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Published in the USA
Media Education (Mediaobrazovanie)
Issued since 2005.
ISSN 1994-4160
E-ISSN 1994-4195
2026. 22(1): 103-112

DOI: 10.13187/me.2026.1.103
<https://me.cherkasgu.press>



Regional Youth Television Studio Within Schoolchildren's Media Literacy Education Trends

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Abstract

The authors analyze the two-year experience of the Regional Youth Television Studio at Novgorod Oblast Television (Veliky Novgorod), which has evolved from a children's TV program into a professional launchpad and initial media professionalization platform for aspiring young journalists – children and adolescents. Using participant observation, they traced the project's development, evaluated the studio concept, and assessed its thematic implementation on air. The Regional Youth Television Studio on the NT channel creates a practice-oriented educational environment to systematically foster schoolchildren's media literacy education trends and professional skills among children and youth. Its uniqueness stems from integrating youth-led programming into the live broadcast schedule, with schoolchildren as interviewers and hosts. The study examined schoolchildren's on-air work via telecontent on the channel's website, supplemented by interviews with channel executives and participating journalists. In the second phase, expert interviews with project-independent child psychologists and educators addressed benefits and risks of early media professionalization. Identified risks include blurring media-reality boundaries, violations of child hosts' personal boundaries, and the burden of popularity and public exposure. Ultimately, the studio demonstrates how regional television, amid digital communication conditions, integrates media literacy education, enabling self-expression, personal development, professional training, and creativity. It also cultivates regional identity via local cultural codes, aiding human capital retention in economically disadvantaged regions.

Keywords: media literacy education, schoolchildren's media literacy education, regional television, Regional Youth Television Studio, video content, youth TV program.

1. Introduction

The relevance of this analysis stems from the ever-increasing information flows that both adults and children encounter daily, from which they can scarcely shield themselves, coupled with society's growing need to cultivate robust media criticism and information hygiene skills among citizens. In the contemporary digital world, the imperative for early media literacy education intensifies, engaging children not only in conscious consumption but also in the production of information. The primary aim of children's media literacy education is to prepare individuals for safe, constructive integration into the media environment – ultimately fostering media-competent personalities capable of independently navigating media spaces, distinguishing facts from opinions, critically evaluating sources, creating meaningful content, and adhering to digital hygiene, ethics, and law.

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This article analyzes the risks inherent in schoolchildren's media literacy education and their involvement in media production – drawing on insights from child psychologists and educators experienced in media teaching and professional media work.

Furthermore, the authors themselves possess hands-on experience as experts and speakers in federal media literacy education projects. This expertise enabled a comprehensive analysis of the Regional Youth Television Studio at Novgorod Television, situating its outcomes within national media literacy education practices and identifying key managerial gaps.

Although media literacy education in Russia traces its origins to the 1970s, it gained institutional form only in the 2000s, with substantive engagement in schoolchildren's programs materializing across institutions during the past decade. Project-based media literacy education stands out as one of the most promising approaches – an interdisciplinary field intersecting pedagogy, psychology, journalism, cultural studies, and technology – particularly amid youth's declining appreciation for traditional education (Teschers et al., 2024; Zvereva, Khvorova, 2022;).

The significance of the media literacy education case under study lies in its potential for practical scalability, benefiting all stakeholders in regional media literacy education processes.

2. Materials and methods

This study aims to analyze and evaluate the operations of the Regional Youth Television Studio on regional television, contextualized within the accumulated experience of federal media literacy education projects, while identifying risks associated with early involvement of schoolchildren as on-air hosts.

The primary sources for this article include, first, over 100 scholarly articles identified via keywords such as *media literacy education for children and adolescents*, *children's television*, and *children's studios*; second, analysis of 138 on-air episodes featuring child hosts and their media promotion on social networks; and third, content analysis of texts from five expert interviews with psychologists and educators involved solely as viewers of the studied project.

Experts for the interviews were selected based on the following criteria: possession of a higher degree in psychology or communication studies, at least five years of experience in practical psychological counseling or teaching schoolchildren, and active engagement in the media sphere (maintaining personal social media accounts and familiarity with the object of this study). Additionally, an interview was conducted directly with the studio's founder and director, Anastasiya Saveliyeva – a graduate of the Journalism master's program at Yaroslav-the-Wise Novgorod State University.

