MEDIA EDUCATION LITERACY IN RUSSIA:
PAST AND PRESENT PERSPECTIVES

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Abstract italiano

L'articolo offre un quadro storico sulla nascita e lo sviluppo della media education in Russia. Dagli inizi del XX secolo fino ai giorni nostri - sia pure con alti e bassi - la media education ha avuto un posto di rilevanza nella ricerca di studiosi di diversa provenienza disciplinare come pure nella pratica di insegnanti, educatori e professionisti dei media. In chiusura vengono riassunti il ruolo e gli obiettivi dei numerosi centri di media education presenti nel territorio nazionale.

Parole chiave

Media education, Russia, Centro di Media Education, quadro storico

English Abstract

The article offers an historical overview of the birth and development of media education in Russia. From the early decades of the XX century to nowadays - albeit with ups and downs - media education has always

played an important role both in the research of scholars with different disciplinary backgrounds as well and in the daily practice of teachers, educators and media professionals. In the final part, the role and objectives of the numerous media education centres active in the country are presented.

Keywords

Media education, Russia, Media Education Centre, Historical development

1.   Media Education in Russia: An historical overview

One can say that the hearth of film education in Russia was lit in 1919 when a film school was opened in Moscow. Important constituents of general media education in this country in the 1920s were film clubs and clubs of young journalists, amateur film/photo studios. In 1925 the Soviet Cinema's Friends Society (SCFS) was organized. In 1930 this society included 110 thousand members. The SCFS' statute distinguished the following objectives: to study the mass audience and to teach by the means of cinema.

Simultaneously media education of pupils and students through press was developing. «The government supported this process, pursuing two main goals: the spread of the communist ideology and the liquidation of illiteracy of population (almost half of the country's population couldn't even read). These two goals were closely connected with each other. The role of media in a Soviet society was increasing rapidly. Dozens of newspapers and magazines published by different schoolchildren and youth unions appeared. Kids-journalists often joined the clubs where professional journalists taught them to prepare articles for newspapers and magazines» (Sharikov, 1990, pp. 29-30). Schools in almost all cities of Russia issued some kind of press or school papers in the 1920s.

However, many of the creative attempts in Russian media education were abolished by the Stalin regime in 1934, when SCFS was closed. From the late 1930s till early 1950s on the whole only those film activities were allowed which served aims of propaganda. However, in spite of the strict censorship, the debate clubs of SCFS developed in this way or another not only the creativity of children but also the critical thinking of the audience. Therefore they could provoke (undesirable for the regime) thoughts about life in the country and its social structure. Also cameras of some non-professional SCFS members could shoot something not very appropriate, not sanctioned by the authorities.

It was not until late 1950s–early 1960s that media education was given a second birth in Russian schools and universities. The amount of institutions where courses of film education were taught was growing (Moscow, Petersburg, Voronezh, Rostov, Samara, Kurgan, Taganrog, etc.).

Beginning from 1957 film clubs began to appear again, uniting thousands of the *The Tenth Muse* lovers of different ages. In 1967 the first big seminar of film clubs' leaders from 36 cities took place in Moscow. A statute of many clubs included not only the watching and discussion of films, but studying the history of cinema, works of outstanding masters, sociological research, etc. (Lebedev, 1969, pp. 52-54).

By 1967 there were about 4 thousand small amateur film studios and circles (Ilyichev and Naschekin, 1986, p. 38). Some of them became sort of media education centres. For example, they did sociological research about the role of movies in people's life, studied the history of cinema, organized film shows and discussions of films, exhibitions, made documentary, feature and animated amateur films and so on. The movement of school journalists and photographers was also given a new start.

The social and cultural situation in Russia at that time provided grounds for a great interest in cinema among school children and teachers. Video and PCs were only dreamt of in science fiction novels. Films were seldom shown on TV, (in fact there was only 1, later 2 TV channels). Therefore cinemas were crowded (statistics showed that in average, a person went to the cinema about 18 times a year), and school children went to the movies much more often than adults. For many Russians the screen was the only window into the world, cut through the still thick "iron curtain". Thanks to the production of 8- and 16-mm cameras the amateur film studios movement developed very actively until the early 1980s. Instructors or teachers of such clubs were taught at the Moscow Institute of Culture, some Pedagogical Institutes and Universities. The number of clubs and studios grew from 5 thousand (1974) to 11 thousand (1983), and the number of members of these youth groups grew from 60.000 to 120-130 thousand people (Ilyichev and Naschekin, 1986, pp. 53-60). In the second half of the 1980s many of these clubs began to use videotapes for making films, that was, no doubt, easier and cheaper.

