

## DIGITAL AXIOLOGY IN THE EDUCATIONAL ENVIRONMENT: FEATURES OF THE FORMATION OF DIGITAL BEHAVIOR OF YOUNG PEOPLE

Pavel Vavilov<sup>1\*</sup>, Evgeniy Maslov<sup>1</sup>, Guzel Saykina<sup>1</sup>, Vladimir Yurinov<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1\*</sup>*Kazan (Volga Region) Federal University, Russia;*

\*Corresponding Author Pavel Vavilov, e-mail: [pasvavilov@kpfu.ru](mailto:pasvavilov@kpfu.ru); [eumas@rambler.ru](mailto:eumas@rambler.ru);  
[gusels@rambler.ru](mailto:gusels@rambler.ru); [vol-yurinov1@yandex.ru](mailto:vol-yurinov1@yandex.ru);

Orcid: 0009-0000-6989-459x; Orcid: 0000-0001-8919-446x; Orcid: 0000-0002-7618-1835; Orcid: 0000-0001-7652-4175

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### ABSTRACT

The purpose of the work is to analyze the transformation of the digital behavior of young people in the educational environment through the prism of the axiological approach. It is substantiated that the main problematic point of digitalization from an axiological perspective can be considered its generation of moral relativism, which results in moral irresponsibility, lack of initiative and permissiveness. The historical experience of university education in modern conditions often turns out to be unaccounted for: the value and worldview component of the educational process and its orientation towards the formation of human spirituality are lost. In this regard, an axiological analysis of the digital socialization of youth in the educational environment unfolds along with the identification of the historical trend of transformation of university education. The novelty of the study lies in the conclusion that education can act in this case as an institution for the rule-making of digital ethics, as well as the transmission of national values in the context of a “global digital village”. The basis for this conclusion is an appeal to historical models of universities in terms of identifying their potential. The work contributes to the formation of a new disciplinary field – digital axiology.

**Keywords:** Axiology, Digital Behavior, Digital Socialization, Education, Digital Ethics, University, Identity.

### INTRODUCTION

Today, one of the risks for individuals and society has become the threat from the digital transformation of society (Muñoz-Rodríguez et al., 2023; Safronov, 2019). Digital reality transforms the value structure of society and along with it the forms and channels of people’s activity. The new digital culture is being formed quite complexly, in the confrontation between digital barbarism and digital civilization; thus, a person’s digital behavior in the virtual world naturally carries an evaluative load.

In the digital era, the Kantian concept of “citizen of the world” has transformed from an ideal type, formally speaking, into a real mass person, freely wandering through the space of the global network. Digital reality and

globalization are in the same harness. Anthropologically important and relevant is the analysis of the change in the method of socialization in connection with the emergence of a new type of person – the global digital nomad – “Homo digitalis”, who has actually topologically broken away from strict ties to a specific citizenship and position. At the same time, the axiological component of the digital nomad, which is closely related to the specifics of identifying a digital person, also changes.

Obviously, the question arises: does the digital “citizen of the world” still have a high moral and civic position? How is the relationship between the universal and the national-civil in the morality of digital society changing (Robinson, 2020), and how digitalization affects the process of socialization and forms of digital behavior of young people in the educational environment (Dudnik, Markov, 2020)? This served as the starting point of our research. A new form of activity is emerging designated it as “sedentary mobility”. A sedentary nomad delegates “self-care” to digital devices and services: a phenomenon arises that the author designated as “life outsourcing”. As a result, a person loses his own opinion and ability to choose. We believe that this series of negative consequences can easily be continued.

Digital culture in our society is not formed; it is formed through the experience of bitter mistakes and defeats. The pre-existing crisis of values also leaves its mark. The absence of strictly defined norms of digital ethics gives rise to deviant forms of behavior, resentment, apathy, permissiveness, and irresponsibility. All these processes are reflected in the educational environment as the most important channel for the digital socialization of young people. The relevance of the study is due to the need to analyze value shifts in the digital behavior of modern youth in the educational environment and to identify the conditions for the process of digital socialization to take place in forms that are positive from a moral point of view.

An important task for us was to resolve the issue of the specifics of transformation of the axiological component of the educational system during the transition to digitalization. In the process of putting forward a hypothesis, we identified the need to turn to the history of university education (Vu et al., 2024; Savvina, 2012) with a strictly defined goal: searching for moral and axiological potential in historical experience.

