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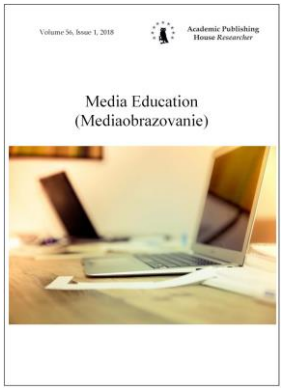

Media Studies Within the System of Contemporary Culture Studies Education

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Abstract

This article describes the experience of teaching media within the humanistic educational framework as one of the pressing questions in high-school pedagogy. The article is based on the long personal experience of the author, who, starting with teaching cinema studies to students, gradually developed media culture and media education school within the culture studies framework. Empirical basis of the research is provided by the prolonged experience of the Chair of Cultural Studies and Leisure Studies of Ural Federal University. After analysing prospective trends in the development of contemporary Russian media education through the combined theory-and-practice approach, the author describes "media studies" as a priority field in humanistic higher education. Teaching media within bachelor's and master's programs in "Culture Studies" and "Socio-Cultural Work" allows us to solve several pedagogical tasks at once: 1) increase student's media competency; 2) foster the development of personal media culture; 3) teach students skill required to create their own media texts; 4) supports professional training of managers in socio-cultural field (including audio-visual field). Our experience of introducing media studies in humanistic curriculum produce results which demonstrate that this educational approach not only fosters the development of an all-rounded personality but also provides competitive advantage for the prospective professionals.

Keywords: culture studies, education, media studies, media competence, media culture, media.

1. Introduction

The concepts of "media education", "media studies" and "media literacy" have become an integral part of contemporary education in Russia, both at school and university level. This is despite the fact that as recent as late 1990s the question of media education were the most hotly debated within theoretical and practical framework of Russian pedagogy.

As early as 1980s, UNESCO declared media education a priority goal of pedagogy, and information factor the leading factor in teaching teenagers and young people at all levels, defining media education as the study, teaching and learning of modern methods of communication and expression considered to be part of a specific and autonomous discipline in pedagogical theory and practice. *International Encyclopedia of the Social , Behavioral Sciences* states that "'Media education' is teaching *about* media, as distinguished from teaching *with* media. Ordinarily, media education emphasizes the acquisition both of cognitive knowledge about how media are produced

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and distributed and of analytic skills for interpreting and valuing media content. In contrast, 'media studies' ordinarily emphasizes hands-on experiences with media production. Both media education and media studies proponents intend to achieve media literacy goals through learning activities with young people." (International Encyclopedia, 2001: 94).

All these definitions demonstrate the relevance of media pedagogy as a specialized field within the humanities. Russian media education has developed three main approaches: 1. Media education as training of future professionals in journalism and mass media; 2. Media education as a basis of media literacy (media competency) in schools and pedagogical colleges; 3. Media studies within the system of university-level humanistic education. Each of these approaches is related to the perspectives for the development of media culture of society and education of active "global citizens" (Fedorov, 2015).

2. Materials and methods

This study explores the practice of teaching media within the framework of contemporary culture studies education aimed at training professional managers in sociocultural work. This study is based on the years of experience in relevant curriculum as practiced by the Chair of Cultural Studies and Leisure Studies in Ural Federal University. The main methodological principle of this research is the combined theory-and-practice approach – the principle that has provided foundation for all media education included in the culture studies curriculum of Ural Federal University. Methods of analysis and synthesis help to generalize and categorize data, thus helping to elaborate such concepts as "media education", "media literacy" and "media culture". The use of synergetics method helps us to apply system approach to our research, in order to argue that both "media education" and "media studies" are multi-faceted complex processes that require multidisciplinary approach (bringing together history, culture studies, pedagogy, semiotics, psychology etc.) in order to foster the development of individual media culture.