«Curricula for the basics of cinema art for schools and pedagogical institutes were written in the 1960s-1970s. These programs were significantly different from many programs of other subjects: their authors avoided strict regulation, dogmatic approach [...]. It was emphasized in these curricula that communication with art should be enjoyable. One more important peculiarity of the programs on cinema art was that the task was not to prepare specialists in a small field, because the country did not need 50 million film critics. The objective of cinema pedagogic was to widen the spiritual, cultural world of school children, to develop their personality» (Waisfeld, 1993, pp. 4-5). I agree here with Waisfeld who said that «classes of media teachers can be described as a dialogue. An old "teacher-centered" scheme, where a teacher is a source of knowledge and a pupil is its receiver, is broken. Both pupils and teachers get a bigger field for creativity, improvisation, for game activities. A game is treated as kind of a reality model. It helps to grasp the inner dynamics of a film, its deep roots» (Waisfeld, 1993, p. 5).

However, some Russian teachers of media education still practiced outdated pedagogical approaches. For instance, Bernstein believed that «teaching with film is impossible without constant control of what a pupil

sees on TV and in cinema theatres every day» (Bernstein, 1971, p. 7). Here, I think, one can clearly see the similarity with viewpoints of many American media teachers (especially in the 1940s-1970s) who also considered that the main goal of media education was a strict control, «information defense», «inoculative approach», aimed against the harmful impact of press, screen, etc.

In early 1980s there was a big experiment of introducing film education into the primary and middle school curriculum in some Moscow schools. Similar experiments on media education (on the press, cinema and TV materials) were conducted in summer children centres like *Ocean* and *Orlyonok*. As for the universities, lectures and practical classes for the teachers-to-be were held. Some Institutes of Teachers' Professional Development (in Moscow, Kurgan, Tver) have also made a contribution to media education. Seminars and workshops on teaching cinema were conducted. Some universities integrated media education into courses of the aesthetic education.

Media education in Russia is not a required subject (with the exception of some secondary schools used as an experimental field and media orientated universities and faculties). Thus there is no national curriculum for media education, no standards or guidelines. Many Russian teachers still confuse media education with using media as a technical aid. Media language is seldom a topic in its own right. Only few school principals encourage the integration of media education, or support teachers' initiative. Media education can be integrated across the curriculum into Informatics (Internet & computer application lessons), Language and Literature, Arts, or Science. Another variant is an optional autonomous media education course.

For example, Film Studies courses have been taught in Voronezh Pedagogical Institute since 1970. Then similar courses appeared in Voronezh University and Institute of Arts, and several schools. Since 1965 the film club has been working in Voronezh. Some other Russian cities and towns (Moscow, Petersburg, Kurgan, Tver, Rostov, Samara, Taganrog, etc.) have a similar structure of media education centres. As a rule, it is a net of courses on media education in universities, teachers' training colleges, institutes, school elective subjects, film clubs in schools and community centers.

In 1967 the Council for Film Education in schools and higher educational institutes was established by the Union of Filmmakers (Moscow). It was headed first by a film critic N. Lebedev and then by Professor I. Waisfeld. He was the first Russian media educator who delivered a report on problems of media education at UNESCO conference in Rome in 1966. Some other Russian media/film educators who began their work in schools, colleges and clubs in the Sixties are: Ury Usov, Inna Levshina, Zinaida Smelkova (Moscow), Nina Gornitskaya (Petersburg), Stal

Penzin (Voronezh), Uly Rabinovich (Kurgan), Oleg Baranov (Tver), Evdokiya Gorbulina (Armavir), Elvira Gorukhina (Novosibirsk) and others.

