Contemporary Russian Media Education: Advances and Challenges

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Abstract

The article examines contemporary Russian media education as a dynamic field of science shaped by rapid digitalization, expanding media influence, and evolving socio-cultural conditions. Drawing on a comprehensive analysis of academic literature from the past twenty-five years, the study explores theoretical foundations, institutional practices, and current trends in Russian media pedagogy within both national and global contexts. Particular attention is paid to cultural, semiotic, critical, and value-oriented approaches that conceptualize media education as a means of developing people's media literacy, critical thinking, creative competencies, and civic engagement. The paper highlights key models and formats of media education in Russia, including integrated, project-based, extracurricular, inclusive, and lifelong learning approaches, as well as the convergence of pedagogical and journalistic paradigms. At the institutional level, media education is embedded in university curricula and research centers, combining media analysis with practical media production. At the same time, the study identifies persistent challenges of present-day media education, such as uneven regional implementation, insufficient school-level integration, technological and infrastructural constraints, methodological imbalances between theory and practice, and limited international cooperation. The findings suggest that while Russian media education demonstrates strong theoretical traditions and growing social relevance, its future development depends on systemic reforms, enhanced digital resources, methodological modernization, and renewed global academic engagement.

Keywords: media, media text, media education, media literacy, media competence, media culture, media violence.

1. Introduction

In the context of rapid digitalization and the growing influence of media on all spheres of social life, media education has become one of the key areas of contemporary pedagogical research. The transformations of information environments, communication practices, and cultural consumption patterns have significantly reshaped the educational approaches, foregrounding the need to develop learners' critical thinking, media literacy, and creative competencies. In Russia, media education is increasingly viewed not only as a response to technological change, but also as a socio-cultural and value-oriented phenomenon that contributes to personal development (Akmanova et al., 2019), civic engagement, and social resilience in the face of modern information challenges.

Contemporary Russian media education represents a complex and evolving field of science situated at the intersection of national educational traditions and global media literacy paradigms. Over the past decades, Russian media education has evolved from a primarily vocational and theoretical model into a multifaceted academic and pedagogical domain that addresses media

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literacy, media competence, and professional media training. Within the global context, it reflects both convergence with international standards and divergence shaped by Russia's specific socio-cultural, political, and institutional conditions: "In recent years, there has been an awareness of the importance of developing media literacy at the federal level. Taking into account international professional standards and the practical experience of other countries, the Russian government approves of new major national projects aimed at developing the relevant competencies of citizens" (Vartanova, 2021).

At the theoretical level, Russian media education is strongly influenced by cultural, semiotic, and critical approaches to media analysis. Scholars emphasize the study of media texts as cultural artifacts, focusing on narrative structures, genre conventions, ideological representations, and audience interpretation (Fedorov, 2021). This tradition aligns Russian media education with global trends in media studies, particularly those developed in Europe, while also preserving distinctive emphases on cultural pedagogy and aesthetic analysis. Concepts such as media culture, media competence, and critical autonomy occupy a central place in Russian academic discourse and are comparable to the international frameworks promoted by organizations such as UNESCO in the field of media and information literacy: "Media and Information Literacy provides a set of essential skills to address the challenges of the 21st century including the proliferation of mis- and disinformation and hate speech, the decline of trust in media and digital innovations notably Artificial Intelligence" (https://www.unesco.org/en/media-information-literacy).

2. Materials and methods

The study materials consist of academic books and scholarly articles on media education during the last twenty-five years. The research employs the following methods: content analysis and comparative approaches. The methods used also include the collection of relevant data (monographs, articles, and reports), analysis of academic literature, theoretical analysis and synthesis, and processes of generalization and classification.

3. Discussion

Modern Russian media pedagogy conceptualizes media education as a multidimensional and integrative process that encompasses educational, cultural, ethical, and communicative aspects. Researchers emphasize its role in preparing individuals for life, fostering conscious interaction with media, and supporting self-actualization in a technogenic society. At the same time, scholarly discussions reflect a diversity of theoretical approaches, ranging from professionally oriented models focused on media industries to universal and synergetic interpretations regarding mass media education as an essential component of general education and lifelong learning. For instance, G.S. Fedyanina considers media education as a "an important component of the educational process, a powerful factor in the application of new forms and methods of teaching, its main task is to prepare modern youth for life in new in-formation conditions. Media education is a complex means of mastering the surrounding world by a person, serves to increase the effectiveness of education, makes it possible to model independent professional activity, and develop creative potential" (Fedynina, 2022: 125). N.A. Simbirtseva also defines media pedagogy as an adaptive environment in which "conscious communication with the media" develops the personality qualities "necessary for the self-actualization of a person in the technogenic world and the critical perception of the 21st century reality" (Simbirtseva, 2018: 21).

