

# University information policy as a tool for supporting civic engagement of student youth

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**Abstract.** The article presents the author's approach to the study of the information field of a modern university as a unique virtual and real space of interaction, communication and consolidation of social forces, initiation of activity of student audiences. Information policy is a set of strategies of conscious management of the information field. The authors have made a research in 2020-2023 at Kazan Federal University by support of other universities of the Republic of Tatarstan. Different methods (case analysis and forecasting of effects, surveys and focus groups) allowed identifying the key elements of effective information policy: synchronization, integration of information policy of the university and the state, interactivity, creation of own platforms, updated communication channels, involvement of students as newsmakers and authors in the creation of newsmaking content.

## 1 Introduction

The role of universities as leading institutions in the field of education, training and upbringing of the young generation is becoming more and more obvious. Universities play a key role in the training of skillful specialists, who are the future of innovative development of the country [1, 2]. Universities face new challenges and opportunities in the field of information policy. Effective information management becomes important aspects of modern university activities. The proper use of information enables universities to improve the quality of education, optimize management and rise attractiveness and competitiveness of education [3]. The growth of Internet coverage, cloud technologies, services and mobile applications allows universities to optimize their information strategies. New opportunities are becoming a challenge and a test for university education [4]. In the information society the role of information is becoming more and more significant. All services of a modern university are included in the cycle of production, updating, feedback; the structure of information policy management in universities is becoming more modern and broader [5, 6].

It is impossible to imagine the modern world outside the information field. The information field is a complex dynamic system with interrelationships, which has the features of time, space, continuity, multipolarity, singularity. The information field develops in the conditions of a certain cultural code, communicative and semiotic traditions. The information field has a narrative structure, reflecting values and meanings.

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The university information services are a powerful tool for influencing and managing the information field [7, 8]. The Department of Information Policy consolidates the work of the university, managing the processes of promoting information about the university at the stages of the educational and scientific process.

The aim of the study is to identify the main principles of functioning the information policy of a modern university and reveal the positive youth movement and civic activity. The study analyzes the factors and components of effective information policy of universities, expands the understanding of scientific approaches to the development of information activity of higher education.

## 2 Theory

There is a common scientific opinion about the clearly managed system of information policy management of higher education institution. K.V. Markelov [9], M.G. Dmitriev [10] addressed various political aspects of information policy in relation to the topics of their own dissertation research.

The analytical report of the World Bank "Higher Education in Developing Countries: Dangers and Prospects" notes that universities are intellectual centers where knowledge is formed and updated through scientific research and educational programs, provide access to information, promote cultural diversity and ensure innovative development of society. D. Salmi, an expert of higher education at the World Bank (USA), states that there are three main components of information policy of a successful world-class university: management, resources, and talent concentration.

The study of information policy of universities is at the intersection of sociology of education and communications, as well as information technology research in the field of education. Many authors have reflected on the problems of forming an effective information policy in modern universities. However, these studies are rather descriptive, as the scholars are representatives of social and humanitarian sciences, not media practices. The authors of this article have had direct experience in monitoring the process of formation of the information policy of Kazan University as expert consultants and developers, authors of documentaries and analytical projects (made at the university television station "University TV").

The relevance and complexity of the task of transforming the information policy of HEIs predetermines the multiplicity of approaches to its solution, the search for different options and mechanisms of effective communication management. Application of such modern approaches and management tools as process and project approaches, balanced scorecard system, information management technologies, quality management system, rating evaluation technologies, which allow to increase the speed of reaction of the internal environment of HEI to external changes, it becomes a necessary condition for innovative development of HEI.