3. Discussion

The works of foreign researchers of late XXth – early XXIst century reflect an experience of introducing media into the educational system, as well as in the practical approach to teaching various classes. One of the first Western researchers whose works attracted attention in post-Soviet Russia was L. Masterman, an English media educator. His attitude was clear and well-defined: "Representation is the central and integrative concept of media education. Media do not reflect the reality – they represent it. The main goal of media education is the "denaturalisation" of media. Media education is the research process first and foremost" (Masterman, 1993: 22–23). This theory affirms that the goal of media education is fostering student's critical thinking. Materman's position was endorsed by many foreign media educators of 1980s–1990s: D. Buckingham, C. Bazalgette, C. Worsnop, J. Gonnet, R. Ferguson, A. Hart and others.

In the XXIst century, the priorities dominating media education have changed. For example, 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" (Berger, McDougall, 2013). The authors believe that this – theory vs practice – approach would subsequently allow the students to successfully find their place at the labor market.

J. Potter in his work "Digital Media and Learner Identity: The New Curatorship" proposed the model of teaching digital media based on the "new curatorship" (Potter, 2012). This idea has become popular among the educators across countries as the most fruitful: it facilitates 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 (Berger, McDougall, 2013: 9). The authors notes the importance of tracking how a student's experience is being formed; how an access to necessary resources is provided; and how a student participates in specialized "creative centers" where he or she acquires practical skills. Each stage has inbuilt controls that implements the idea of mentorship.

E. Morrell and J. Duncan-Andrade use the term "critical media pedagogy" which the authors define as the deliberate work of educators and students to develop critical thinking skills 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 "critical media pedagogy" would be the ability of students 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… and culturally affirming pedagogy… students can also learn to deconstruct dominant media narratives and to create their own counter-narratives…" (Morrell, Duncan-Andrade, 2005).

We can agree with the authors that determining the students' interests within the educational framework may also correct the educators' work in their efforts to achieve learning outcomes. The development of digital media products through the use of digital media requires teachers to master information and communication skills (ICT), as well as aesthetic representation of reality and its reflection in media images.

Mastering ICT skills is a necessary professional component for specialists in any field. L. Qvortrup proposes to define media pedagogy as: a content of education (media education); an education and socialisation within media environment (media socialisation); and the use of media in teaching and for teaching (educational media) (Qvortrup, 2007). These three approaches help to implement the principles required to foster a media literate individual of the XXIst century. They also open perspectives for meaningful pedagogical solutions applied at various levels of education.

H. Shmidt's article published in influential *The Journal of Media Literacy Education,* argues in favor of the theoretical importance and practical necessity to establish media literacy educational programs in colleges and universities, since "media literacy competencies are necessary for all of today's college graduates… and media-related skills are increasingly important for a variety of professions as well." (Shmidt, 2015: 53).

At the same time, the question of *what* should serve as basis for studying communicative culture in colleges and universities remains open to discussion. In their article "Media literacy and transmedia storytelling", English researchers A. Weedon and J. Knight note that "Media studies have claimed the realms of television, newspapers, cinema, radio and audiovisual texts, their forms, the industries that produce them and the means of distribution and consumption as its object of study. New media researchers have added identity, interactivity, geolocation, engagement, affectivity, sharing, creativity and fan crowd and other forms of online and real life community building through new communications technologies» (Weedon, Knight, 2015: 405).

At the same time, according to S. Ashley, the challenges faced by media educators in Europe and the USA are generally typical, related mostly to the educational setting (limited time, large number of students and their widely differing skill levels). This is why many surveyed educators "aim to foster engagement with media and civic life through a focus on current events and media consumption. Several noted a focus on the role of media in a democracy and the importance of accessing information from a variety of sources. Diverse perspectives such as those generated by differences in race, gender, and politics did not seem to be a problem for those surveyed" (Ashley, 2015: 170).

