Russian Media Education Literacy Centers in the 21st Century

BY **PROF. DR. ALEXANDER FEDOROV**

The comparative analysis of the models and functions of Russian media education literacy centers in the 21st century (included wide specter of media—print, screen, TV, mobile, the Internet, new generation of video games and virtual worlds) showed that despite having some definite differences and peculiarities, they have the following common features:

- differentiated financing resources (public financing, grants, business organizations, etc.) and regional media information support;

- presence of famous Russian media teachers heading the media education centers;

- a target audience of a wide age-specific and professional range (with the predominance of students of different educational institutions, teachers, media experts);

- the chief aim of a media education centre is multi-aspect, as a rule, but in the whole, it can be generalized under a common assertion— development of the audience's media competence. And under media competence of a person we mean "a sum-total of an individual's motives, knowledge, skills, abilities (indicators: motivation, contact, information, perception, interpretation/ evaluation, activity, and creativity) to select, use, critically analyze, evaluate, create and spread media texts of different types, forms and genres, and to analyze complex phenomena of media functioning in the society" (Fedorov, 2007, p. 54).

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

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

- educational work, organization and realization of research projects, conferences, and publishing activities;

- as a working definition of media education they use either the definition given in the UNESCO documents or any other close terminology;

- as a key media education theory they refer to a synthesis of the practical and cultural studies media education theories, the theory of the audience's critical thinking development, or a theory similar to the practical theory including some elements of other theories, e.g. the theory of media activity;

- a basic media education model usually consists of the following components: the objective unit (development of the audience's media competence), the contents unit (theory:

development of the audience's motivation, knowledge about media culture; practice: development of the audience's perception and analytical skills, and media creativity skills), the result unit (level enhancement of the key media competence indicators); and as for the diagnostic unit (level detection of the audience's media competence), it is not necessarily included but is often implied;

- the organizational forms are aimed at media education integration into educational, out-of-school and leisure activities of the audiences, media educational courses for teachers; organization of film/media clubs for school students and young people, support of school-youth Internet sites, print media, TV, etc.; holding of panel discussions, seminars, workshops, training courses, conferences, festivals, competitions on media education topics; publishing monographs and handbooks;

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

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

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

Our analysis also showed that the media educational models offered by leading Russian media educators are similar to the ones of their foreign colleagues (Baran, 2002), however they definitely have some peculiarities, such as a more tolerant attitude to studying the aesthetic/artistic scope of media culture.

The Russian media literacy education centers (who have important role in media literacy teaching with new technologies in schools and communities) have a common aim to enhance the level of all the basic indicators of the audience's (for example, students') media competence: motivation, contact, information, perception, interpretation/evaluation, activity, and creativity.

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

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

   ~ media texts genres and subject diversity, including non-entertaining genres;

   ~ new information search;

   ~ recreation, compensation, and entertainment (in moderation);

   ~ identification and empathy;

   ~ his/her own competence confirmation in various life activities and media culture;

   ~ search of materials for educational, scientific, and research purposes;

   ~ aesthetic impressions;

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~ readiness to apply efforts when reading, comprehending media contents; philosophic/intellectual, ethic, and aesthetic dispute/dialogue with media message authors, and critical estimate of their views;

~ learning to create his/her own media texts by studying creation of professionals;

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Our generalized our model of media education is based on the cultural studies, practical, semiotic, ethic, and critical media education theories, that confirms the conclusion that modern teachers often synthesize different theories (e.g. a synthetic theory of media activity). As a matter of fact, this model represents a synthesis of the analyzed theories [Fedorov, 2007]: socio-cultural, educational-informational and practical-utilitarian models, and reflects modern media educational approaches, offered both by Russian and foreign scholars.

Modern media education models lean towards making the best use of media education potentialities depending on their aims and objectives; they are varied and can be wholly or par-
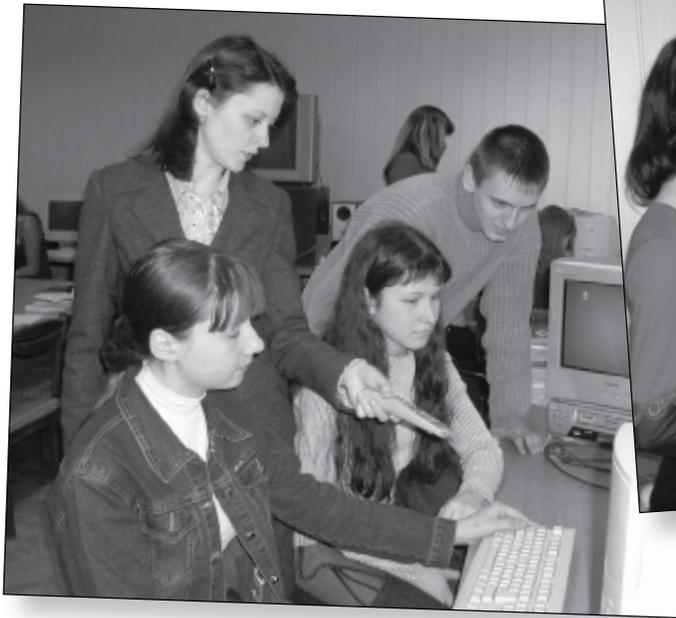
ADD CAPTIONS EXPLAINING PHOTOS??