A review of the literature indicates a still existing shortage of works devoted to the peculiarities of the formation of digital ethics (Hagelstein et al., 2021; Skvortsov, 2021), which indicates the urgent need for its conceptualization. In our study, we are based on confidence in the heuristic significance of introducing the concept of “digital axiology”. The scientific novelty of the study lies in the fact that the importance of developing a digital axiology of the educational environment as an integral component of theories of digital socialization of youth has been proven.

The most important point of scientific novelty of the study was the substantiation of the thesis that the existing digital ethics, which is spontaneously emerging in connection with the digital transformation of society, today needs a specialized, institutionally organized study of its norms and values, and therefore it is education, from our point of view, can act as a subject of rule-making in the formation of ethics of digital behavior of young people.

## METHODS

This work is an analysis of the digital behavior and socialization of young people through the prism of the ideological and axiological foundations of education in the digital era. The main research approach used in our work is an axiological approach to the problem of digital behavior of young people in the educational environment.

Hermeneutical analysis contributed to the identification of axiological transformations of identification processes and behavior of young people in the educational environment due to digitalization.

The comparative method, in unity with the socio-historical approach, made it possible to compare the main models of universities with their inherent value orientations, and to show the complexities of forming digital morality.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Digitalization affects all spheres of society today. The digital transformation of the education system is accompanied by a certain bias towards the transfer of information to the detriment of the spiritual and moral development of the student. The fact is that the nature of digital reality is such that what is important for its functioning is, first of all, the transience of information exchange (“communication” without identifying its deeper meanings), and therefore there is a danger that the personal-axiological assessment of digital content fades into the background; a person feels less moral aspects, it is difficult for him to make moral decisions (Carr, 2010).

There are a number of specific characteristics of the “device” of digital reality that transform the learning process. Thus, digital content is presented as hypertext with tags and hyperlinks; Visualization and quick change of pictures dominate. Linearity of thinking, depth of understanding, and concentration on one task atrophy; memory may generally lose its status as a tool of cognition.

Due to the fact that the digital educational environment and the everyday digital environment do not have clear dividing boundaries, the digital format of education is often superimposed on the matrix of attitudes towards digital reality as an environment for communication, recreation, games and entertainment, which undermines educational values: first of all, the value of persistent, purposeful work to obtain knowledge. As a result, the fundamental metaphysical task of education may be lost: “to convey the very value of education (and the skill to learn), to create a model of education as a benefit. We believe that the implementation of this task is impossible without acquiring intellectual virtues” (Saikina, 2022). The phenomenon of discovery, eureka becomes almost impossible if learning is perceived as a simple exchange of information. This attitude is especially dangerous for research work in the natural sciences. Entertainment content (game and online) does not focus on axiological issues.

Online education, moreover, displaces the emotional aspects in communication between teachers and students and formalizes it as much as possible. The phenomenon of “personal knowledge” (M. Polanyi) can turn into a rudimentary form, as a result of which education can lose its most important traditional function of transmitting norms and social ideals, forming value consciousness in the process of educational work. However, it is personal communication that can be a genuine channel for transmitting values. Thus, digital ethics is especially in demand in education.

In this regard, we would like to pay special attention to the history of university education in order to identify the experience of its implementation of the axiological tasks of socialization of young people.

In the work “Third Generation University: University Management in Transition” Y.G. Wissema describes the evolution of universities and highlights their functions in various historical periods. The term “University 1.0” is used to describe the first, traditional model of the university, which arose in the Middle Ages and lasted until modern times. The main purpose of universities in this model is to teach and transfer already existing knowledge in a closed system (corporation). “University 1.0” is characterized by a traditional teaching format with an emphasis on lectures and seminars, as well as minimal interaction with the outside world.