The video content of the episodes was examined with respect to thematic content, ties to the regional media agenda, and scripting decisions.

The methodology draws on established approaches to video analysis (Baykova, 2022; Kress, 2006; Shesterina, 2024), and studies of project-based activities (e.g., Almulla, 2020; Bazikyan, 2025; Fateeva, 2007; Guo et al., 2020).

3. Discussion

Literacy in new media constitutes a core set of social and cultural competencies essential for navigating the digital media space (Gáliková Tolnaiová, 2020; Young, Ronquillo, 2022; Young, 2015). Youth interactions with media often emerge as a central research concern, prompting scrutiny of potential risks alongside their developmental benefits (Edgerly 2025; Livingstone et al., 2021; Oden, Porter, 2023), which underscores the critical role of media competence in fostering informed and constructive engagement.

Thus, according to K.J. Rott and B. Schmidt-Hertha (Rott, Schmidt-Hertha, 2014), German scholar D. Bakke delineates four essential elements of media competence: (1) media criticism, involving analysis and interpretation of media texts; (2) media studies, focused on grasping mass media structures and functions; (3) media use, encompassing technology skills for consuming and processing information; and (4) media content creation, which covers producing original content and participating in the information ecosystem.

Another approach, proposed by M. Tully et al. (Tully et al., 2021), emphasizes constructing effective relationships with the digital space and its vast information volume. It delineates five core domains of news literacy competencies: context; creation; content; distribution; consumption.

Russian researcher A.V. Fedorov developed a more detailed model encompassing five levels of media competence:

- Cognitive (knowledge of the media system);
- Motivational (interest in media analysis);
- Evaluative (critical judgment);
- Activity-based (content creation);
- Ethical (responsibility for produced and published content) (Fedorov, 2008; Fedorov, 2017; Fedorov et al., 2007).

Fedorov's model of media competence holds a leading position in Russian media pedagogy. It conceptualizes media competence as an outcome of purposeful media literacy education, a marker of personal culture, and a vital tool for critically evaluating incoming information. Unlike other models, which typically prioritize functional-instrumental aspects, Fedorov's approach encompasses a wide array of psychological, social, and cultural factors.

Furthermore, youth contribute to territorial development by forging robust cultural identities rooted in place (Gehl, 2013; Zhang et al., 2024). This holds particular significance in contexts of territorial competition for human resources – particularly creative youth – where agendas promoting territorial identity through local cultural codes emerge as essential (Kaminskaya et al., 2024). Such strategies prove paramount for economically disadvantaged regions.

Research on media literacy education projects predominantly examines specific facets – rhetorical, communicative, or socializing (Gritsai, 2025; Hobbs, 2016; Kozlova, 2019). Moreover, middle schoolers represent an optimal developmental stage for media literacy education (Purinton Drake et al., 2021). In addition, collaborative content creation strengthens community belonging (Armstrong-Carter, Telzer, 2021), learning motivation, and therefore academic performance (Huang, Cockayne, 2023; Fujita et al., 2019). Thus, active project participation beyond core curricula fosters competitiveness essential for adulthood (Krskova et al., 2024).

Analyzing a five-year children's media studio in Zhukovsky, N.L. Lugovskaya notes: "Not all participants will pursue journalism, but information handling skills prove universally valuable. Mastery of new information technologies remains a prerequisite for competitiveness in the modern world" (Lugovskaya, 2023, 43). I.N. Demina and N.L. Melnikova highlight the Irkutsk *Sok* studio's real-world media production: "Theory and practice complement each other as children master journalistic genres, write texts and scripts, participate in filming, appear on camera, develop projects, and edit them. Activities span news reports, interviews, clips, entertainment and educational programs, live broadcasts, social advertising, documentaries, and fiction films" (Demina, Melnikova, 2024, 30).

Western initiatives further illustrate effective youth media literacy education approaches, emphasizing the importance of actively engaging youth in the learning process rather than adopting top-down or excessively prescriptive strategies (Ni Shuilleabhain et al., 2021; Ramasubramanian, Scharrer, 2015: 183;). The PBS NewsHour Student Reporting Labs project exemplifies this by integrating schoolchildren with PBS's professional newsrooms to cover regional issues (Hobbs, 2016). Implemented through active project-based pedagogy, it yields positive outcomes as R. Hobbs demonstrates heightened intellectual curiosity, enhanced fact-checking competencies, respect for alternative viewpoints, information synthesis skills, and collaborative teamwork under live broadcast conditions.