Another often discussed challenge faced by contemporary media education is how to approach social media within the education process. American researcher S. Talib believes that this is the most important question of media pedagogy, since social media have become an integral part of life for the young generation. This is why this complex and engrossing media environment requires skilled media pedagogy which would prepare the students to understand, interact with and adapt to social media that are becoming an integral part of their life. The research in media literacy shows the need for instruments and methods that would help the students to become "adept digital citizens" (Talib, 2018: 55). Based on this, the author concludes that "one important avenue of further research could be a cross-disciplinary meta-analysis of social media research. This would help codify and increase the number of ID approaches available to people interested in adopting this method in their teaching and research. For teaching, it would be useful to explore how this pedagogy evolves as it is applied in different fields such as sociology and digital humanities among others" (Talib, 2018: 64).

At the same time, contemporary foreign researchers clearly focus on practical aspect in relation to competitive advantage and professional self-fulfillment of prospective specialists.

Russian media education envisage its main goal as the development of media literacy and media culture of the students, as described by A.V. Fedorov in his book (Fedorov, 2001). However, in recent years this author has increasingly tended to define the goal of media education as "media

competency", which, in his opinion, "better describes the nature of individual-based skills required to use, critically analyze, assess and transmit media texts in their various types, forms and genres, and to analyze complex processes by which media functions in society" (Fedorov, 2007: 82). In his view, media literacy (media competency) should be understood as a "key element in a concept of global citizen" (Fedorov, 2015).

Research shows that the majority of Russian media educators pursue the following goals in their teaching practice: development of their student's critical thinking ability; teaching theory and history of media culture; teaching media language and media text decoding; fostering students' ability to perceive media texts aesthetically; facilitating students' communicative skills; teaching the students creative self-expression through various media (Fedorov et al, 2004: 26–27).

Taking into account that media education is a comprehensive process of socio-psychological interaction (dialogue) between media educator and student, A.V. Sharikov proposed the following definition of its goal: "Media education is the process through which an individual acquires the culture of mediatized social communication" (Sharikov, 2005: 78–79).

In March 2017, International Forum "Media Education in Pedagogy: Existing Methods and New Approaches to Its Management" (International Media Education Forum, 2017) raised the questions relating to 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 space that would include efficient pedagogical media technologies and innovative media and information resources. The topics discussed at the Forum show that pedagogical community is highly interested in the modalities of interaction between media and education: media education management system; regional models of media education development; media and information literacy as a key competence of modern teacher; media culture and information security; media center as a media educational technology facilitating the development of students' communicative competencies; the use of media education technologies for patriotic education at schools.

These examples demonstrate that the question of "media and education" is not only highly relevant – it is also being solved in multiple ways in modern pedagogy.

4. Results

Media education concept as a culture studies project

Analysis of theory and practice of media education, both Russian and foreign, demonstrate that there are no globally approved theoretical concept of this term. The experience accumulated by the Russian Association for film and Media Education headed for years by A.V. Fedorov, which influenced the works of scholars in various humanistic schools and trends (O. Baranov, A. Fedorov, E. Vartanova, Zasursky, A. Korochensky, S. Penzin, S. Urazova, Y. Usov, N. Khilko, I. Chelysheva, A. Sharikov, O. Shlykova and others) provides us with the opportunity to determine main conceptual frameworks of media education that allow us to describe media education as a structure of applied culture studies.

We agree with A. Fedorov (Fedorov, 2001: 20-33), which highlighted the following basic concepts of media education:

1) *Media education as a culture studies framework*

Here, the content of media education is framed through the key concepts of media culture, which are relatively universal: "multimedia culture", "culture of mass communication", "media sphere", "media space", "media environment", "media text", "media technologies". At the same time, this framework fosters exploration of the main types of media culture: print culture, electronic culture, audio culture, visual culture, audio-visual culture. In terms of media representation, this framework focuses on media text genres (regardless of what type of media is used): analytical article, journalist report, essay, interview, photo portrait, photo collage, social photography, talk shows, socio-psychological drama, comedy, melodrama, historical saga (in cinema and TV), video clip, website etc.