It is well known that French educators fiercely criticized scholastic universities (“University 1.0”), thereby laying down new ideals of education: an educated society, instilling moral models and believing in the moral self-improvement of the nation, educates educated citizens. In the French Enlightenment, the essence of education was seen as liberation from the dogmas of religion and political tyranny and the development of virtuous civic qualities. Following the ideals of the French Enlightenment, the German classical *Bildung* tradition substantiates education not only as the acquisition of knowledge, but also as the formation of personality, the development of morality, culture and self-awareness. The German Enlightenment emphasized the importance of a deep understanding of the world through education (primarily the humanities, *Geisteswissenschaft*) and the development of the individual through spiritual development and national identity. Based on these ideas, the University of Berlin, founded by Wilhelm von Humboldt, appeared in 1809, which is an example of the new model of “University 2.0”.

Since the beginning of modern times, universities version 2.0 has become centers not only for the transmission of knowledge, but also for their production. Universities are becoming more open: students are involved in research activities, interdisciplinary approaches and research are encouraged that combine knowledge from different fields to

solve complex problems. An important aspect of this model is integration with the outside world, including cooperation with industry, business and other scientific organizations.

Despite the good prospects of the Enlightenment project with which universities armed themselves, in line with the social-critical thought of the 19th and 20th centuries there were ideas about the “wrong side” of the Enlightenment. “...The Enlightenment was a movement that politicized every aspect of human interaction, giving rise to new forms of intolerance, utopianism and absolutism” (Potamskaya, 2022, p. 183). The most prominent representatives of criticism of the Enlightenment were supporters of the Counter-Enlightenment (F. Nietzsche, I. Berlin) and philosophers of the Frankfurt School.

T. Adorno and M. Horkheimer, in their work “Dialectics of Enlightenment” (Horkheimer et al., 2022), traced (since antiquity) the tendency of reason to turn into an instrument designed to achieve political goals, which often remain hidden and manipulative. This process of cultural modernization in the era of capitalism is accompanied by the establishment of complete administrative control over the social body, where the connection between economic efficiency and social progress becomes closest. Increasing economic efficiency can help create more equitable conditions for social well-being, but at the same time – conditions for increasing the level of control over people. In this context, the individual becomes unimportant in the face of powerful economic forces, and society gains unprecedented control over nature. Submitting to technological mechanisms, the individual gradually loses his independence, becoming more dependent on technical innovations than ever before.

Isaiah Berlin (2013), a prominent British philosopher and historian of ideas, introduced the concept of “Counter-Enlightenment” (the essay was first published in 1973). He used the concept to describe reactions to certain aspects of the Enlightenment that he believed could lead to authoritarianism and totalitarianism. Among these, aspects such as belief in a single objective truth or the desire for radical social change can have negative consequences. He warned that the absolutization of reason and the desire to create a single universal system of values could lead to the infringement of individual freedoms and the restriction of pluralistic views. The current significance of Enlightenment values is demonstrated, for example, by Jean-Paul Brighelli, a French critic of the modern educational system and author of *Voltaire or Jihad* (2015), who calls for a return to the classical examples of European Enlightenment culture in order to counter the pressure of Islamic radicalism and cultural nihilism.

As the philosopher M. Stirner notes (1967) in his essay “The false principle of our education, or Humanism and realism” (1842), by the 18th century two attitudes have emerged in higher education – realism and humanism. The goal of realism was achieved in “the abolition of the priestly class of scientists and the profane class of the common people” (subject to freedom from the authorities of knowledge); the goal of humanism, on the contrary, was achieved “through the medium of its classics and the Bible”. Stirner points to the implicit dictate of the humanistic tradition, which produces the intentions of the modern era in a person’s desire for “higher education, trying to distinguish himself with its help from the background of the common people” (Stirner, 1967, p. 10). Realism removed the practical content from humanism and left only the edifying theoretical form. In the end, the realistic tradition won; Relying on the ideals of scholarship and the practical (applied) application of knowledge in various fields, it creates, in the words of Stirner, “trained and unprincipled” practitioners. Smoothing out the identified shortcomings of the two traditions, Stirner proposes to put the dimension of morality above them with the aim of educating a free personality.

The rapid development of the modern digital educational environment in the last two decades has provided subjects of academic education with the right to realize humanistic and realistic ideals of education. With the development of technology and globalization, the University 3.0 model has emerged, which focuses on innovation and commercialization of knowledge. The integration of digital technologies (such as artificial intelligence, machine learning, augmented and mixed reality technologies) into the educational process is also an important characteristic of “University 3.0”. The introduction of digital technologies makes it possible to simulate the classical educational process and create virtual classrooms. However, the use of artificial intelligence and other digital tools, such as Chat GPT, raises questions regarding their impact on the quality of the educational process and the indirect role of their subjects.