Examining various media studios' experiences, it is difficult to agree with O.E. Kohanaya's view that children and adolescents constitute a "rather inert and parent-dependent category, easily engaged and directed toward desired goals – effectively manipulating their emotions and desires" (Kokhanaya, 2022, 76). This critique intensifies regarding her assertion that "children participating in TV programs act merely as instruments for the aforementioned category, rendering them victims and, in a sense, television products themselves" (Kokhanaya, 2022, 77).

Research commonly neglects the concrete results of schoolchildren's media literacy education – the actual products of their media endeavors.

4. Results

Among recent Russian federal media literacy education projects involving regional schoolchildren, several merit particular attention.

The flagship initiative of the public organization *MediaPrityajenie* (Media Attraction), under the Movement of the First, enables participants to develop personally while acquiring essential media and journalism competencies. This nationwide program targets talented youth passionate about media development, serving as an excellent springboard for future journalism careers with

its competitive focus. Additionally, within *MediaPrityajenie*, another major initiative called *MediaZachet* (Media Grade) aims to enhance children's and adolescents' media literacy. Unlike *MediaPrityajenie*, this contest requires individual participation only. Its central task is to engage children in actively covering special federal *Days of United Actions* events through their personal social media accounts. Another project with a media literacy education component from the Movement of the First is the regional initiative *Pervye v Media* (First in Media). Analysis of these three media literacy programs demonstrates that *MediaZachet* functions as a diagnostic instrument to reveal gaps in schoolchildren's media competencies, whereas *MediaPrityajenie* and *Pervye v Media* equip young learners with practical, activity-oriented methods to thoughtfully address and strengthen these areas. Also, in October 2025, Veliky Novgorod hosted the II All-Russian Media Forum of Young Diplomats, attended by 150 children from across Russia, as well as Kazakhstan and Belarus. The business program of the Forum included presentations of participants and their projects – schoolchildren showcased video vignettes dedicated to the cultural-historical landmarks of their regions – and master-classes on media production.

As evident, federally grant-supported projects primarily focus on identifying talented children through competitive formats, while incorporating educational components such as master-classes and nationwide travel.

The Regional Youth Television Studio project on Novgorod Oblast Television (URL: <https://novgorod-tv.ru/teleproekty/detskaya-studiya>), first, has a clear media specialization in television and, second, is aimed to directly involve schoolchildren in all stages of television production. The project aired in summer 2024, initiated by Novgorod Oblast Television and the Novgorod Oblast Committee for Youth Policy. The first filming of the Regional Youth Television Studio took place during Youth Day celebrations in Veliky Novgorod.

Regional television primarily addressed its image-building objectives: as is well known, featuring children and animals in footage guarantees viewer attention. At the same time, the channel's quarter-century of accumulated experience and the need to attract young journalistic talent amid competition from nearby megacities – Veliky Novgorod lies on the transport corridor between Saint Petersburg and Moscow – cannot be overlooked. As the project leader noted in an interview, the educational component of the Regional Youth Television Studio on Novgorod Oblast Television was not the initial rationale for its creation. Rather, the educational component emerged as a consequence of the need to train children in journalistic skills to enhance the quality of the produced television content.

Today, per the organizers' vision, the project's core goal combines producing television content for young audiences in Novgorod Oblast with fostering an educational environment for schoolchildren. Key objectives include:

- Imparting foundational skills in television journalism;
- Cultivating media culture and literacy;
- Unlocking creative potential;
- Developing communication skills, teamwork, and time management.

Analyzing the target audience of the Regional Youth Television Studio project, it divides into two groups: those prioritizing participation in television production and those viewing it as an educational opportunity. As of early 2026, the project roster includes 13 schoolchildren aged 10–17 serving as hosts.

The program centers on the interview genre, with episodes featuring guest dialogues up to ten minutes long. New episodes air on Novgorod Oblast Television every Tuesday and Thursday – two per week – followed by weekly repeats. Notably, regular scheduling emerged only six months after launch, securing a fixed slot in the broadcast lineup. Moreover, the initial five-minute format proved restrictive, thus the episodes were expanded to ten minutes – doubling the runtime. Current episodes run at least ten minutes, occasionally exceeding 15 minutes in exceptional cases.

