our department confuses both the professors and us because it feels like we are covering things superficially. I feel like we are not delving into details. Perhaps if we could focus on specific areas, even if it's by dividing the courses, it would provide us with more benefits. For example, we have a class where we learn Photoshop. However, it would also be beneficial to have a class where we learn algorithms or a course related to media ethics. Instead of covering the basics in such a way, it would be better if we could classify our courses a bit more in relation to new media. Let's finish courses like media history and sociology in the first year so that we can progress with classes focused on our specific areas afterward. I don't particularly like that this program is entirely focused on our personal development (*P2*, 22, Foundation).

P2 critiques their new media education, noting confusion due to the department's broad curriculum. They argue that the current structure leads to a shallow understanding of the material, lacking in-depth coverage of topics. *P2* suggests focusing on specific areas within the curriculum to enhance educational outcomes, even if it requires course division. They propose adding practical and relevant courses, such as algorithms and media ethics, to enrich the learning experience. Similarly, another participant, *P19*, acknowledges that the curriculum encompasses various fields, including Journalism, Advertising, and Radio-Television. *P19* strongly supports the integration of practical courses into the curriculum, arguing that these courses profoundly influence their personal and professional development.

> Since it is a broad field, I can say that we take courses in journalism, advertising, and radio-television. This represents a kind of blending of these subjects. I definitely recommend that interested individuals take practical courses. Practical courses really make a significant contribution to one's life (*P19*, 24, Public).

On the other hand, one participant proposes a type of action plan for fellow students to address the challenging aspects of new media education:

> Students need to be prepared for a practical working life. The biggest problem for university students is their inability to choose a specific area within this field. They are not developing themselves in that area. They may take courses related to 8-10 different professions, but which field will they enter for a job? In my opinion, students should be able to make this decision by the end of their second year. However, if you were to ask students now what they will do, most of them don't know what they want to do. I think this is a significant gap (*P18*, 26, Public).

The observations made by *P18* shed light on a critical issue in higher education, specifically, within diverse fields such as new media. The inability of students to specialise or discern a clear career path may weaken their skills and a lack of readiness for the job market. *P18* suggests that students should finalise their career choices by the conclusion of their second year, emphasising the significance of early guidance and mentorship as crucial components in guiding their educational journey. According to *P18*, this lack of clarity has the potential to induce anxiety among students, who might feel daunted by

the plethora of options available and uncertain of which path to pursue.

Delayed curriculum updates in response to digitalization

One of the prominent themes highlighted in the study is the rapid transformation by digital technologies in new media education; however, curriculum revisions have failed to keep up with this evolution. The media industry requires professionals skilled in the latest tools, but outdated curriculums limit students' exposure and hinder their competitiveness in the media sector. Based on these reasons, the theme that emerged during the coding process, which emphasises the importance of analysing the effects of this delay and developing strategies to incorporate current content, will be discussed in this section for new media programs.

P3 reflects the notable concerns of new media students regarding the ability of university curricula to remain relevant in the face of the swiftly changing digital technology environment. Specifically, *P3* draws our attention to the necessity for a more dynamic, flexible, and adaptable academic framework that can effectively keep pace with technological advancements.

> University education has contributions, but I believe it is not evolving as quickly as digitalisation; it is lagging behind. For example, artificial intelligence can suddenly emerge these days. Although it is related to New media, our department incorporates it into the curriculum very late. This situation leaves you at a disadvantage when you need to work after graduation, or at that time, and you have to apply for social media or external training (*P3*, 20, Foundation).

A different participant criticises the new media curriculum being implemented at their university, pointing out that while compulsory courses are primarily theoretical, elective courses lean more towards practical applications. They express their disappointment with this situation regarding their education by stating that this inconsistency has led to a sense of frustration.

> For example, some courses are six credits but cover topics everyone is already familiar with and are not needed. These should be lower-credit courses that provide additional knowledge as they do not require much academic work. This situation saddens me. I don't know, perhaps the professors also have an influence. For instance, we had a class where we were taught how to use *TikTok*. We were all amazed: Are we really taking a class like this? It seemed like a course designed entirely for killing time. Furthermore, some courses are lacking. There are no courses on diction, rhetoric, anchoring, or presenting; I think this is an important gap for new media students. Because some students want to become anchors or reporters, but there isn't a course available at the school that allows them to gain experience or knowledge in this area. The courses generally consist of compulsory classes focused on theoretical knowledge. Still, there are some practical courses among the electives, such as camera and studio classes. However, I am honestly upset because I haven't taken the courses that align with my interests and because they didn't meet my expectations (*P4*, 24, Foundation).