This framework of media education, which is widespread in many countries (UK, Canada, France and Russia) has been seriously influenced by the ideas of Canadian theorist Marshall McLuhan, who became one of the first theorists of media culture proving that all media is based on the transmission of value-laden information ("The media is the message") (McLuhan, 2003: 7). From here, the main functions of media are derived: media re-create reality; each media text is a

result of deliberate construction; the content and the form of media text are interconnected, although each medium possesses its own language and rules of encoding reality; each medium has its own cultural code and its own cultural meaning;

2) *Media education as a sociocultural framework*

The theoretical basis of this framework is provided by the synthesis of culture studies (fostering individual media culture) and sociological (teaching the importance of the social role of media) approach. The main points of this framework have been described by A.V. Sharikov: 1) the development of media naturally leads to the emergence of specialized education in each field of humanities; 2) since media audience is a mass audience, professionals (the teachers of specialized classes) confront a need to teach media language to a wider social group; 3) this tendency is further supported by the fact that the society itself increasingly becomes aware of the power of media influence over the individual, which, in turn, leads to the rethinking of social impact of media and fosters further development of media education (Sharikov, 1990: 60). At the same time, the main goal is a sociocultural development of students and their adaptation to the conditions of their social environment.

3) *Semiotic framework of media education*

This framework is based on the works of such renown Russian and Western media theorists as M. Bakhtin, R. Barthes, B. Bibler, N. Boltz, Y. Lotman, J. Kristeva, M. Yampolsky and others. The main goal of semiotic framework is to teach the target audience how to "read" media text. As a result, the main content of media education revolves around "codes" and "grammar" of media text, and the main education strategy is media text decoding, description of its content, text-related associations, language nuances etc. Semiotic analyses can be applied to all kinds of media cultural "products": books, magazines, articles, movies, TV series, videos, TV and radio shows, photographs, mutlimedia artworks, computer graphics, websites etc. The analysis of semiotic framework of media education shows that it generally ignores ideological function of media, paying main attention to the specifics of media text language, and not to it political connotations.

4) *Aesthetic framework of media education*

This framework still remains popular among Russian media educators. An entire process of film education, both in secondary and higher education, was being developed within this framework in 1920s–1980. Here the theoretical basis largely corresponds with the culture studies framework of media education. However, the main goal of media education is seen as helping students understand the rules governing media text creation – the rules that are directly related to art – as well as develop student's aesthetic appreciation and taste and their ability to perform expert analysis of art objects. This is why the main content of media education centers on the study of specific characteristics of media culture; the history and theory of its subtypes (photography, cinema, TV, video, multimedia system, Internet etc.); the original vision of the media text's creator; and the development of individual critical thinking. Aesthetic theory of media education was also popular in the West in 1960s–1970s, the pinnacle age of *auteur cinema*. However, today it is obvious that the artistic dimension of media is not the most important one for the contemporary pedagogy, since media text has to be examined not only aesthetically but also through ethical, psychological, social and other angles.

5) *"Practical" framework of media education, or media studies*

Within this framework, the goal is to expand the study of media culture to include media technologies. It also pays particular attention to the development of practical skills and competencies in various media use, encouraging students to create their own media texts thus fostering their creative self-expression. Each of these frameworks, in its own ways, strives both to develop media literacy of the students and to foster individual media culture that includes "the culture of information production and transmission, as well as the culture of its perception", which is simultaneously "a marker of sophistication level of an individual able to "read", analyze and assess media text, express themselves creatively through media, acquire new knowledge through media etc. (Fedorov, 2001: 20-33; Kirillova, 2008: 18).

As we have seen, the main goal of teaching media in contemporary university-level humanistic departments is to prepare the new generation to life that is being shaped by the digital revolution: to teach students how to perceive information of various types, help them asses it, understand how it works, learn to communicate through non-verbal computer-mediated forms and modern information and communication technologies.

Theoretical and practical questions of media studies have long been the priority for teachers and students at the Department of Art History and Cultural Studies of the Ural Federal University.