From the very start the Council tried to consolidate the efforts of media teachers-enthusiasts from different Russian cities (Moscow, Petersburg, Voronezh, Kurgan, Samara, Novosibirsk, Rostov, Taganrog, etc.). It collaborated with the Ministry of Education, Pedagogic Academy and State Committee of Cinema specifically in publishing teaching plans, curriculums, sponsored seminars, workshops and conferences. Starting from the second half of the 1960's such conference were held in Moscow, Tallinn, Alma-Ata, Erevan, Tbilisi, Petersburg, Kiev, Kurgan, Bolshevo.

At all the stages of the media education development in Russia there were its opponents too. They were afraid that fast and awkward accomplishment of the ideas of school film education can destroy the direct contact between the screen and young audience by its importunate interference. Thus, after special training newly educated 'film literate' audience would critically evaluate, not simply enjoy a film. But in order to enjoy cinema one should watch films freely, without any bias. One cannot turn a visit to a cinema theatre into the obligatory school subject. It is not right to 'freeze' love of the youth for the cinema (Rybak, 1980, p. 4).

However, despite of all the difficulties, the 1980s in Russia were marked by «the process of 'deepening' of media education researches; transition from the description and summing up of the pedagogic experience to the revealing of psychological and/or sociological grounds of this phenomenon; the growth of the researchers' interest to children creativeness through media. Researchers began to explore media effects on smaller children. In the 1980s their activity affected the elementary school too» (Sharikov, 1990, pp. 38-39).

In the end of the 1980s the vigorous development of the video began to change the work of clubs and amateur children's studios. VCRs and video cameras were used more and more often for making and showing films. School TV studios were emerging. In 1990 the Association of Young Journalists was established. In 1998 the Council for Film Education was transformed into the Association for Film and Media Education. In the 1990s it joined the European Association for Audiovisual Media Education.

Today the number of members of Russian Association for Film & Media Education is about 300: primary & secondary level schoolteachers, high school, university, college, lyceum teachers & professors, leaders of film-clubs, journalists, etc. Russian Association for Film & Media Education includes also members of the Laboratories of Screen Arts and Media Education (Russian Academy of Education, Moscow). The main directions of Association's work are: integration of media literacy courses in school and universities; development of school and university curricular; teacher training programs; conferences and seminars; publications; research; maintaining web resources on media education.

At the same time, as it has already been mentioned, media education in Russia has come across numerous difficulties during the whole time of its existence (ideological, financial, technical, etc.). During the period between the 1920s and the 1980s the political and censorship control, and poor technical equipment of schools and higher educational institutions hindered media education movement. In the 1990s media teachers were granted freedom and independence for developing programs and their practical implementation. But they lacked financial and technical support. Many Russian schools and colleges in the 90s didn't have enough money for teachers' salary, not mentioning the audiovisual equipment. Moreover, still just the few universities were preparing future teachers for media education of pupils.

The drastic change in social and cultural situation in Russia effected serious alteration in media education's development. The remains of the «iron curtain» fell down. More and more Russian were getting the opportunity to travel abroad. Cinema stopped being the only window into the world. Films (including foreign films) were not a deficit anymore; you could watch them on TV on different channels. Media repertoire was satiated with American action movies. Information about film and music stars, new releases and premiers could be read in hundreds of newspaper, magazines and books. By the end of the 1990s nearly every urban family owned a VCR. Computers, interactive games, Internet spread very rapidly. Thus, an uncomfortable question arised: could a school teacher, as a rule lagging behind his pupils as far as media consumption concerned, have authority in the sphere of media culture with his pupils?

But Russian media education was developing. International conferences on media education were held in Tashkent (1990), Valuevo (1992), Moscow (1992, 1995). The Screen Arts Laboratory at the Research Institute for Art Education of the Russian Academy of Education (this laboratory was headed by Professor Dr. Ury Usov until his death in April 2000) published books and teaching materials, programs on media and film education (by Prof. Dr. Ury Usov, Dr. Larissa Bazhenova, Dr. Elena Bondarenko, etc.).

Similar processes were going on in Russian film clubs in 1990s. After a long resistance by authorities (who looked at film clubs and media education movement as potentially dangerous encouragement of oppositional critical thinking) finally, in 1988 the Russian Federation of Film Clubs was officially established.