It can be said that significant gaps are noted in essential areas such as diction, rhetoric, and presentation skills. *P4*, like many of the participants in this study, has voiced dissatisfaction with the lack of courses that cater to their individual interests and professional goals, indicating that the current curriculum does not adequately equip students for their future roles in the media sector.

What will i do after graduation? The diversity of job opportunities in the media sector

The theme demonstrates the participants' recognition of the diverse career prospects associated with their field of study when they engage in discussions. It aims to highlight the importance of comprehending the range of job opportunities that graduates can pursue. The industry presents a myriad of roles, encompassing positions in journalism, advertising, public relations, digital marketing, and content creation, among others. This breadth of options mirrors the dynamic media and communication landscape, calling for adaptable skill sets to meet various professional challenges.

One of the participants draws attention to the need for a broader perspective on new media itself, rather than focusing solely on the debate between the presence of theoretical and practical courses. *P5* emphasises the importance of focusing not only on the new but also on the traditional aspects in new media education, stating that, for example, in practical courses, it includes elements from both old and new production methods, camera usage, content creation, shooting techniques, and angles.

> I'm not just talking about education at the computer. Apart from that, we need to be able to do things practically. Yes, let's learn design at the computer. Yes, let's learn editorial work. These are good things. But the industry isn't just progressing in terms of editing or design; it's not advancing in social media consultancy, either. This is what I'm talking about. The new media we refer to encompasses both the old and the new. It includes production methods from the past, camera usage, how production is done, how to write content, how to shoot, from what angle to shoot, and why it should be done this way. Let's have the students write a program among themselves. Let's choose the best program and shoot it. I think new media needs to involve students in a way that actively engages them with social media (*P5*, 22, Foundation).

Another important subtheme that emerges in the study is the critical need for industry collaboration in new media education, as it is perceived to be essential because of the diverse range of job opportunities available within the media industry. *P12* refers to the importance of practical learning experiences outside the classroom in the context of new media education. They highlight a specific example where a knowledgeable individual conducted a session on *LinkedIn*, a topic that had not been covered in their class. They emphasise the value of guest speakers and club activities in filling the gaps in their learn-

ing and ensuring they do not fall behind. They also mention their solution to this matter as their active involvement in the New Media and Communication Club's Organization Department, where they engage with industry leaders, invite CEOs and influencers, and organise summits to enhance practical learning and networking opportunities for students in the new media field.

> We had not covered LinkedIn in class. A gentleman who was very knowledgeable about LinkedIn came and explained it to us in three hours, like a class. This way, we didn't fall behind. We can complete what we haven't covered in class through club activities. I am in the management of the New Media and Communication Club's Organization Department. We invite CEOs and influencers and organise summits. For this, we interact with them (*P12*, 22, Foundation).

P13, who has been managing their digital agency for three years and is completing their second year in new media education, states that the number and content of practical courses are inadequate, and offers the following suggestion:

> I believe that, alongside university professors, professionals from the industry should also teach at universities. Universities need to take action regarding this matter. Academics should establish direct contact with industry professionals and occasionally integrate them into their classes. I think this aspect is lacking. While it is true that academics have worked hard to reach this point, I believe they are missing some insights from the industry during this process. I think they should fill this gap with experts from the field (*P13*, 20, Foundation).

P7 acknowledges the limitations and challenges associated with new media education, which are attributable to the field's constantly evolving and emerging nature. Considering the rapid changes in the concept and applications of new media, educational programs may find it challenging to stay updated and provide students with current information. Despite perceiving specific courses as inadequate or superficial, *P7* demonstrates an understanding that exploration and experiences in the new media domain are ongoing, and setbacks are inevitable in the learning process as follows:

> If I have to speak for myself, I have continuously built upon the education I received throughout my life to reach a certain point. This has shaped my course selections, and this includes conferences and seminars. We can actually reach a point through some references we receive from our instructors. So, it seems like it's not just something that the education we receive in our field provides us. Because, as the name suggests, it is new media; it used to be media communication systems. It is actually a field that everyone is still getting accustomed to, as it is something we are discovering together. Therefore, I can't overly criticise the superficiality of some courses in certain areas (*P7*, 23, Foundation).

While highlighting the need for more practical courses, *P11* asserted that education in new media plays a pivotal role in developing critical thinking abilities:

> I have developed more critical thinking skills by taking courses such as Introduction to Communication Science and New Media Literacy that involve questioning mes-

sages and examining their sources (*P11*, 22, Public).