Digital educational environments, which were routinized in the educational process during the COVID-19 pandemic, are today the main markers of the effectiveness of education and control over it. By digital educational environments, researchers understand “a set of digital technologies, methods and tools designed to support the

educational process and scientific activities of university students and teachers, to facilitate learning and self-study, the development of modern general cultural, professional and digital competencies of students with which they will be in demand on the labor market in the digital economy” (Sorokova, Rubtsova, 2023, p. 4). As you can see, this implicitly contains the ideas presented in the “University 2.0” model (carrying out scientific activities, various types of competencies, etc.). However, the specter of “University 1.0”. one way or another is contained in the educational system, since the subject-object relationship between teacher and student is an integral social and cultural component of the University project. When a university is deprived of its ideological component, problems of a psychological and moral nature arise. Raising national consciousness through the digital educational environment without the anthropic component of learning, the human factor, is extremely utopian. Therefore, in a study devoted to the development of the conceptual model “University 4.0” in the digital era, in which a society highly developed in the field of IT, and not a person, supplies knowledge about the future, one cannot find passages about the education of the individual (Vu et al., 2024).

The “University 3.0” and “4.0” models are notable for the fact that they provoke controversy regarding the subjectivity of students, whose anthropological status is blurred in the optics of considering them as autonomous “digital nomads” who can (e)migrate from one educational program to another, from one (un)finished course to another, from (not) paying attention to the lecture to viewing multimedia content on a smartphone. The possibility of bareback Bildung without bildung, that is, personal culture (in the German version, the words “culture” and “bildung” were interchangeable) is the modern privilege of having the skills of a “digital native” (Lacka et al., 2021). Therefore, it is especially important to develop the cyber-ethical foundations of the educational model and digital culture of the individual, since behind the individualization of learning, with the building of an individual educational trajectory, free access to educational materials that form the global educational community, the flexibility and adaptability of educational programs there must be an educational component that takes into account national interests states.

The fact is that digital reality, uniting people with different citizenships and nationalities into a global network society, objectively leads to a weakening of the national component in the axiological consciousness of citizens (Robinson, 2020). At the same time, moral consciousness in the mode of universality is formed in close unity with the transmission of national values and ideals in the process of inculturation. It is discovered that the destruction of channels for transmitting traditional national values simultaneously narrows access to universal culture. Digitalization creates a certain freedom in “trying on” different roles and persons, affirming a polycentric identity, but it also produces a crisis of identification processes in terms of the formation of national identity and civic consciousness. A person also finds himself in a moral-axiological vacuum and feels lost and unsupported. As a result, sentiments of “moral relativism” are growing in society, which at the behavioral level leads to permissiveness. The sphere of Absolutes has lost its value-orienting power.

In the new cultural paradigm of digimodernity (Safronov, 2019), the process of digitalization, affecting more and more aspects of human social existence, sets the vector for the virtual existence of students both outside and within the educational process. Researchers note states of “meaninglessness and emptiness” among students as factors in building psychological barriers to accepting the digital educational environment. Thus, to build a digital educational environment, it is necessary to pay attention to the formation of a digital educational culture, a goal-setting mechanism for each of its subjects and regulation of digital behavior.

The transformation of the axiological sphere in the process of digitalization can be assessed through the category “moral revolution”, which was put forward by John Danaher and Jeroen Hopster. They understand her as “a significant change in a society's moral beliefs and practices” (Danaher, Hopster, 2022, p. 2). Through moral revolutions, the areas regulated by morality expand or contract. In this case, we are talking about the fact that a completely new social form enters the sphere of moral regulation.

Important for our research is the following attitude of the authors of this work: it is necessary to treat changes in the moral sphere with a willingness to positively perceive the changes that arise there. We believe that this means that it is necessary to take a constructive approach, that is, to mobilize forces to develop digital ethics. In the course of studying the historical models of universities, we came to the conclusion that in modern society it is education that can actualize the inherent forces for improving the axiological consciousness of young people. Education has historically acted not only as an institution for the transfer of knowledge and skills, but also as the main institution of

human socialization and inculturation. Acting as a traditional channel for transmitting universal human values, in the new conditions of digital transformation of society, education can become the initiator of the targeted development of ethics of digital behavior not only for young people, but also for society as a whole. It is necessary to take into account that the education system already has experience in creating one of the branches of applied ethics – the ethics of science.