«Perestroika» years at first seemed as the golden age for film clubs. The foundation of the Federation promised an anticipated liberation from the censorship's dictatorship, an opportunity of the exchange with the best Russian and foreign films. In fact, the Film Clubs Federation began to collect its own film library, club enthusiasts were invited to regional and All-Russian seminars, conferences and festivals, famous actor and

directors toured the country meeting their audience face-to-face. But the drastic growth of prices forced its rules. By the end of the 1990s even big Russian film clubs could not afford buying a new film copy from Moscow. Not to mention small film clubs in small provincial towns. Together with the film club movement the economic crisis hit amateur school film and video studios too. The vast majority of them closed down.

The publication of programs and study guides has always been an important component of media education. Moscow publishing houses («Prosveschenie», «Pedagogica», «Detskaya Literatura», «Novaya Shkola», «Kino Center», «Iskusstvo») have published quite a monographs, programs dedicated to the issues of media education. Articles on film/media education were published in magazines «Iskusstvo Kino», «Pedagogica», «Specialist», «Ecran», etc.

One of the most active enthusiasts of literature on film education was Lev Rybak – a teacher, film critic, the chief editor of the 'Kino Centre' publishing house. The author of several brilliant cineastes' biographies, Lev Rybak founded the book series *Cinema & School*. There he published four of his books, written in an entertaining way, using a language comprehensible both for teachers and high school students. Three of these books tackled the problem of screening Russian classical and modern literature. And in his book *Alone with a Film* he wrote about the subjectivity of film perception. «Before I became a film critic - Rybak wrote - I had been a school teacher for more than 15 years. I went to the cinema with my pupils. And sometimes I was really hurt when a pupil of mine, after having seen a good film, said: 'Rubbish!' evidently not considering the film to be a good one. I was mad: you can interpret a film in your own way, but try to comprehend it! Viewers' impressions of a film are always different, individual; there is no sense in trying to level them. But how can one make these impressions emerge at all and not be so poor?» (Rybak, 1980, p. 6). I must agree that this is still one of the key questions on the media education agenda though many media education researchers and teachers have tried to find an answer to it.

So, there was no scarcity of pedagogical literature. However no regular academic journal on media education has been issued till 2005. The journal of 'Media Education' was set up by the Association for Film and Media Education, and Taganrog State Pedagogical Institute. The magazine offers a needed forum for the exchange of information about different forms and contents of media education, thus fostering essential coordination of efforts of Russian media educators.

As far as the research work is concerned, the Laboratory of Screen Arts at the Institute of Art Education of the Russian Academy of Education was in the lead for several decades. First doctoral theses on media education appeared in the 1960s. Research by Baranov (1968), Karasik (1966), Rabinovich and Rabinovich (1966) were dedicated to the problem of film

education of school pupils. And Saperov's thesis (1969) analyzed the problem of using radio broadcasting in education. In the 1970s many dissertations about teaching audiovisual literacy were defended (Usov, 1974; Levshina, 1974; Ivanova, 1978; Malobitskaya, 1978; Monastyrsky, 1979). Later studies of media education for pupils included: producing and using audiovisual means in school (Pressman, 1981; Bulavko, 1982), filmmaking by school children (Bozhkov, 1984; Genkin, 1985), social and psychological aspects (Shakeeva, 1983; Kirillova, 1983), morals education of teenagers (Smelkova and Zharinov, 1986), analysis of using foreign films in media education (Fedorov, 1986), inter-disciplinary ties of literature and film courses (Polichko, 1987), employment of cinema as a complex education of pupils (Gutova, 1987), aesthetic education and artistic development of school children (Usov, 1989; Evtushenko, 1991; Bondarenko, 1994).

Theses based on the school data made way for the research of media education in universities. The most important works on film education in Universities appeared in the 1980s-1990s (Odintsova, 1981; Penzin, 1987; Fedorov, 1993; Platunova, 1995). In 2000 the first Russian thesis analyzing the foreign experience, more specifically, the theory and history of media education in the U.S., was written (Novikova, 2000). In the 1990s the Laboratory of Technology and Media Education (Russian Academy of Education) headed by Professor L. Zaznobina worked out a concept of school media education, integrated into the basic curriculum.

From the 1990s onwards, Russian media education specialists (U. Usov, L. Bazhenova, A. Levitskaya, G. Polichko, A. Spitchkin, A. Sharikov, A. Fedorov and others) have joined the international media educators' community, participating in international conferences for media education (held in France, Canada, Austria, the UK, Brazil, Spain, Greece, Switzerland), publishing their works in French, American, English, Australian, and Norwegian journals.