P8, who states that they learned many aspects of new media applications through experience before starting their education and studied the program to obtain a diploma, emphasises the importance of communication courses.

> Until now, the courses we have taken at the university can be briefly summarised as follows: how to use Photoshop, how to conduct digital marketing online, and how to stand out in search engines. However, due to my lived experiences, communication is the most important thing that needs to be taught. […] Schools need to focus more on communication. For example, even though we have a course on perception management, the classes feel quite short from my perspective; we only have 2 hours a week. Instead, it could be 2 days a week for 4 hours because perception management is genuinely an important course. I need to be able to influence your thoughts to progress in line with my goals. Or, if I want to be an influencer, I need to manage the perception of a community in order to be able to become an influencer (*P8*, 21, Foundation).

P8 emphasises the importance of communication as a fundamental skill in addition to courses such as Perception Management. They suggest that effective communication is necessary for influencing others and attaining personal objectives, especially within the realm of becoming an influencer. Similarly, *P14* addresses the impact of verbal and written communication, recognising that communicating proficiently is crucial for marketing purposes and disseminating information on social media.

> Besides visuals, most people can also influence others through speech and writing. Like many others, I also read the texts written in front of the visuals. How should you speak and write when sharing something on social media or discussing something? How should you approach news or write advertisements? You are taking a marketing course, but you also need to write something about marketing. In other words, it is not enough to know what and how to market to influence people (*P14*, 22, Foundation).

Discussion

> I would really like people to learn and realise that the media and communication play a significant role in this world and are a major factor in shaping the industry. (*P9*, 23, Public).

The media landscape has undergone significant transformations more rapidly than ever in recent years. As a result of the rapid advancement of digital technologies, in the field of media studies, the need for updating academic curricula has been discussed to keep pace with these changes (Berkeley, 2009; Biswas & Bland, 2024; Ndavula & Agufana, 2023). The increasing integration of digital tools and platforms into every day and professional life has prompted universities to update their media curricula periodically. However, the extent to which curricula are transformed in alignment with the expectations of students, graduates, academia, and the industry can be revealed through comprehensive research. Additionally, the extent to which the industry has developed the skills of graduates with media education and students undergoing

internship training is also among the topics under investigation. This limited study, which focuses solely on new media students as the sample, highlights the necessity for all stakeholders to consider the effectiveness of new media education.

Based on the data collected from new media students, it is evident that there are crucial observations and recommendations regarding new media curriculum. The most prominent and common aspects highlighted and emerged as themes are as follows: The inclusion of essential courses in the curriculum, technical training and equipment requirements, the categorisation of courses based on specific fields, delayed updates to the curriculum in response to digitalisation, uncertainty regarding post-graduation plans, and the variety of job opportunities within the media industry.

Integrating essential courses in the new media curriculum, such as Digital Literacy, Media Ethics, and Social Media Management, is vital for equipping students with the necessary skills for the industry. Students place high value on practical experience, as it enhances their understanding of theoretical concepts and prepares them for real-world challenges. This need for practical application is echoed in the paper by Dr. Bharat Dhiman (2023), which examines the development and implementation of media education and research practices in five Asian countries – India, China, Japan, Singapore, and South Korea. The findings from this study indicate that instructional practices in these countries are insufficient, emphasising the necessity of a balance between theoretical knowledge and its practical application. They also highlight the need to balance theoretical knowledge and its practical application in their courses. However, concerns regarding the lecturers' lack of relevant industry experience highlight a significant gap in the educational framework. Addressing these concerns is crucial for developing a curriculum that aligns with the evolving demands of the media landscape and empowers students for future success. For instance, in his article *Collaborating With ChatGPT: Considering the Implications of Generative Artificial Intelligence for Journalism and Media Education*, John V. Pavlik (2023) suggests that media educators should not only consider how to incorporate generative AI into their courses and curricula but also how to develop programs that train students in the effective use of these technologies, while addressing issues such as ethics and potential biases. Furthermore, he offers media educators the opportunity to consider the implications of generative AI platforms like *ChatGPT* for academic integrity and how students might utilise these tools in their academic work.