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

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

For example, **Center "Media Education and Media Competence" in Taganrog State Pedagogical Institute** *(Russia, head Prof. Dr. Alexander Fedorov)*:

TARGET GROUP:
students, pupils, teachers;

THE MAIN AIM:
the development of media competence of a personality, its culture of communication with the media, creative abilities, critical thinking/autonomy, abilities to the full-fledged perception, interpretation, analysis and evaluation of media texts, self-expression with the help of media, preparation of future media educators for various institutions;

THE MAIN TASKS:

- creation of scientific and methodological basis for the development of media education and media competence of the growing-up generation;

- analysis of Russian and foreign experience in the field of media education;

- creation of the scientific basis of the monitoring of the levels of media competence of the audience of various age groups;

- during the process of basic and optional education to develop the following abilities: perceptive-creative (creative perception of media texts of various types and genres taking into consideration their connections with various arts etc.); practical-creative (creation of media texts of different types and genres); analytical (critical analysis of media texts of different types and genres); historical-theoretical (self-dependent use of the gained knowledge on theory and history of media/media culture); methodical (take-over methods and forms of media education; various technologies of self-expression with the help of); practical-pedagogical (use of gained knowledge and abilities in the field of media education during teaching practice);

- development of collaboration (including international collaboration) with the scientific and educational institutions related to media education and media competence;

- training of top-qualified, mediacompetent specialists and pedagogical cadres (candidates and doctors of science) on the basis of the newest pedagogical technologies in collaboration with the interested faculties;

- development of new progressive forms of innovation activities, scientific collaboration with scientific, educational organizations, foundations and other structures with the purpose of joint solution of the most important scientific and educational tasks in the field of media education;

- conducting of conferences, seminars, competitions on the subject of media education, media competence;

- development of publishing activities on the subject · development of the financial basis of the researches on the subject of media education and media competence attracting funds from various sources, usage of non-budget fund.

THE MAIN THEORTEICAL CONCEPTIONS ON WHICH THE ACTIVITY OF THE EDUCATION CENTER IS BASED:

cultural, socio-cultural, theory of the development of critical thinking, practical.

BASIC SECTIONS OF THE MEDIA EDUCATION MODEL ACCEPTED IN THE EDUCATION CENTER:

Basic sections of the media education model accepted in the education center:

1. DIAGNOSTIC (STATING) COMPONENT: stating of the levels of media competence and the development of critical thinking with respect to media and media texts of the given audience at the initial stage of education;

2. CONTENTS-SPECIFIC COMPONENT: theoretical component (the studies of history and theory of media culture; the development of media educational motivation and technology; i.e. the studies about methods and forms of media education of the audience) and practical component (the creative activity on the material of media, i.e. the development of creative abilities to self-expression with the help of media; creatively apply the gained knowledge and skills; the perceptive-analytical activity, i.e. the development of abilities to critically perceive and analyze media texts of different types and genres);

3. RESULTING COMPONENT: final questionnaire, testing and creative works by the students; the analysis of the level of the development of critical thinking and media competence of the students at the final stage of education (Fedorov, 2007, pp.141-145).

The mastering of the audience's creative abilities on the material of media is connected above all with the new cre-

ative possibilities which appeared by the beginning of the 21st century with the spreading of video equipment and computers. It's clears that this stage provides for the tasks which are traditional for Russian media education as well (for example, writing articles for the Press, short scenarios, "screenings" of the abstracts from literary works, etc.). However the main thing is that cameras, DVD-players, computers and monitors allow to "identify" oneself with the authors of the pieces of media culture (journalists, producers, script writers, directors, actors, designers, animators, etc.) without any technical difficulties. This helps to develop not only creative abilities, imagination, fantasy but also by interaction to perfect perception and analysis of media texts (Fedorov, 2007).

I am sure that historical-theoretical section should not be necessarily placed in the first place of the whole structure of the model, it's better to get acquainted with the history and theory of media culture and media education when the audience has already developed perception, the ability to critically analyze media texts, creative approaches. The integrity of the process of media education is not violated, the section of the history and theory of media culture would rest upon the firm footing, and would not turn to a bulk of facts and names.