A distinctive feature of the project lies in empowering children to independently conceptualize the dialogue structure with invited guests and formulate pertinent questions. The program editor selects topics and guests, furnishing participants with concise details on the interview's objectives and the guest's profile; children are then tasked with conducting thorough research on both the individual and the subject matter. Once the young hosts draft their scripts, these undergo review by the project leader for refinements. The team aims for minimal edits to the children's versions, often achieving this, as noted by the leader.

The training program adopts a bifurcated structure, commencing with a theoretical phase. Experienced Novgorod Television journalists and anchors lead in-person master-classes for beginners, covering essential television production elements: program formats, interview preparation, on-camera behavior, pre-recording nerves, handling unexpected issues, and practical insights tailored to the novice Novgorod Television participants. These sessions acquaint children with core concepts, including information processing, content structuring, fact gathering and validation, on-camera presentation, interview preparation and guest interaction, script development, and appropriate online/social media conduct.

A distinct emphasis in training future journalists is placed on oratory skills and the art of public communication. Professional journalists instruct children in:

- Articulation techniques and voice modulation;
- Teleprompter operation;
- Overcoming communicative barriers on camera.

These elements predominantly pertain to the theoretical phase of training young journalists. Production competencies, by contrast, are honed directly on the set during the recording of new episodes for the Regional Youth Television Studio on Novgorod Oblast Television.

On-camera work demands multifaceted communicative competence from participants, encompassing the following.

- Verbal expressiveness. Young journalists master technically precise, articulate speech, employing intonational variety and cultivating an individual tempo-rhythmic style. They learn to deliberately control their vocal volume, pace, and pauses.

- Nonverbal communication. Through on-camera performance and collaboration with the production crew, children develop command of facial expressions, gestures, posture, and simulated eye contact with the audience beyond the screen. They acquire proficiency in body language, emotional expressivity, spatial orientation relative to cameras and on-screen partners.

- Dialogic interaction. Scripted scenarios facilitate skills in active listening, emotionally responsive reactions to interlocutors, constructive dialogue management, improvisation, and multitasking.

Moreover, the filming process fosters cognitive development, including the following.

- Memory and concentration. Children memorize scripts, personal lines, action sequences, and the project leader's technical directives.

- Creative thinking. Periodic improvisation during shoots cultivates associative thinking, idea generation, and adaptability to unforeseen changes.

- Analytical abilities. Participants develop skills in analyzing situational dynamics and interlocutors' responses to specific questions, forecasting the consequences of their statements and actions, and critically evaluating their own performance upon reviewing program episodes featuring their contributions.

On-camera work further cultivates stress resilience. According to the project leader, children develop self-control, learn to manage anxiety, and respond constructively to critique. The television production process also fosters emotional intelligence, as participants build empathy toward guests and crew members alike. Goal-directedness emerges through repeated takes, wherein children cultivate patience in pursuing results, perseverance, motivation for self-improvement, and accountability for their contributions to the collective endeavor.

Regarding technical skills acquired on set, children primarily master foundational television journalism competencies, including interviewing principles, equipment handling, and prop interaction.

The most critical phase of program production within the Regional Youth Television Studio project is preparation, typically comprising several stages.

- Topic and guest selection. To enhance productivity and minimize costs, multiple programs (five to ten) are filmed per session, enabling shoots every two to three weeks – but necessitating extensive pre-production efforts.

- Topic research, guest background investigation, and curation of compelling facts. The more material uncovered, the more engaging the interview structure becomes.

- Mapping key discussion points for elaboration or emphasis, ensuring a focused narrative rather than a diffuse "everything and nothing" approach.

- Question formulation and narrative structuring. Children develop these independently, utilizing information provided by the editor or gathered through their own research.

– Script review, editing, and refinement of the young hosts' drafts.
 – Another crucial pre-recording step is guest warm-up, occasionally omitted due to time constraints or the guest's tardiness. However, this stage significantly streamlines the filming process. Ten to fifteen minutes prior, the host and editor initiate casual conversation with the guest – on their journey, the weather, or any neutral topic – while thoroughly briefing them on on-set procedures. Given the novelty of such environments for most guests, this clarification reduces tension by ensuring all participants comprehend the production workflow.