By the year 2001 the number of secondary and higher educational Russian institutions training professionals in media, has quite grown. Besides VGIK (Russian State Institute of Cinematography), School for Script Writers and Film Directors, Russian Institute of Professional Development in the Field of Film, now there are St. Petersburg State University of Film and Television, Film-Video Colleges in Sergeev Posad and St. Petersburg, film/television colleges in Irkutsk, Sovetsk, and Rostov-on-Don. Professional media education is included into the curriculum of St. Petersburg State Academy of Culture, St. Petersburg Academy of Theatre Art, Institute of Professional Development of TV & Radio Specialists (Moscow), Independent School of Cinema and Television (Moscow), Grymov's School of Advertising, Institute of Modern Art (Moscow), New Humanities University of Natalia Nesterova (Moscow), several schools of animation, etc.

First works summarizing general problems of media education, appeared in 1990s (A. Sharikov, A. Fedorov, L. Zaznobina). In February 2000 (A. Fedorov and others) the first in Russia bilingual (Russian-English) Internet site http://www.eduof.ru/mediaeducation on media education was created. The same year staff of the Laboratory headed by L. Zaznobina in the Russian Academy of Education opened one more Russian web site on media education.

The important event in media education development in Russia was the registration of the new specialization (minor) for pedagogical universities - «Media Education» (N 03.13.30) in 2002. Since 2002 this specialization is included in the education process in Taganrog State Pedagogical Institute (head of this media educational project is professor A. Fedorov together with media educators: I. Chelysheva, E. Murukina, N. Ryzhykh, V. Kolesnichenko, D. Grigorova and others).

The media educators team from Taganrog State Pedagogical Institute since 1994 published about 30 monographs (Fedorov, 2001; 2005; 2007 and others), textbooks and more than 400 articles about media education and media literacy. This team also received the research grants (media education topics) from many Russian and foreign foundation (foundation of President of the Russian Federation, Russian Foundation for Humanities, Foundation of Russian Ministry of Education, Kennan Institute (US), IREX (US), MacArthur Foundation (US), Open Society Institute (Soros Foundation, US), DAAD (Germany), Fulbright Foundation (US) and others.

In 2004 UNESCO and South Urals Media Education Center conducted the interregional round-table discussion *Media Education: Problems and Prospects* in Chelyabinsk. The participants discussed the concept and notions of media education and educational standards in this area and mapped out the ways of concerted efforts to be made by national and regional mass media in the coverage of media education problems. According to the participants, media education is a way of shaping national information and education policies and promoting information literacy, media culture of personality, and civil society. Media education problems were considered in the reports. Media education was proclaimed as one of ways of the development of a national information and educational policy, social integration, and media literacy.

The final document of the "round table" included suggestions to introduce a major specialty "Media education" with a qualification "Media educator" for universities of Russia; to develop the plan of effective realization of Media Education in various regions of the Russian Federation; to create a database about forms and methods of media education activities with the purpose of the analysis and generalization of experience; to publish *Encyclopedia of Media and Media Education*; to support the regular release of a journal "Media Education".

In the begin of XXI century Media Education Centers or projects (including media education/literacy conferences) were created in Belgorod (A. Korochensky and others), Byisk (V. Vozchikov and others), Chelyabinsk (I. Fateeva, A. Minbaleev and others), Ekaterinbourg (N. Kirillova and others), Irkutsk (L. Ivanova and others), Krasnodar (T. Shak and others), Omsk (N. Hilko and others), Perm (P. Pechenkin and others), Samara (A. Sharikov and others), and others Russian cities.

Many projects are realized due to my colleagues from the Russian Academy of Education. A network of school media libraries (libraries containing books, journals, audio and video cassettes, CDs, DVDs, etc.) has been created in recent years, and a number of most interesting creative network projects for schoolchildren have been launched - these directions are guided by Y. Yastrebtseva. Her colleagues, L. Bazhenova and Y. Bondarenko, aim their efforts at promoting media educational work in Moscow schools. During the lessons, play activities are often used (especially with younger children), students perform creative tasks (making a short video film, a photo collage, etc.), and have collective discussions of media texts. Similar work is going on in schools and universities of other Russian cities - Tver, Voronezh, Samara, Perm, Chelyabinsk, Rostov, Taganrog, Tambov, Krasnodar, Yekaterinburg, Volgodonsk…

For example, the recognizable symbol of media education in Voronezh is the Student Film and Video Club, where participants come to discuss especially significant or problem films - the club is led by S. Penzin, an art critic and assistant professor of the Voronezh State University. Professor G. Polichko from the State University of Management is the initiator of annual media educational festivals for schoolchildren - with master classes, talks given by well-known figures of media culture, and collective discussions… Such festivals have taken place for about 10 years in different Russian cities.

