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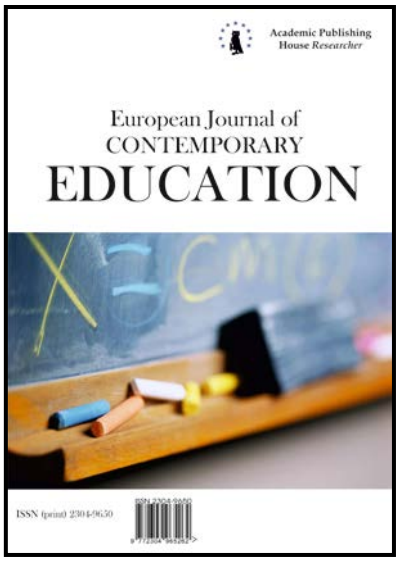

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Impact of European Media Education Strategies on Russian Media Education Development

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Abstract

The article attempts to examine the impact of European media education theories and approaches on Russian media education evolution basing on a comparative analysis of Russian and European media literacy promotion strategies in the historical context. This influence resulted in the appearance and development of socio-cultural models of media education in Russia basing on the cultural studies and critical thinking theories of media education, including the adopting of integrated media education approach in schools and universities.

Keywords: media, media education, media literacy, media competence, aesthetic approach, culturological approach, film, critical thinking, integration.

Introduction

Despite Russian teachers' interest in foreign media education experience Russia remained a comparatively shut-in society for the West until the early 1990s. That is why Russian scientific community could not fully familiarize themselves with significant research findings carried out by foreign media education experts. In particular, the first publications on media education issues by British authors, for example, appeared in Russian scientific literature at the beginning of the 1990s [Bazalgette, 1995; Masterman, 1993].

However, some Russian researchers endeavored to analyze the world experience of media education in the late 1980s – early 1990s [Usov, 1989; Sharikov, 1990]. For instance, a brief analysis of foreign scholars' works undertaken by Yu. Usov in his doctoral thesis [Usov, 1989] showed a proper

understanding of key media education concepts such as fostering independent thinking, critical thinking, media appreciation and media literacy, etc.

However, being aware of major media education strategies popular in the West that primarily aim at the development of audiences' critical thinking and media literacy, Yu. Usov pursued a traditional Russian media education approach based on enhancing the audience's artistic perception and aesthetic sense (*aesthetic approach*): "Western media educators seem to prefer the practical approach (with the emphasis on teaching practical skills for working with media equipment) and the consumption and satisfying (the needs of the audience) approach, whereas their Russian colleagues often favor the artistic/aesthetic approaches in media education" [Fedorov, 2015, 8].

Meanwhile, some western European media experts understand the artistic or aesthetic approach as outdated and inconsistent. L. Masterman, in particular, criticizes this approach to media education based on discriminating and focusing on art masterpieces [Masterman, 1993, 22]. Contrariwise, an explosive growth of information and communication technologies has gradually led to the information media domination over artistic media. Hence, western European media teachers emphasize the study of such media education key concepts as *media agencies*, *media technologies* and others which are not connected directly to the aesthetic content of a media text.

Materials and Methods

The first Russian researcher who began to review the experience of western European and Russian media experts was Alexander Sharikov who explored the works written by L. Masterman, T.A. Bauer, R. Ferguson, M. Souchon, and other experts of European media education. The findings of the research were published in the first Russian review article on the problem entitled *Media Education: World and Russian Experience* [Sharikov, 1990].

The author of the review found out that *media education* (the term was coined in the 1970s) in western European countries drew on long-term experience of film education. However, "in the 1970s the attention was focused not only on culturological and aesthetic aspects but also on social and ideological effects of this phenomenon. It turned out that pure teaching school students to understand the film language and to appreciate pieces of film art without analyzing the whole system of sociocultural relations in communication was evidently insufficient for proper citizenship education" [Sharikov, 1990, 6]. At the same time media education focused on training children and youth for life in the information society so that they could critically perceive a wide range of information, assess it and "evaluate the possible consequences of its impact on one's psych, obtain non-verbal media-assisted communication skills [Sharikov, 1990, 6].

