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Media Education as a Relevant Practice of Contemporary Culture

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Abstract

The author highlights the main features of the Western tradition of media education that has influenced the development of media and education relationships in the Russian culture of the early XXIst century. Today, we have the three key directions in theoretical understanding and practical implementation. The first is media education for professional work in journalism and mass media. The second is media education as the practice of media literacy. The third is media education as a component/tool for professional pedagogical work in education. Each of these trends occupies a special position in the history and perspectives of mediacultural development in the context of Russian education.

Keywords: media, education, media education, media literacy, media pedagogy, media culture

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1. Introduction

Media education of the late XXth–early XXIst century is a constant subject of Russian and foreign research, where it is traditionally treated in the context of media culture, which includes the culture of information transmission and the culture of information perception. Media culture serves a system of personal development of an individual capable of reading, analyzing and assessing media texts, creating media texts, learning new information through media etc. [8, p.8].

Media education experience in other countries possesses established traditions and trends. Western practice is to create a learning and methodological environment where teachers' training takes place within the context of their working situation and is integrated with the daily pedagogical practice and concrete pedagogical goals. The teachers become active actors within an educational environment that provides them with a continuous learning process.

Concepts of media education established abroad are focused on the development of critical thinking within the informational environment, development of students' practical skills, creative abilities and aesthetic tastes that would help them to gain independence and acquire subsequent education outside the educational institutions. Among such approaches are: ideological theory of media education; 'protectionist' ('injection', 'defense', 'vaccination') theory of media education; theory of media education as 'meeting the needs' of students; 'practical' theory of media education; media education as a tool for 'critical thinking' development; cultural-oriented theory of media education. [10].

2. Materials and Methods

This research uses an empirical method of *selection and systematization of material* relevant to the issues of media education. Based on the relevant foreign and Russian research, we describe the key tendency of media education in the XXIst-century pedagogy.

3. Data Analysis

The works by foreign researchers of late XXth–early XXIst century reflect an experience of integrating media education in educational institutions, in the process of teaching concrete courses, and in the educational process in general. R. Berger and J.McDougall posited the main question in professional media education: "*how* we teach ought to change, as well as *what* we teach" [1]. We believe that this – *theory vs practice* – would subsequently allow the students to successfully determine their place in a labor market.

J.Potter proposes a model of teaching digital media through 'curating' [6]. This idea has become popular in pedagogy as well, facilitating rethinking how the relations between 'expertise, apprenticeship and participation' work within the process of designing new environments conductive to the development of students' critical thinking and media literacy [1, p. 9]. The authors outline what factors have to be tracked: how a student's experience is formed; how an access to resources is provided; and how a student participates in specialized 'creative centers' acquiring practical skills. Each stage has inbuilt controls that implements the idea of mentorship.

In their article, E.Morrell and J.Duncan-Andrade [5] use the term 'critical media pedagogy' which the authors define as the purposeful work of educators and students

to develop thinks that would help the young people to critically assess and interpret media-generated messages, as well as messages from other sources (in their communication with their peers, families etc.). According to the authors, these are the basics of academic literacy. E.Morrell and J.Duncan-Andrade believe that the result of these joint activity would be the students learning how to create their own narratives reflecting their sociocultural experience that can help the students both to become critical citizens and to find their professional vocation: "Through a problem-posing (Freire, 1970) and culturally affirming pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1994), students can also learn to deconstruct dominant media narratives and to create their own counter-narratives to the media's depiction of urban youth…" [5].

Focusing on the students' interests would allow to correct educators' work in their efforts to achieve learning outcomes. The creation of digital media product requires teachers to master information and communication skills (ICT) and aesthetic representation of reality in media images. Few teachers are experienced in constructing this kind of educational process combining technical and aesthetic aspects.

Mastering ICT skills is a necessary professional component for specialists in any field. In his work *Media Pedagogy: Media Education, Media Socialization and Educational Media,* L.Qvortrup proposes to define media pedagogy as: a content of education (media education); an education and socialization within media environment (media socialization); and the use of media in teaching and for teaching (educational media) [7]. These three approaches help to implement the principles of developing a media literate individual of the XXIst century and open perspectives for meaningful pedagogical solutions applied at various levels of education.

One of the projects to overcome this situation was the 'Media Plan for ICT, TV and the Net' project realized as part of the program of the Ministry of Culture 'ICT, Mass Media and Danish Folk Schools' (ITMF) [see 3, p.151–170]. Professional journalists were invited, without leaving their main jobs, to teach the training course that was aimed also at teachers. One of the stages of this project involved both experienced and inexperienced teachers, so that the first group served as consultants and mentors for their colleagues just beginning to master media production. An experience of working with professional TV producers resulted in a series of joint workshops on media production. For the process of training future teachers, it is vitally important to provide students with an access to educational resources and to teach them technical skills required for media production.

The main point underlined in the majority of foreign research is practical orientation tied to the competitive advantage, professional self-realization and job prospects.

4. Results

In Russian academic research, media education, its essence and characteristic traits were defined by A.F.Feyodorov as "the process of personality development with the help of, and based on, the mass communication media, with the goal to develop communication culture governing relations with media, creative and communicative abilities, critical thinking, skills required to comprehensively perceive, interpret, analyze and assess media texts, various forms of self-expression through media techniques. Media literacy acquired through this process helps individuals to actively use capabilities of the TV, radio, video, cinema, press and Internet information field. The content of media education is: basics of art history in media sphere (types and genres of media, functions of media in society, language of media, history of media culture etc.), information on the main use areas of theoretical knowledge (professional media, amateur media, media distribution channels, movie clubs in media sphere, leisure organizations, educational institutions etc.), practical creative tasks utilizing media content" [11, p. 1].