According to many researchers the global resource for the actualization and modernization of communication policy of universities is a conscious understanding of changes and development. A university, which is focused on innovative development, the processes of transformation, become sustainable, and adaptive, flexible system of information field is created. The interaction of all structures of the university and creation of a unified information and analytical system can provide education of a high quality. The principles of developing a unified information policy are based on the metaprinciple of increasing the competitiveness of the university in the modern educational field. At the same time, it is worth noting the experience of leading world universities, where communication, transforming into a separate priority function, is the main element of transformation of universities, educational programs and standards. According to N. Luman [11, p. 9],

"everything we know about our society and even about the world we live in, we learn through mass media". German expert F. Krotz [12] considers this phenomenon as one of the four metaprocesses that are changing civilization along with globalization, individualization and commercialization. Sh. Hepp proposes information management as an internal and external process in 2013, in the work "Cultural exchange and social integration: modern theories of internal mediatization". The author highlights the sociocultural aspects of mediatization and its role in integration and communication in modern society.

The main approaches to form information policy are considered as urgent tasks of university activity and have the following tasks: fixing the educational mission of the university, providing access to information and technologies, information protection and cyber security and the use of information technologies in the educational process [13, 14]. Some authors note the importance of including students and staff in the creation of information policy. In foreign universities, the Student Affairs Office performs this function. Some Russian universities (e.g., National Research University of Higher School of Economics) have such departments. Participation in the information policy of the university can be an important activity for young people to reduce the distance in communication between teachers and students and to form a stable civic position.

### 3 Methods

The authors presented quantitative methods of statistical data analysis, mediometry. The use of statistical data and indicators related to access to information resources, the use of information technology and the results of scientific research quantitatively assess the effectiveness of university information policy.

Qualitative methods.

In September-October 2023, students and teachers of Kazan Federal University and Kazan National Research Technical University were participated in a survey. One hundred seventy respondents took part in the survey, 82% of them aged 19-20 years old, 61% of them were men.

Interviews were held with university managers and information technology specialists to obtain an understanding of the organization and functioning of information policy, as well as to identify problems and prospects for development. The method of comparative analysis allowed us to present an overview of information policy of various universities in Russia to identify common practices and differences, as well as to study advanced approaches used in leading universities.

The main qualitative research method was the method of research of successful cases. The case method was proposed by the American researcher K. Christian and was supported by R. Christensen, W. Elleriessbro. The empirical base of the study is Russian mass media, social media, rating databases, regulatory legal acts.

### 4 Results

To analyze the current situation, we have considered the structure of information policy of the two leading universities of the Republic of Tatarstan, which are on highest positions in the official rating of media activity among Russian universities of 2022. It should be noted that the Ministry of Education and Science of the Russian Federation monitors the dynamics of media activity of universities monthly. The final M-Rating consists of three points: the effective university's work with the media (Index Mass Media), social networks (Index Social) and the official website (Index Site). Each of the three points is calculated separately and affects the final formula for calculating the results.

### **Case 1. Features of the information policy of Kazan Federal University**

Kazan Federal University is one of the oldest universities in the country with its unique history and experience in creating a special information space. In different years scientific and popular literary magazines were published here, the university newspaper "Leninets" has existed for more than half a century, a powerful educational portal is actively working. In the 90s the university television appeared, recent years it has become a rating cable channel "Univer TV".

The information strategy of one of the largest universities in the country is realized in accordance with the strategy of strategic development. According to it, KFU-2030 is an open, economically self-sufficient, among the top 100 leading universities in the world, integrated into the technologies of the new industrial revolution, combining the cultures of Europe and Asia, West and East. It makes a significant contribution to the achievement of national goals and objectives, a powerful driver of territorial development, a center of talent attraction, a source of history and traditions [15].