Analysing the concept of present-day media education in Russia, I.A. Kuptsova and T.N. Vladimirova identify the following two main trends: "a highly specialized/professional approach to defining media education" implying the process of obtaining qualifications in the field of media, focusing on the applied features of media education, and a "synergetic/universal approach to the interpretation of media education" that takes into account the depth of penetration of media channels and the media environment into modern culture and everyday life, thus interpreting media education as "training and education means of media and/or in the field of media through the process of communication in order to form of general cultural and professional competencies, value guidelines, information culture of the individual, development of his intellectual and creative potential" (Kuptsova, Vladimirova, 2024: 59). Therefore, I.A. Kuptsova and T.N. Vladimirova consider media education as a means of forming value guidelines and intellectual and creative potential of an individual (Kuptsova, Vladimirova, 2024).

A number of current Russian scientific findings (Gorbatkova et al., 2021; Novikov, Fedorov, 2022) focus on combating media manipulation in response to the growing influence of digital media and its persuasive and deceptive communication practices. In this context, media education seeks to equip learners with the critical competencies necessary to navigate this complex media landscape, thus fostering their informed judgment, democratic participation, and social resilience. It is also worth mentioning the present-day research studies devoted to protecting children and youth from media violence and aggression (Chelysheva, 2011; Fedorov, 2015).

The life-long or continuous concept of media education is also emphasized in Russian contemporary studies (Akmanova et al., 2019) since it incorporates developing people's critical thinking skills and helps individuals recognize misinformation, manipulation, and commercial or ideological interests behind media messages. At the same time, it encourages their active participation in media culture, enabling people to express themselves, communicate effectively, and engage in democratic processes. The Russian scholars researching integrated and optional (extracurricular) media education highlight its complementary potential within the education system. Integrated media education refers to the continuous incorporation of media-related competencies into regular subject teaching and everyday school or university practice, whereas optional or extracurricular media studies take place outside compulsory education, for example, in clubs, workshops, project weeks, or voluntary courses (Arbuzova, Fortus, 2023; Bobrovnitskaya, 2017; Bondarenko, Gudilina, 2016; Chelysheva, Mysheva, 2021).

Meanwhile, scientific researches on inclusive media education (Shalagina, 2024; Voronova, Kravets, 2020) show that effective media education must go beyond technical media skills and address the questions of social and cultural equity, representation, access, and participation: such studies in media pedagogy and educational sciences consistently emphasize that inclusion in media education involves both *who* participates and *how* media are taught, used, and critically examined. Thus, inclusive media education is understood as an approach that enables learners with diverse social, cultural, linguistic, and physical backgrounds to access media, reflect on media production, and actively contribute to media culture.

Unfortunately, we cannot but agree with professor A. Fedorov, that "media education in Russia has not progressed from an experimental stage to a widespread practical implementation yet. This requires consolidating pedagogical universities, journalism faculties, experimental media educators, and the media community, as well as coordinated interactions between government agencies, existing media education centers, and experimental platforms in this field" (Fedorov, 2009: 20).

4. Results

Institutionally, Russian media education is embedded within universities, pedagogical institutes (Chelysheva, Mikhaleva, 2022), and research centers, most notably in faculties of education, journalism, and communication. Leading universities have incorporated media education into bachelor's, master's, and doctoral programs, thus combining theoretical coursework with practical training in journalism, audiovisual production, and digital media technologies. In recent years, curricula have increasingly reflected global transformations in the media environment, including digitalization, convergence, and the rise of social media platforms. This shift demonstrates Russia's participation in the broader global movement toward integrating digital competencies and multimedia skills into media education.

Analysing the current trends in media and information literacy in research and scientific publications of the 21st century A. Fedorov and G. Mikhaleva define the following leading directions in the scientific studies devoted to media education: "major function of media and information literacy is to provide access to information and knowledge and promote free, independent and pluralistic mediated social environments (UNESCO); media literacy as a vital, survival skill for an individual; minimizing online risks and expanding online opportunities in media literacy education; information or digital literacy in the educational and professional contexts; focus on studying human behaviour in social computer-mediated interactions and challenges of global cross-cultural communication; promoting people's media and information literacy for active social change; media literacy and digital literacy as critical instruments against various online risks and manipulations; media and information literacy integrated into the school curriculum and university syllabus; media literacy education aimed at students' applying their critical thinking skills to media messages and creating media texts; focus on media language and representation

analysis in media and film studies; national peculiarities of promoting media and information literacy in different countries; international media literacy based on the effective strategies used in different cultures" (Fedorov, Mikhaleva, 2020: 153).

On the international stage, Russian media education has achieved visibility through scholarly publications, conference participation, and cross-border academic collaboration. Russian researchers are contributing to international debates on media literacy, comparative media education, and media pedagogy, and their work is being cited within global academic networks. On the other hand, although Russian media educators regularly participate in global academic exchanges, their integration into international research and educational networks has recently become limited: reduced academic mobility, fewer joint programs, and restricted access to international funding and platforms unfortunately hinder cross-cultural dialogue and comparative research. Consequently, Russian media education risks becoming more inward-looking, which may slow theoretical innovation and methodological renewal.