In Russian practice, the 'union' between media and education is only beginning to take shape along the following lines:

1. media education for professional work in journalism and mass media;

2. media education as media literacy;

3. media education as a component/tool for professional pedagogical work.

The first trend is more widespread and diverse, thanks to the existing theoretical and methodological base, as well as its practical applicability. For example, E-library online database lists 102 journals in 'Mass communication. Journalism. Mass media' section, 11 of which are listed in VAK, including 2 indexed by Web of Science (as of January 2018). We also have educational programs with courses teaching media creation, distribution and functioning, with subsequent analysis and interpretation of the content. For example: the program 'Educational Media' (*Obrazovatel'nye media)* by Moscow State Pedagogical University (2018), undergraduate program 'Mediacommunications' (*Mediakommunikatsii)* by Moscow's Higher School of Economics (2017), professional development program 'Management of Digital Media' (*Menedzhment tsifrovykh media)* by the Faculty of Journalism of Moscow State University (MGU, 2017), educational courses by the Media School and Cinematic Arts 'How to Make a Movie: A Laboratory of Your Future Film' (*Kak snyat' kino: laboratoria Vashego budushchego fil'ma)* (2018) and others. Most of the time, the target area of media education

resources is media community. It includes journalists, TV professionals, advertising and public relations professionals and even media lawyers, for whom, according to A.N.Fortunatov, "it is not the 'package' that matters – information, journalist, TV presenter etc. What matters is a level of education and range of vision exhibited by the creators of media world, demiurges of new reality – this is the main humanizing goal" [12, p. 149].

Since media sphere includes the majority of society that is actively taking ownership of the basic levels of media literacy, there is a high demand for the new methodological approaches in the experimental work of secondary and higher educational institutions, as well as in organizations providing supplementary education and in leisure centers. The main goal of media education (**second trend**) is an acquisition of media literacy skills: mastering the technologies to create meaningful media content and gradually introduce it in the education process.

A year ago, International Forum "Media Education in Pedagogy: Existing Methods and New Approaches to Its Management" (March 16–17, 2017) [9] raised the questions regarding the functioning of the Russian system of media education management. The Forum's main goal was to consolidate efforts of administrative, educational and media communities in order to create an open informational educational space that would include efficient pedagogical media technologies and innovative media and information resources. The topics discussed at the Forum show a high level of interest from the pedagogical community to the modalities of interaction between media and education:

1. management system of media education in pedagogical sphere;

2. regional models of media education;

3. media and information literacy as a key competence of modern teacher;

4. media culture and information security;

5. information hygiene and information health of children and young people;

6. corporate media and their role in the system of media education;

7. media center as a media educational technology facilitating the development of students' communicative competencies;

8. use of media education technologies for patriotic education in schools.

These lines of exploration are the results of the search for a new strategy of educating the future generation – a strategy that would be able to manage an informationally saturated environment. In this sense, media pedagogy becomes an adaptive environment that has a powerful educational, formative and pedagogic potential to help individuals not only become a part of learning process but also to realize their own creative potential.

In Russian practice, media-assisted learning is mostly implemented as part of supplementary education for children: media studios, media resources, school media. There is a demand for specialized teachers who would be able to provide their students with guidance, who would be professionals in this area and actively help the students to present their works as a project/project-oriented activity. Examples of such projects may include: films on a given topic, DIY objects, school magazines or newspapers, blogs accompanied by supplementary materials, actions and step-by-step instructions leading to the desired educational outcome.

Finally, **the third trend** is related to an educator's personality and work practices. Media generation that spends a lot of time on social media and resources hosting content of various quality, needs a special approach to education, which would help them to find their bearings in informational streams.

5. Discussion and Conclusions

Russian researchers stress the main goal of media pedagogy which "should not concentrate only on mass media as one of the ontological dimensions of media reality. Its goal is a human being and his/her relationships with information, which today is mostly consumed through media but is not limited to them" [12, p. 145]. According to A.N.Fortunatov, media pedagogy is "the road to create a personality in harmony with media and social realities; a set of methods providing the development of creative and communicative abilities, critical thinking, skills requiring to comprehensively perceive, interpret, analyze and assess media texts" [12, p. 145–146]. This is a well-established definition that focuses on the practical advantages of successfully teaching media literacy skills to students.

Practice-oriented approach takes priority in contemporary education. It allows to cater to cultural needs and demands, with education being a part of culture. One of the relevant tasks facing XXIst-century teachers is the formation and development of students' academic literacy skills according to their subsequent activity and professional choices. Introduction of contemporary technologies and media resources in the

educational process would help teachers to attract and hold their audiences' attention on the relevant and important social topics, questions and problems regarding global and Russian culture.

The prevailing diversity of texts in global space requires contemporary subject to possess academic literacy in perceiving and further interpreting information. To do this, requires understanding of processes and technologies used to produce journalist and mass media 'messages'. An active and thinking reader of diverse texts and their competent interpretation is capable to create new meanings in culturally relevant forms. For teachers, contemporary media are both technical and informational resources. The use of these resources opens new perspectives in the general education process, as well as in building a dialogue between different social groups (pedagogical teams, student, parents, employers) and in career guidance. Media literacy as an individual quality not only provides a person with a competitive advantage on the labor market, but also creates his/her high demand in a professional field.

Funding

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