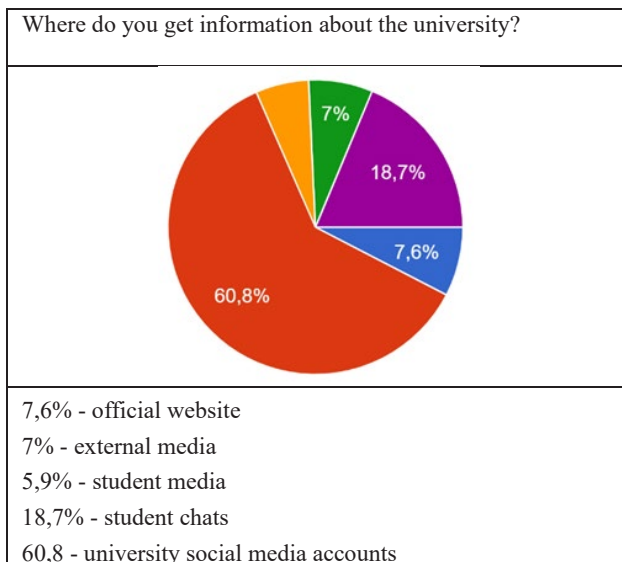
**Case 2:** Traits of the information policy of Kazan National Research Technical University named after A.N. Tupolev (KNRTU-KAI).

Kazan National Research Technical University has a great experience in analyzing, designing information influence. The university has created a system of information interaction, the press service and information services manage training and information platforms. An important experience of the university is the creation of a youth press service, which invites students of 3-4 years, studying in the major of "Public Relations". Every student or graduate student of the university can work in the youth press service. The students participate in the creation of the "news feed", create content for the website, the newspaper "Krylia" ("Wings"), city and republican media. KNRTU-KAI has formed and an electronic information and educational environment (EIE). It provides information openness of the university, access to information for students and staff of the university. The elements of the EIE are informational portal (<http://kai.ru>) as a single point to enter to all resources, personal offices of students and staff; e-learning system, electronic library system, online reception of the university management with tracking the stages of consideration.

The process of improving the quality of information policy in KNRTU-KAI is an integral part of the functioning of the university as a whole; there is a constant adjustment of all systems of the university.

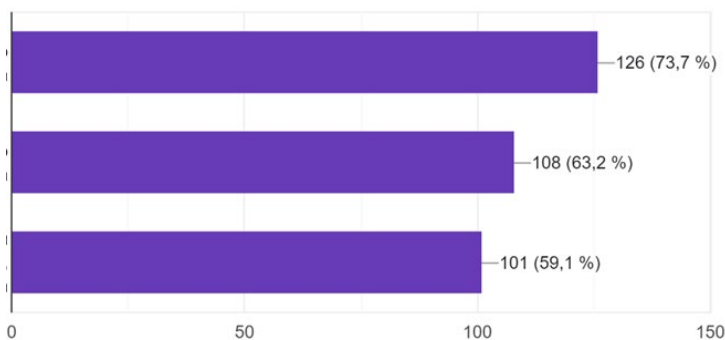
## **4.1 Survey results**

In general, the information field, availability of information more than 70% of respondents assessed above 7 points on 10 point of evaluation. University social networks became the most active platforms for obtaining information, more than half of the respondents actively participate in the creation of the information field and information exchange.



**Fig. 1.** Active information platforms in the information field of the university

Does the information policy of the university contribute to civic activism among students?



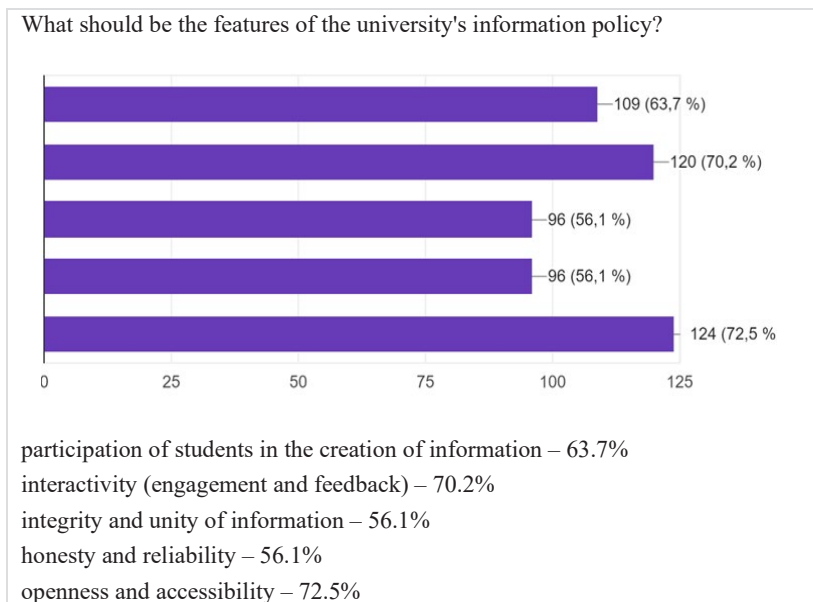
information promoting the creation of a "personal brand" of the university – 59.1%