In 2005, the Center for Media Education in the city of Togliatti organized a "Virtual Tour of the Media Land", an Internet game for schoolchildren[1] . The participants form teams, visit some Russian media educational websites, study their content, answer questions, accomplish creative tasks, and create presentations. To find out more about the methods used in particular media educational classes your readers may visit the «Biblioteka» (*Library*) section of the Russian Association for Film and Media Education website.

The Taganrog State Pedagogical Institute was the site of the first all-Russia Research School for Youth, *Media Education and Media Competence* (October 18-25, 2009). The school was carried out with financial support from the Federal Agency for Science and Innovation within the framework of the federal programme "Scientific and scientific-pedagogical cadres

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[1] http://mec.tgl.ru/modules/Subjects/pages/igra/priilog_1.doc

innovation Russia for 2009-2013" (the head of the school was Alexander Fedorov).

Sixty young scientists from Belgorod, Borisoglebsk, Irkutsk, Krasnoyarsk, Moscow, St. Petersburg, Vladikavkaz and other Russian cities participated. Young scientists from Kiev (Ukraine) and Minsk (Belarus) arrived as guests.

Russia's leading experts in the field of professional and mass media education attended the opening ceremony and the roundtable discussion.

The purpose of the school was, firstly, to effectively educate young researchers and teachers in the best scientific and methodological advances in the field of media education, and secondly, to organize a creative dialogue on issues of media education and media competence. A third purpose was to create an integrative communicative space for young scientists through increased interpersonal contacts as well as to intensify the exchange of scientific expertise and information between young scientists.

Because applications to the school were on a competitive basis, priority was given to young researchers, teachers and graduate students under the age of 35 years, whose scientific achievements and interests were as close as possible to the themes of the school. The organizing committee selected the articles, which were then posted on the official website[2].

During the School "Media Education and Media Competence", the following occurred:

- young researchers and teachers (up to 35 years of age) effectively utilized modern media education theory and methodology that account for the age of the audience, and especially the use of all types of media (mass communication), technology, critical analysis of media texts of different types and genres;
- they also studied the theoretical foundations of 'Media Education and Media Competence', the basic theory of media education and the basic theoretical approaches to the critical analysis of media texts in the learning process (scientific impact);
- in the process of conducting the Research School (lectures, seminars, practical work and creative assignments), they were also able to master modern methods of media education (a methodological effect). An important feature of the Research School was the combination of the expert community (distinguished scholars in the field) sharing scientific experiments with the young scientists and the possibility for mutual discussion of reports by the young scientists, including testing and questioning.

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[2] http://eduof.ru/mediacompetence

The fields of application of the results can include all areas of media education, media competence, and media literacy - in higher and secondary schools and institutions of further education. Possible users of the scientific and methodical results are teachers, graduate students and university students, academic researchers in the field of media and media education, school teachers and libraries – in sum, a wide audience interested in themes of media education. Proposals from the Research School for methodological approaches to media education are being introduced in the educational process of higher professional education at the Taganrog State Pedagogical Institute (03.13.30, Specialization "Media Education").

Due to the principled possibility of wider use of its results, the practical significance of the All-Russia Research School for Youth, "Media Education and Media Competence" and the conclusions of scholars, graduate students, students and teachers in the teaching process (lectures, seminars and executions of courses, degrees and dissertations) can be useful to any modern university.

Within the framework of conferences the reports directly concerning questions of media education, problems of the organization of multimedia databases, electronic libraries, and media libraries in libraries for children and youth were heard. Important objective for Russian media educators is to open (and get it recognized by the Russian Ministry of Education and Sciences) a new university major speciality (major) "Media Education" within the framework of which it will be possible to prepare professional media educators for universities and schools.