Hence, "the supreme task of media education is to prepare a person for comprehensive inclusion in the mass communication system, i.e. acquiring an informed experience of non-verbal perception and mastering mass-media language (thus leading to better understanding of media content), obtaining skills for critical analysis, etc." [Sharikov, 1990, 10-11].

However, recognizing the importance of critical understanding of media texts, A. Sharikov does not consider it the main objective of media education. According to him, the development of students' media communication and creative skills, i.e. the abilities to perceive, create and transmit information is nonetheless essential.

More recent Russian studies pursued the analysis of key approaches to media education in Russia and Europe [Chelysheva, 2002; Fedorov, 2008; Fedorov, Levitskaya, 2015]. Nevertheless, according to Prof. A. Fedorov, "Dr. Sharikov's scientific contribution was actually the first "media education manifesto" in the Russian pedagogical discourse" [Fedorov, 2015, 171].

While analyzing the evolution of mass media education in Russia A. Fedorov indicates that in the late 1980s "in the time of the so called *perestroika*, when censorship began to weaken and the society in general began to move slowly towards democratization and pluralism of opinions, for the first time in Soviet media education scientists began to use socio-cultural and cultural studies conceptions as bases for their researches. Consequently, they rested upon such tasks as the development of understanding of social, cultural, political, ethical, psychological, economical meanings and implications of media texts. This tendency was most brilliantly presented in the thesis of A. Sharikov" [Fedorov, 2015, 242].

Thus, during 1970s-1990s Russian media education was guided by *the aesthetic theory* combined with the practical and ideological theories. In the early 1990s, it was replaced with *the cultural studies approach* that was especially popular in western European countries. The impact of western theories

and strategies for media education focused on audiences' cultural outlook, critical and independent thinking enhancement in relation to media texts consisted in enlarging the scope of media studies, in a more profound and systematic (multifunctional) approach to analysis and interpretation of media texts with due account for varied socio-cultural factors.

In the 1990s-2000s Russian studies in media education become more intense, organized and motivated to a large extent thanks to the Russian Association for Film and Media Education. For instance, in the early 1990s Russian and British researchers had an opportunity to exchange their media education experience in the context of seminars and workshops on media education in Moscow (1992, 1995).

The period under consideration, also made it possible to develop the *integrated* media education approach basing on combining media studies with various subjects of school or/and university curricula. For example, media education integrated with foreign language learning [Novikova-Levitskaya, 2004; Bukharkina, 1994; Ivanova, 1999], chemistry [Zhurin, 2004], physics [Sokolova, 2004], literature [Galchenkov, Avdeyeva, 2010], music [Khitsova, 2008; Shak, 2010], world art [Fominova, 2001] and others.

Although both Russian and European media education strategies have some common features, for example, European media education approaches are more or less holistic and include citizens' media culture, media creation and media participation.

According to A. Fedorov, different Russian models of integrated media education have traditionally based on the practical approach to media literacy development [Fedorov, 2009, 45]. With regard to the above mentioned opinion, the authors of integrated media education models agree on the view that "media education integrated with arts and sciences are meant to perform a unique function of preparing school students for life in the information environment by reinforcing media studies integrated with different school subjects" [Fominova, 2001, 10].

Hence, some leading Russian researchers of media education prove conclusively the potential benefits of adapting or modifying European media education practices in the Russian system of education, the more so, because "some elements of integrated media education are already included there [Fedorov, 2006, 12]. As the matter stands, the analysis of the compulsory minimum of primary and secondary levels of education held by A. Fedorov has shown that the potential of integrated media studies in the Russian school is far from being depleted. Therefore, Russian experts from Institute of General Secondary Education (Russian Academy of Education) in 1998 worked out a project - *Standard for Media Education Integrated with School Subjects* [Zaznobina, 1998].

A deep comparative analysis of contemporary foreign and Russian approaches to media education can be found in articles and monographs written by A. Fedorov [Fedorov, 2004, 2005, 2009, 2014, 2015]. This analysis made it possible to classify them into educational-informational, educational-ethic, practical-utilitarian and socio-cultural. Among them *synthetical* models of media education basing on the combination of several media education theories are most common nowadays.