This section often is not present in the models of school media education. However it's important for the future and present teachers. I believe that without getting acquainted with the history and theory of media culture and the peculiarities of the present state of media a teacher's knowledge would be a lot like his students' so the teacher wouldn't be able to answer many questions, he would be unable to make out a qualified media education program, etc. At the same time it's not obligatory for a teacher to include all the gained knowledge on history and theory of media culture into his program of a school optional course, for instance. However such an informational stock would no doubt have positive influence on his general culture (Fedorov, 2007, p.141-145).

As to creative, game approaches their necessity is beyond any doubt as well because during a game personality continues o develop (psyche, intelligence, individual thinking, business-like character, communicativeness, etc.), the additional reserves of human abilities are being activated and mobilized. This deals with role-play, didactic games, special pedagogical games connected with the development of specific skills necessary for a teacher (Fedorov, 2007, p.141-145).

ORGANIZATIONAL FORMS USED BY THE EDUCATION CENTER:

- The development of media competence and critical thinking of the students within the bounds of the specialization for pedagogical institutes "Media Education" (state registration number 03.13.30), school media education studies (integrated and optional);

- long-term plan of subjects and determination of the working priorities of the education center, assisting young scientists who are researching media education;

- organization of examination in the field of media education, media literacy, media culture;

- realization of innovation projects concerned with media education, effective use and development of educational, scientific and experimental bases;

- conducting of scientific conferences and seminars (for instance in 2009 the Media Education Center organized and conducted the All-Russian Scientific Schooling for the Youth with the financial support of the Special Federal Program "Scientific and pedagogical manpower of innovation Russia for 2009-2013" of the Ministry of Education and Science of the RF, all the details at http://edu.of.ru/mediacompetence).

METHODS USED BY THE EDUCATION CENTER:

according to the source of the gained knowledge: *verbal, visual methods, practical* methods. According to the level of cognitive activity: *explanatory/illustratory, reproductive, problem, partially search or heuristic, research* methods. Practical, creative, tasks, role-play-

ing games prevail during the studies. In scientific research the research methods prevail.

MAIN SECTIONS OF THE MEDIA EDUCATION PROGRAM:

relative to the study of such key concepts of media education as "media agencies," "categories of media," "media technologies," "language of media," "media representation," "media audience":

- the place and the role of media and media education in contemporary world, types and genres, the language of media;

- main terms, theories, key conceptions, trends, models of media education;

- main stages of historical development of media education in Russia and abroad;

- the problems of media competence, critical analysis of media functioning in society and of media texts of different types and genres (content analysis, structural analysis, event analysis, analysis of stereotypes, analysis of cultural mythology, analysis of characters, authobiographical analysis, iconographic analysis, semiotic analysis, identification analysis, ideological and philosophical analysis, ethic analysis, aesthetic analysis, cultivation analysis, hermeneutical analysis of cultural context);

- technologies of media education studies (mainly creative tasks of different kinds: literary-imitating, theatrical-play, graphic-imitating, literary-analytical, etc.) (Fedorov, 2007).

FIELD OF APPLICATION OF MEDIA EDUCATION PROGRAMS WORKED OUT BY THE MEDIA EDUCATION CENTER:

institutions of higher education (pedagogical institutes first of all), normal schools, extension courses for teachers, schools, institutions of accessory. In particular a youth discussion film club has been working for several decades (nowadays attached to Taganrog State Pedagogical University, the leaders — A.V.Fedorov, E.V.Muryukina). A.P.Zhdanko, a post-graduate, runs a media education circle in Taganrog Secondary school Đ9. Another post-graduate A.S.Galchenkov organized a monthly magazine *Literary Media World* in 2009 on the basis of Secondary school Đ22. (http://www.edu.of.ru/mediaeducation/default.asp?ob_no=57903).

The team of Media Education Center works on the systematization and the analysis. On September, 2002 by the initiative of the head of the scientific school Ministry of Education of the RF registered the new specialization for pedagogical institutions of higher education—*Media Education*. 1.09.2002 for the first time in Russia the experimental teaching on this specialization began in Taganrog State Pedagogical Institute.

In 2000 the members of the Media Education Center "Media Education and Media Competence" created and now supports several web-sites dedicated to media education, including a site on the federal portal of Ministry of Education and Science of the RF (http://edu.of.ru/mediaeducation). Since January, 2005 with the support of UNESCO bureau in Moscow the Media Education Center began issuing the Russian pedagogical magazine *Media Educatio*" (periodicity — 4 times a year, print and Internet versions http://www.edu.of.ru/medialibrary/default.asp?ob_no=34437). ✤

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