Within the context of increasing interest to media education worldwide, the UNESCO program's support, recent developments such as the introduction of a pre-service teacher training, and the systematic publication of a journal, media education has good prospects in Russia.

2.   The role of the media education centres

The comparative analysis of the models and functions of the Russian media education centers showed that despite having some definite differences and peculiarities, they have the following common features:
- differentiated financing resources (public financing, grants, business organizations, etc.) and regional media information support;
- presence of famous Russian media teachers heading the media education centers;
- a target audience of a wide age-specific and professional range (with the predominance of students of different educational institutions, teachers, media experts);
- the chief aim of a media education centre is multi-aspect, as a rule, but

in the whole, it can be generalized under a common assertion – development of the audience's media competence. And under media competence of a person we mean a sum-total of an individual's motives, knowledge, skills, abilities (indicators: motivation, contact, information, perception, interpretation/evaluation, activity, and creativity) to select, use, critically analyze, evaluate, create and spread media texts of different types, forms and genres, and to analyze complex phenomena of media functioning in the society;

- the objectives of the media education centers are also varied, but in the whole, there predominate the objectives aimed at developing media competence of different social groups: development of the audience's skills to find, transfer, accept, and create media information (media texts) using television, video, computer and multi-media technologies; teaching the audience to acquire and critically analyze media information; delivering courses in media education for teachers; support of festival, film club and amateur film movements and others.

Also one can point out some common functions of the media education centers:

- educational work, organization and realization of research projects, conferences, and publishing activities;
- as a working definition of media education they use either the definition given in the UNESCO documents or any other close terminology;
- as a key media education theory they refer to a synthesis of the practical and cultural studies media education theories, the theory of the audience's critical thinking development, or a theory similar to the practical theory including some elements of other theories, e.g. the theory of media activity;
- a basic media education model usually consists of the following components: the objective unit (development of the audience's media competence), the contents unit (theory: development of the audience's motivation, knowledge about media culture; practice: development of the audience's perception and analytical skills, and media creativity skills), the result unit (level enhancement of the key media competence indicators); and as for the diagnostic unit (level detection of the audience's media competence), it is not necessarily included but is often implied;
- the organizational forms are aimed at media education integration into educational, out-of-school and leisure activities of the audiences, media educational courses for teachers; organization of film/media clubs for school students and young people, support of school-youth Internet sites, print media, TV, etc.; holding of panel discussions, seminars, workshops, training courses, conferences, festivals, competitions on

media education topics; publishing monographs and handbooks;

- the teaching methods are manifold both according to knowledge sources («verbal», «visual», «practical» methods) and according to the level of cognitive activity («explanatory-illustrative», «reproductive», «problem-solving», «searching» or «heuristic», «research» methods). However practical methods are preferred;

- major areas of the media education program contents are in character with the above-mentioned objectives and aimed at the audience getting a wide range of knowledge about media culture, developing the abilities to percept, critically analyze, and comprehend media texts, encouraging media creation, mastering media educational skills (for teachers);

- media education programs application fields normally cover a broad range of educational and cultural institutions (inclusive of the audience's self-education, e.g. with the help of media educational Internet sites).

3.   Conclusion

Our analysis has showed that the media educational models offered by leading Russian media educators are similar to the ones of their foreign colleagues, however they definitely have some peculiarities, such as a more tolerant attitude to studying the aesthetic/artistic scope of media culture.

The media education centers have a common aim to enhance the level of all the basic indicators of the audience's media competence: motivation, contact, information, perception, interpretation/evaluation, activity, and creativity.

Thus, a personality with a high level of media competence (though some scholars prefer to use the terms «media culture level», «media literacy», or «media educational level» instead of the term «media competence», it testifies a terminological pluralism characteristic of the media educational process) evinces the following media competence characteristics:

1. Motivation: a wide range of genre, subject-based, emotional, epistemological, hedonistic, intellectual, psychological, creative, ethical, aesthetic motives to contact media flows, including:

- media texts genres and subject diversity, including non-entertaining genres;
- new information search;
- recreation, compensation, and entertainment (in moderation);
- identification and empathy;
- his/her own competence confirmation in various life activities and media culture;

- search of materials for educational, scientific, and research purposes;
- aesthetic impressions;
- readiness to apply efforts when reading, comprehending media contents; philosophic/intellectual, ethic, and aesthetic dispute/dialogue with media message authors, and critical estimate of their views;
- learning to create his/her own media texts by studying creation of professionals;

2. Contact: frequent contacts with various types of mass media and media texts.

3. Information: knowledge of basic terms, media communication and media education theories; media language peculiarities, genre conventions, essential facts from media culture history, media culture workers, clear understanding of mass communication functioning and media effects in the socio-cultural context, the difference between an emotional and well-grounded reaction to a media text.