We believe that in modern conditions of the transition to a digital society, the expectation that digital ethics will form “by itself,” spontaneously, just as the norms of universal morality were formed, is inappropriate and dangerous. From our point of view, the vector of formation of digital ethics in this case will be similar to the principles of constituting branches of applied ethics.

The formation of any branch of applied ethics is caused by the objective need to regulate behavior in one of the spheres of public life in order to protect people from the dangers that arise in it, from the willfulness of people. The degree of danger of uncontrolled behavior here, therefore, is such that it affects the so-called issues of “life and death.” In this regard, the regulation of behavior through abstract moral norms (which a person must be able to apply according to the situation) is no longer possible. A detailed study of the standards is required.

According to A.A. Guseinov, the main function of applied ethics is “to promote more efficient functioning of the relevant applied sphere” (Guseinov, 2021, p. 46) using the “motivating role of the moral factor.” As a rule, branches of applied ethics are formed in response to the need to solve vital problems relating to life and death, health, and safety of people; in this case, the development and institutionalization of additional moral codes is necessary.

In digital reality, the situation is further aggravated by the fact that people online often hide behind nicknames and logins (Muñoz-Rodríguez et al., 2023; Hagelstein et al., 2021), as a result of which he does not entangle himself with “the bonds of responsibility”. It must be borne in mind that people are little aware of the legal side of network communication (Hagelstein et al., 2021, p. 2).

Despite the fact that the digital sphere does not represent some isolated sphere, but permeates all spheres of society, it still makes sense to designate it in the status of applied ethics according to a number of parameters: the development of its norms and principles will require targeted specialized rule-making activities; cooperation of professionals from different fields of knowledge and practice in dialogue with public opinion, taking into account public practice; detailing the norms of digital behavior (in contrast to universal human morality, the norms of which are formulated in the abstract). In a certain sense, the norms of applied ethics, being detailed point by point, begin to function in the logic of a hypothetical imperative (situational, conditional) and are supplemented by externally coercive levers of influence.

José Manuel Muñoz-Rodríguez, Carmen Patino Alonso, Teresa Pessoa, Judith Martín-Lucas (2023) posed the problem interestingly: they believe that the very fact that the younger generation is unable to safely use the Internet means that they cannot be considered “digital natives”. This is where critical thinking can help (Carr, 2010). Therefore, we believe that it can be attributed to the principles of digital ethics. And the function of its formation, of course, can only be assumed by education.

## CONCLUSION

Based on our research, we came to the following conclusions:

1. The digital behavior of the subject of education is largely determined by the specifics of identification processes in the digital era. There is a certain gap between a person’s status in real social space and his digital identity in the “global digital village.”
2. Strengthened by digitalization (due to the integration of humans into global cyberspace), the crisis of national identity contributes to the loss of civic position and related forms of youth activism.
3. The digital transformation of society leads to a new relationship between the universal and national components in the functioning of morality.
4. Playing with identification, the possibility of an anonymous (irresponsible) presence in digital reality turns out to be not freedom, but arbitrariness. Online communication demonstrates problems with the culture of formalizing

emotional reactions, insensitivity to other people's experiences and an inability to empathize. Hence, one of the products of digital behavior is moral relativism

5. If in other areas of real life the deficit of developed moral consciousness is compensated by etiquette forms of external courtesy and decency, then in the digital environment they cease to be significant. Therefore, the rules of etiquette work to a greater extent in public space with a real presence.

6. Negative processes occurring as a result of digitalization require the targeted development and institutionalization of digital ethics. Education can act as an institution for rule-making activities in the formation of the principles of digital ethics and axiology. The formation of cyberethics requires the cooperation of various specialists, and the educational system can play the role of an organizing center. At the same time, it is necessary to take into account the cultural and historical experience of universities in the formation of the value consciousness of students and their national characteristics.

7. In this regard, it is necessary for subjects of educational process management to understand the importance of developing principles and norms of digital ethics, establishing a unique code of digital communication for the purpose of further implementation in educational disciplines and educational work with students.

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