R.V. Salny points out in his article the following trends in present-day Russian media education:

– Integrated media education (use of media education technologies within school and university courses; art-historical and cultural approach promoting the creative development of students' personalities; systematic training of learners within integrated media education using interdisciplinary, activity-based, and competence-based approaches; master's programs adapted to the training of specialists in media and information literacy; media education integration school and university subjects at all levels, elective media studies);

– Project-based media education activities (student media outlets; film festivals; Internet projects or electronic educational resources; digital media projects);

– The convergence of journalism and media education leading to the formation of media criticism as an element of pedagogy;

– Contemporary media education is developing within two models: pedagogical and journalistic (Salny, 2020).

A distinctive feature of contemporary Russian media education is its dual orientation toward critical analysis and media production. While critical media literacy aims to develop students' ability to interpret and evaluate media messages, practical training emphasizes professional skills required in journalism, broadcasting, and creating digital content (Zhilavskaya, 2021). This balance corresponds to global educational models that seek to combine analytical and creative competencies.

On the other hand, modern Russian media education faces a range of interrelated problems and challenges that reflect broader transformations in the media environment, higher education system, and socio-political conditions. For instance, one of the challenges of Russian media education is the uneven integration of media education across educational levels and regions. While leading universities and major urban centers offer well-developed media education programs, access to high-quality media education still remains limited in many regional institutions and secondary schools: "today an insufficient attention is paid to the problem of media literacy and media education at the school level" (Bykov, Medvedeva, 2020: 393). This disparity results in an unequal distribution of media literacy skills and competencies, reinforcing broader social and educational inequalities. The lack of a unified national strategy for media education further exacerbates this problem, thus leading to fragmented curricula and inconsistent learning outcomes.

During the last twenty-five years Russian media education has become more value-oriented as media has become one of the major environments in which human values, attitudes, and behavioural models are formed. That is why its purpose is not only to develop people's media literacy and critical thinking, but also to guide them toward socially significant values through conscious and reflective interaction with media content. Within this approach, civic, patriotic, moral, and family education are closely interconnected and reinforced through contemporary media analysis, interpretation, and creation (Chelysheva, 2023; Gritsai, 2025; Mikhaleva, 2021).

Technological challenges also play a critical role in shaping contemporary Russian media education. The rapid pace of digital transformation requires constant updating of curricula, teaching methods, and technical infrastructure. Besides, many educational institutions face shortages of modern equipment, software, and qualified personnel capable of teaching advanced digital media skills. As a result, media education programs may lag behind the realities of the contemporary media industry and global technological trends.

In addition to infrastructural issues, there is a methodological challenge related to balancing theory and practice (Gavrilov, 2023). Russian media education has a strong theoretical foundation, particularly in cultural and aesthetic approaches to media analysis. However, the translation of theoretical knowledge into practical competencies is not always effective. Students may receive extensive training in media theory without sufficient opportunities for hands-on experimentation, collaborative projects (Snegireva, Isakova, 2021), and engagement with real-world media environments. This imbalance can reduce graduates' competitiveness in both domestic and international media labour markets.

Finally, there is a broader societal challenge related to public perceptions of media education. Media literacy has often been undervalued outside academic circles and not always recognized as a vital civic competence: this may limit institutional support and public investment in media education initiatives, particularly at the school and community levels. Without a strong societal demand for media literacy, the transformative potential of media education in fostering informed, critically engaged citizens may remain underrealized.

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, modern Russian studies highlight the growing importance of media education in addressing urgent social issues, including media manipulation, misinformation, digital aggression, and inequality of access to media resources. Special attention is paid to continuous, integrated, extracurricular, and inclusive models of media education, which expand its pedagogical potential and adapt it to diverse educational contexts and learners' needs. However, despite the theoretical richness and methodological diversity of Russian media education research, scholars note persistent difficulties in its large-scale practical implementation.

Overall, contemporary Russian media education can be characterized as a dynamic and complex system that combines strong scholarly traditions with global integration: it contributes original theoretical perspectives and pedagogical models to international media education discourse while simultaneously adapting to global technological and educational trends. Its future role on the global scale will largely depend on the extent to which it can expand international collaboration, enhance academic openness, and respond flexibly to the rapidly changing world's media landscape. The challenges of contemporary Russian media education stem from a complicated interplay of political, institutional, technological, and cultural factors. Therefore, addressing these challenges requires systemic reforms, increased investment in digital infrastructure, methodological modernization, and greater openness to international collaboration. Only under such conditions can Russian media education strengthen its role both nationally and within the global media education landscape.

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