4. Perception: identification with the media text author, basic components of the «primary» and «secondary» identifications being preserved (excluding a naïve identification of the reality with the media text contents), i.e. an ability to identify with the author's position which enables to anticipate the course of events in a media text.

5. Interpretation: an ability to critically analyze media functions in the society with regard to varied factors based on highly developed critical thinking. Media text analysis based on the perceptive capability that is close to «comprehensive identification», an ability to analyze and synthesize the spatiotemporal form of a media text; comprehension and interpretation implying comparison, abstraction, induction, deduction, synthesis, critical appraisal of the author's opinion in the historical and cultural context of the work (expressing reasonable agreement or disagreement with the author's point of view, critical assessment of the moral, emotional, aesthetic, and social value of a media text, an ability to correlate the emotional apprehension with conceptual judgment, extend this judgment to other media genres/types, connect the message with their own and other people's experience, etc.). This reveals the critical autonomy of a person (irrespective of public opinion on the media), his/her critical analysis of the message based on high-level information, motivation, and perception indicators.

6. Activity: practical skills connected with selecting, creating and spreading media texts (including individual and collaborative projects) of different types and genres; active self-training ability.

7. Creativity: creativity in different activities (perception, game, art, research, etc.) connected with media.

The greater part of the indicators can be generalized under a common term of «activity» (perceptive, intellectual, practical) connected with mass media and media education.

The diversity of the media education models does not exclude a possibility to generalize them by building a certain integrative model with the objective, diagnostic, contents units (theory and practice) and the result unit. A different matter is that not in every media education model one can distinguish all the units. For instance, in some media education centers created within the walls of «houses of youth creation» and leisure centers of practical orientation, the theoretical and diagnostic aspects are given less attention than in the media education centers functioning within universities or research studies institutes.

Our generalized model of media education is based on the cultural studies, practical, semiotic, ethic, and critical media education theories, that confirms the conclusion that modern teachers often synthesize different theories (e.g. a synthetic theory of media activity). As a matter of fact, this model represents a synthesis of the analyzed theories: socio-cultural, educational-informational and practical-utilitarian models, and reflects modern media educational approaches, offered both by Russian and foreign scholars.

Modern media education models lean towards making the best use of media education potentialities depending on their aims and objectives; they are varied and can be wholly or partially integrated into the educational process. Besides, they do not only observe the general didactic principles of education (upbringing and all-round development of a personality in studying, scientific and systematic approaches to teaching, knowledge availability, learning in doing, visual instruction, self-education encouragement, life-oriented education, long lasting and sound knowledge, positive emotional background, individual approach in teaching, etc.), but also some specific principles connected with media contents. Among them one can mention the unity of emotional and intellectual personality development, a person's creative and individual thinking development. Whereas the teaching methods are aimed at taking advantage of potential media culture opportunities, as the use of hedonistic, compensatory, therapeutic, cognitive-heuristic, creative and simulation media culture potentialities enables the teacher to involve the audience in perception and interpretation of media messages, spatial-temporal analysis and visual structural analysis of a media text. Moreover, reference to the present day media situation which alongside with some negative aspects (low-quality mass culture content, etc.) opens wide opportunities for teachers connected with using video recording, computers, and Internet that approximate a contemporary viewer to the status of a reader (personal, interactive communication with media).

The methods proposed for the realization of the modern media education models are usually based on units (blocks or modules) of creative and simulation activities which can be used by teachers both in class and out-of-school activities. A significant feature of the analyzed models is their wide integration: at schools, colleges, universities, additional training institutions, leisure centers. Moreover, media education lessons can be conducted in the form of lessons, electives, special courses, either integrated with other school subjects, or used in clubs' activities.

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