In addition, participants have expressed concerns regarding the inadequate technical training and equipment offered in the new media curriculum. They emphasise the importance of introducing practical courses at an earlier stage to ease the process of transitioning into real-world applications. Participants have identified the difficulties they face due to the absence of dedicated studio spaces and outdated technical resources, which hinder their ability

to acquire the essential skills needed for success in the media industry. These findings are consistent with a different study, which indicates that the area participants felt most lacking in within Communication Faculty education is practical training, with a rate of 51% (Kaderoğlu Bulut & Hacısalihoğlu, 2021). According to the 2022 report on "Cultural Economy and Cultural Employment Statistics" by TÜİK, the value added of enterprises operating in cultural sectors increased by 100.9% in factor cost, with 22.1% of the value added being produced by enterprises engaged in the printing and reproduction of recorded media, and 13.8% by enterprises involved in the production of cinema films, videos, television programs, sound recording, and music publishing activities. Therefore, it can be said that cultural expenditures and enterprises and products evaluated within the scope of creative industries are increasing. In this context, it is seen as a valid request for students to have more effective content in practical courses and not to consist of superficial information.

Another important theme identified is the need for courses in the new media curriculum to be classified according to specific fields. Participants ask for a structured framework categorising courses into Communication, Journalism, Advertising, and Radio-TV Cinema disciplines. They suggest creating a detailed roadmap that outlines the courses related to each field to effectively prioritise topics and skills in new media education.

Furthermore, another critical aspect this study's participants highlighted was the importance of curriculum updates in response to digitalisation. A limited number of studies have also been conducted on the expectations of academia and the industry (Kaderoğlu Bulut & Hacısalihoğlu, 2021; Can, 2018) and on 'new media' education and sectoral expectations (Akgül & Akdağ, 2017; Özarslan, 2019). From the perspective of a new media student, the delay in incorporating contemporary tools and concepts such as artificial intelligence into the curriculum can be seen as a critical flaw in the education system. Similarly, in his article *Coexistence and Creativity: Screen Media Education in the Age of Artificial Intelligence Content Generators,* Stuart Marshall Bender (2023) argues that Gen-AI can offer significant benefits to existing media education approaches and that this technology could increase interest in studying the creative arts. Given that the digital realm evolves at an unprecedented pace, students feel that their educational institutions should be more responsive and proactive in integrating current trends and technologies into their programs.

The lag in curriculum development could result in a disconnect between the skills students acquire during their education and the skills increasingly demanded by employers in the digital marketplace (Pavlik, 2023). As a result, graduates may find themselves unprepared for the demands of the workforce, necessitating additional training or self-directed learning, such as seeking external courses on social media strategies or other relevant topics regarding new media. Examining "TÜİK Higher Education Employment Indicators" for

2022, it can be seen that the average time to find the first job for bachelor's degree graduates is 13.9 months, while it is determined as 11.8 months for graduates in information and communication technologies (TÜİK, 2023). Considering this data, it is evident why new media students seek to enter the sector better prepared professionally.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the participants' remarks in this study indicate a strong desire for increased experiential learning opportunities to deepen their understanding and proficiency in new media. Their comments indicate a preference for a more structured and comprehensive educational approach that integrates both technical and theoretical depth rather than focusing solely on personal development without sufficient academic rigor.

The emergence of new media departments in Türkiye reflects the transformative impact of digitalisation on education and the labour market. While this field continues to evolve, it holds significant potential in equipping students with the skills and knowledge needed to thrive in the digital age. Continued efforts to align education with industry needs and initiatives to promote youth employment will be crucial in realising the full potential of new media education in Türkiye. Within the framework of the 'Bologna Process', higher education institutions are required to develop curricula that are compatible with the expectations of students, academics, and the sector and are in line with digitalisation. By strengthening partnerships with industry professionals, educational institutions can stay attuned to emerging industry trends and developments, benefiting students and the media industry.

Although this study is limited to the perspectives of new media students, it is considered a valuable contribution as it provides insights into media education in the digital age. Future research exploring the perspectives of academics would offer the opportunity to view universities and curricula as more integrated and holistic entities. Additionally, the experiences of both media sector employers and professionals will enrich this field of study, facilitating a more comprehensive understanding of the alignment between media education, academia, and the expectations of students and the industry.

In sum, the discussions presented by participants should be considered essential recommendations for refining the new media curriculum. Considering and discussing these recommendations will constitute important steps for educational institutions in preparing students for successful careers in the ever-evolving media field. Students represent one of the key stakeholders from whom diverse perspectives on media education can be gathered. Despite the limitations of this study, which focuses exclusively on new media education from the perspectives of new media students, the data gathered provides a foundation for generating new research questions. This study aims to con-

tribute to developing a new media curriculum at the university, and foster increased collaboration among industry professionals, academia, new media students, and young graduates.

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