creating a student information community – 63.2%

information in the form of news about all areas of university life – 73.7%

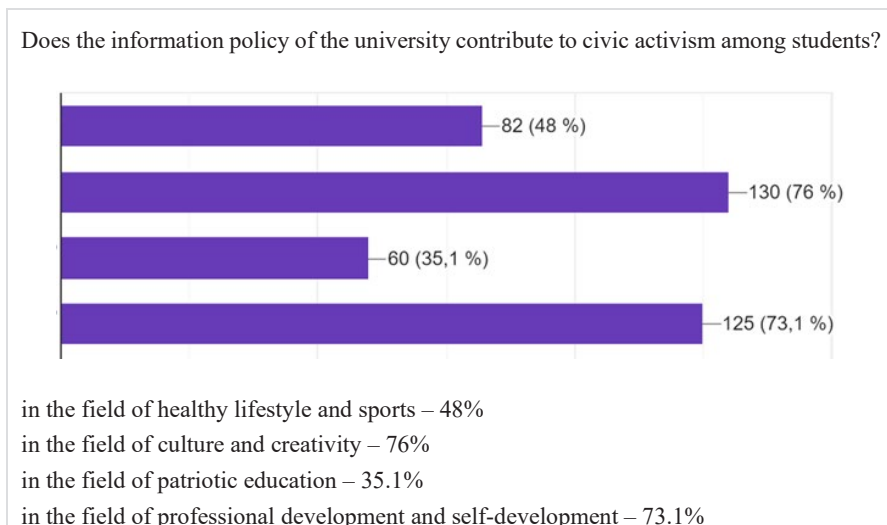
**Fig. 2.** Criteria for a successful information strategy

Fig. 2 shows mechanisms and features of the desired information policy. The most significant for the respondents were openness, information "transparency", the possibility of dialog – feedback and active manifestation of students themselves in the information space of the university as authors of their content.



**Fig. 3.** Desired (ideal) features of HEI information policy

In our opinion, an important result of the study was the identification of information topics and directions, which become priorities for the manifestation of positive, constructive activity [16-17]. Culture and self-development remains an important topic for the student community [18-21].



**Fig. 4.** Information directions (topics) as spheres of activity of the student audience

## 5 Conclusions

The research has shown that the following positions can become the elements and principles of information policy that has a positive impact on the student audience for the development of civic activity of student youth.

1. *Principle of synchronization*. It is important feature to have a high degree of synchronization and integration of the information policy of the university and the state. At the same time, it is necessary to develop projects in the field of creative industries, support volunteer initiatives to attract creative talented students to the activity.

2. *The principle of unity, coordination of actions of all information services and newsmakers of the university*. Responsible services and employees in unambiguous interpretations of key ideological positions should broadcast the information policy of the university.

3. *The principle of strategic flexible planning*, updated strategies of confronting turbulence and uncertainty. In this case, the flagship of strategy design is the target program of university development. For the creation of narratives and the formation of meanings, it is important to have its own strategic guidelines.

4. *The principle of independence*. The university should have its own information platforms: websites, studios, platforms. Within the framework of interaction with a wide range of stakeholders, universities should develop corporate media.

5. *The principle of interactivity*. University information services provide access to reliable and prompt feedback.

6. *Principle of authorship* - involvement of students in the realization of information policy. Student media and private newsmakers can be an important tool in this context.

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