The area of audio-visual communications and media technologies have been the focus of the Chair of Cultural Studies and Leisure Studies since 2001 (before this, "History and Theory of Cinema" was the leading discipline), when the chair-approved curriculum first introduced courses for the bachelor programs in "Intercultural Communication" and "Cultural Management". Thanks to this, students specializing in cultural research can master contemporary management systems, marketing and business in socio-cultural work, advertising techniques and audio-visual business. In 2005, two new courses, "The Culture of Mass Communications" and "Media Culture and Foundations of Media Management", were introduced into the curriculum.

In 2006, with the support of the President of Russia grant, the Ural Research and Methodological Center for Media Culture and Media Education was established as a regional social project. The same year, the newly-established center joined forces with the Russian Institute for Cultural Research (Moscow) to organize the All-Russian Research Conference "Screen Culture in Contemporary Media Space: Methodology, Technologies, Practices", and in 2007, in collaboration with the Boris Yeltsin Foundation, – Intentional Research Conference "The Future of Russia: Vector of Changes". Here, the "Media Culture of New Russia" became one of the leading sections; the results of its work were published as the collected papers (Kirillova, 2007). Ural Center for Media Studies and Media Education, which is a subdivision of the Department of Art History and Sociocultural Technologies, has become a valuable research base for teachers and students.

In 2010, the Chair of Cultural Studies and Leisure Studies opened master's program in socio-cultural work. The first program offered was "Tolerance Technologies in Sociocultural Work"; however, the second master's program, "Audiovisual Communications and Media Technologies in Sociocultural Work", is aimed to provide professional training for future managers in socio-cultural field of work.

The relevance of this program is supported by the need to train highly qualified professionals in audio-visual cultural management, taking into account the importance of contemporary media technologies as a factor of social modernization which forms the framework for the development of civil society.

The curriculum of this program prepares master's students for the new innovative type of work in research, pedagogy, project design, creative fields and organization (management). The program combines theoretical research training aiming to develop professional research skills in audio-visual culture and communications with the practical learning of new technological skills and computer processes necessary for the prospective workers in socio-cultural management field.

This educational program teaches such subjects as: issues in modern communicative; history and theory of audio-visual culture; computer technologies in socio-cultural work; state media policy and its role in transforming Russian socio-cultural environment; international information law and Russian legislation regarding media technologies; audiovisual documentation used in socio-cultural work; photo, cinema and TV archives; producing; advertising technologies; and audio-visual business.

The program also includes various forms of creative projects and professional work in audiovisual field: students analyse audio-visual artworks, TV and radio programs, write scenarios, shoot short movies and video clips, develop festival and competition programs, design websites etc.

The prospective professional field available for master's students in socio-cultural field after their graduation from the program "Audiovisual Communication and Media Technologies" are: managerial work in sociocultural and audio-visual fields; research and pedagogical work, including media pedagogy; producing of specialised projects in sociocultural and audio-visual fields; festival management; expert and analytical work at the contemporary art market.

Master's program "Audiovisual communication and media technologies in sociocultural field" is an inter-departmental project which attracts not only students majoring in culture studies and art history, but also journalists, historians, linguists and economists.

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, we may say that the practical application of media studies within the cultural research education provides good results, which prove that "media education is the road to create a personality in harmony with media and social realities; a set of methods fostering the development

of creative and communicative abilities, critical thinking, and skills required to comprehensively perceive, interpret, analyze and assess media texts" (Fortunatov, 2011: 145–146).

Still, today practice-oriented approach dominates the field education, since it allows to respond to the challenges and needs of contemporary culture, with education being a part of this culture. One of the relevant tasks facing the XXIst century pedagogy is the formation and development of students' academic literacy skills according to their subsequent activity and professional choices. Introduction of contemporary ICT and media resources into the educational process would help teachers to attract and hold their audiences' attention on the relevant social topics and questions within the context of global and Russian cultural development. Media literacy acquired through education process not only provides a person with a competitive advantage on the labor market, but also guarantees their high demand within their chosen professional field.

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