Another key preparation element involves drawing on personal experiences related to the discussion topic. Children are prompted to recall relevant anecdotes or incidents, which – when incorporated – help breach the "fourth wall," fostering greater proximity between the guest and audience. Before filming, schoolchildren practice articulation drills, learn to guide conversations actively rather than passively follow, and master fundamental on-camera techniques.

Given the program's predominant use of event-driven or portrait-style interviews, guests typically include nationally or regionally prominent figures – who prove inherently compelling due to their professions or talents – or individuals linked to noteworthy events capable of recounting them engagingly.

The Regional Youth Television Studio guests have included athletes, musicians, vocalists, writers, youth project authors, educators, deputies, regional government officials, comedians, entrepreneurs, artists, civic organization representatives, volunteers, journalists, Olympiad and federal contest winners, bloggers, cultural workers, non-profit activists, scientists, and many others.

The project studio has hosted even nationally renowned guests during their visits to Veliky Novgorod. For instance, the Regional Youth Television Studio has featured interviews with Alexander Bianki (grandson of writer Vitaly Bianki); Yuliana Bukholts (dancer and contestant of Russian dance television show aired on a federal channel); Marina Ivanova (vocalist with the Russian-language pop band *Kraski*); and Ekaterina Manoylo (Russian author).

Notably, the Regional Youth Television Studio production team employs a mobile filming format during urban events, such as Youth Day, the Finals of the Championship of High Technologies, and the Family Picnic city holiday. For these occasions, the team deploys a portable studio – a boxed setup with three walls matching the project's primary color scheme and stylistic decor. Additional visual identifiers of the program include hosts' uniforms (blue hoodies branded with Novgorod Oblast insignia), Novgorod Television channel logo pins presented to guests at each shoot's conclusion, and branded tablets used for scripts.

Initially, the Regional Youth Television Studio operated without systematic promotion: episodes aired on Novgorod Oblast Television and were later reposted in the channel social media VKontakte group. From late 2025, regular multichannel promotion strategies were adopted. Organizers report ongoing experimentation, with only effective formats retained long-term.

A mandatory pre-release promotion checklist item now requires teaser posts across all channel social media platforms.

VKontakte teasers feature text posts augmented by on-set photographs, whereas the Telegram channel employs circular video previews wherein guests succinctly preview the interview content in a single sentence. These derive from 30–60-second vertical videos, formatted for Telegram as needed and repurposed in original form for VKontakte Stories.

Another milestone in the Regional Youth Television Studio project's development on Novgorod Television was the host roster renewal, highlighted in channel news: *Novgorod Oblast Television ignites new stars. Regional Youth Television Studio Host Casting Held in TV Tower. Three dozen young Novgorod residents came to test themselves on camera under the glow of studio spotlights* (URL: <https://novgorod-tv.ru/news/bolee-30-detei-proshli-kasting-na-novgorodskom-oblastnom-televidenii-chtoby-poprobavat-sebya-v-rol-i-vedushhih>).

Approximately 35 children submitted applications, 30 of whom attended the auditions. Open to ages 10–16, the selection process ultimately invited six participants to collaborate and join filming.

Following the expansion of the television project, it became necessary to introduce a new stage in its educational component, particularly for the new hosts.

Regarding experts' evaluation of media literacy education for schoolchildren, the greatest consensus emerged in response to the question of its necessity at an early age. Key arguments include the following:

– *Today's children enter the media world at birth, making it essential to foster their critical thinking, heighten awareness of digital risks (like those in social media), equip them with skills to counter manipulation tactics, and build sharp analytical abilities;*

– *Approximately half of children verify information, while the rest accept it unconditionally; children's critical thinking is not yet fully developed;*

– *Childhood provides a prime opportunity for absorbing new knowledge in any area;*

– *Media literacy education for present-day children extends further than nurturing critical thinking and creative talents; it builds socialization and communication proficiencies – particularly essential, considering that many elementary school pupils encounter difficulties with asking questions, crafting prolonged coherent expressions, or offering logical recounts.*

The majority of experts rated the Regional Youth Television Studio project highly, even though one expert sought clarification on success criteria:

– *It's a bit stuffy – let me specify: what exactly constitutes success for a children's studio? What scales do we use to measure it? If we're talking coverage and likes, there's room for growth. But if it's about self-realization opportunities for kids with serious media ambitions, the success is evident.*

One of the five experts, a practicing psychologist, expressed a critical evaluation: *By my perception, the children do not understand what they are asking or saying. They are mere "talking heads," lacking emotional depth and conceptual clarity in their statements. I am not opposed to children's television, but it should be managed by professionals in both journalism and child psychology. Children need to be taught how to formulate questions and reflect. What I observed lacks these elements – they simply read scripts prepared by others, which is evident and hinders emotional engagement in the dialogues. There is no chemistry.*

Only one of the five experts perceived no issues or risks associated with schoolchildren's early involvement in broadcast media, asserting: *From my perspective, early media broadcasting engagement brings solely benefits: improved speaking and listening skills; new social connections; precocious professional orientation; and enriched life experience.*

The remaining experts identified several risks and challenges associated with schoolchildren's involvement in studio work:

– *It is essential to delineate media space from real-life domains (school, home, neighborhood, extracurricular activities); younger children may struggle with this distinction, as their psychological boundaries remain underdeveloped – even many adults fail to compartmentalize professional roles effectively.*

– *It is crucial to consider how children will experience and psychologically process the encounters arising from media work. Thus, preparation is essential to equip them for potential life changes and to assist in managing "excessive" experiential demands.*

– *Broadcast settings overload children's nervous systems via cameras, lighting, and audiences, fostering hyperactivity, anxiety, fears, and nightmares; limited life experience impedes accurate information conveyance, while fame pressures cultivate narcissism or diminished self-esteem upon setbacks.*

– *Popularity and public visibility represent a heavy burden even for adults. For a child, early exposure to broadcasting and audiences can pose a double risk. Critical reflection on one's own actions and others' behavior is still forming in childhood. Ethical and moral sensibilities develop very gradually. Meanwhile, normative age-related crises – with their conflicts between 'want,' 'can,' and 'must' – remain inevitable. Thus, rebellious teenagers and young adults lacking conscience yet inflated egos are a common phenomenon among 'stars' who captured public attention at a tender age.*

Thus, the in-depth expert interviews overall demonstrated the project's viability and its practical value.

5. Conclusion

At the current stage, the Regional Youth Television Studio project in Veliky Novgorod fulfills the following functions:

– Initial familiarization of children with television production;

– Development of communicative skills through on-camera work and team interactions at the filming site;

– Formation of basic understandings of media ethics;

– Production of content for regional broadcast airwaves.

At this developmental stage, the project exhibits certain growth areas requiring attention, specifically:

- Fragmentation of the educational program and lack of a systematic educational approach;
- Absence of a clear training plan;
- Insufficient integration – or more precisely, complete lack of integration – with educational institutions;
- Absence of clear and comprehensible mechanisms for evaluating educational outcomes.

Furthermore, instituting a certification system upon completion of educational modules would enable effective tracking of the project efficacy. This would not only enhance children's retention of material but also elevate the quality of the Regional Youth Television Studio program episodes.

Another avenue for project development involves establishing a partnership network with other media literacy education initiatives or institutions. Collaborative events and resource exchanges – for instance, with the Department of Journalism at Yaroslav-the-Wise Novgorod State University – could broaden children's knowledge horizons from both practical and theoretical perspectives.

Regarding mechanisms for monitoring the effectiveness of introduced changes and innovations, the following tools may be employed:

- Testing children on foundational television journalism principles to assess theoretical knowledge acquisition;
- Increased viewer engagement in social networks, where metrics such as view counts, likes, and comments would gauge improvements in content quality post-training.

Meanwhile, the project and children's preparation for on-air activities must account for the risks of schoolchildren's involvement as hosts outlined in this article; engaging a child psychologist on a permanent basis may prove necessary.

Despite the risks inherent in this media literacy education approach, it must be underscored that, under contemporary conditions, schoolchildren's media literacy education constitutes an indispensable element of personality formation. Regional media-initiated projects hold substantial potential – not only for addressing staffing needs but also for fulfilling media literacy education mandates. Moreover, involving schoolchildren in the regional information agenda cultivates their deep sense of territorial belonging and mastery of local cultural codes – indispensable assets in the strategic competition for human capital.

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