The above-mentioned analysis enabled A. Fedorov to develop a media education model for enhancing student teachers' media competence and critical thinking at media studies lessons [Fedorov, 2007]. The model is increasingly being introduced in teacher training, as well as training, retraining and improving the qualifications of working teachers.

The conceptual framework of this approach is a synthesis of culturological, socio-cultural and practical media education theories. The objectives of media education according to the model are "to develop a person's media competence, media culture, creative and communication skills, critical thinking / autonomy, including perception, interpretation, analysis and evaluation skills for reading media texts, self-expression using the media" [Fedorov, 2007, 139].

These aims are largely mirrored by European trends in media education development: "media literacy denotes the ability to use individual media unaided, to understand, and bring critical assessment to bear on, the various aspects of media as such and media content, and to communicate – irrespective of the context – and create and disseminate media content; given the many sources available, what is most important is the ability to separate out information from the new media's flood of data and images and to categorise that information; media literacy is a basic element in consumer information policy, awareness of and familiarity with matters relating to intellectual rights, the mobilisation and democratic participation of citizens and the promotion of intercultural dialogue" [European Parliament resolution of 16 December 2008 on media literacy in a digital world, 2008].

Discussion

In general, a content analysis of Russian theses on media education proves that contemporary researches in Russia are focused primarily on the following issues: development of citizens' critical thinking, media communication and creation skills; teaching the audience to perceive, evaluate and analyze media texts of different genres. Moreover, there is a growing tendency for encouraging children and youth to create media texts, for introducing media studies in schools and universities, for enhancing the audiences' media culture and media competence.

That is mainly due to several factors: a rapid development of information and communication technologies in the world, harmonization of Russian and European education systems, widening of international scientific contacts and collaboration (in a number of areas including cultural studies, social studies, media studies, media education studies), search for new approaches and methodologies in media education.

Hence, the peculiar interest in the historical development of media education in European countries reflected in researches undertaken by Russian scholars [Kolesnichenko, 2007], [Novikova-Levitskaya, 2004], [Pechinkina, 2008], [Ryzhykh, 2007], [Khudoleyeva, 2006], [Mikhaleva, 2012].

Currently, Russian schoolteachers effectively apply European media education experience (integrated and optional film and media studies) as well as university teachers within the bounds of the Russian teacher training specialization "Media Education": film education methodology [Ryzhykh, 2007], the system of key media education concepts (*media agency*, *media category*, *media language*, *media technology*, *media audience*, *media presentation*) used for media text analysis at film and media studies lessons [Muryukina, 2008; Chelysheva, 2011].

In the 21st century the international cooperation and the sharing of experience between Russian and European media experts have reached a new level of evolution: Russian media experts are actively cooperating with foreign colleagues supported by UN, UNESCO and the Council of Europe.

Conclusion

Consequently, the impact of European media education strategies on the evolution of mass media education in Russia has resulted in the appearance and development of socio-cultural models of media education in Russia basing on the cultural studies and critical thinking theories of media education, including the adopting of the integrated media education approach in schools. In our opinion, there is an urgent need for further research in identifying the possible ways of international collaboration and sharing experiences with regard to promoting media education both formal and informal at school and during lifelong learning.

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Влияние европейских стратегий медиаобразования на развитие медиапедагогики России

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Аннотация. В статье рассматривается влияние европейских медиаобразовательных концепций и подходов на развитие медиапедагогики России на основе сравнительного анализа российских и европейских стратегий повышения медиаграмотности граждан в историческом контексте. Это влияние отразилось на развитии социокультурных моделей медиаобразования в России с опорой на культурологическую теорию медиаобразования и теорию развития критического мышления аудитории, включая становление интегрированного подхода к медиаобразованию в системе школьного и вузовского образования.

Ключевые слова: медиа, медиаобразование, медиаграмотность, медиакомпетентность, эстетический подход, кино, критическое мышление, интеграция.