# Mass Media Education as the Factor of Teaching Mass Media Culture of Individuals

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**Abstract:** The article deals with the specific features, basic trends and prospects of contemporary mass media education: world and Russian experience. The author evaluates the available traditions in this sphere, proves that the mass media education is a comprehensive process integrating various sciences: pedagogic and psychology, informatics and science of culture, politology and sciences of arts. The purpose of mass media education is not only to teach the auditorium the "mass media alphabet", in other words, the mass media literacy is a more complex task of personality socialization, teaching the mass media culture, the ability of critical perception, the skill to "read", analyze the mass media text, to deal with mass media creativity, to absorb new knowledge through the mass media. It is setting a problem to the higher school to introduce the new discipline at higher education institutions. It means the "Mass media Logia" which will enable to integrate many subjects into the curriculum: "the history and theory of mass media culture", "Mass media semiotics", "Mass media philosophy", "Mass media pedagogic" and "Mass media critics". This comprehensive curriculum will already produce the graduate as full-fledged specialist of the 21st century.

**Key words:** Mass media · Mass media literacy · Mass media culture · Mass media education · Mass media pedagogy · Mass media logic · Mass media text · Mass media semiotics · Mass media ethics · Personality socialization

## INTRODUCTION

The aims and purposes of mass media education, its specific features, basic trends and prospects have at the last 10-15 years to become more acute among theoreticians and parishioners of the mass media culture.

Incidentally, Russia has accumulated the experience of mass media education, it has the functioning Association of cinema education and mass media pedagogy (the president is professor A.V. Fedorov, doctor of pedagogic science), various research of this matter have sprung in this country, a specialized journal Mass media education has been publishing since January 2005. This idea is an intensive encouraged by UNESCO with its program of Information for all in Russia.

Still, this matter is far from resolved because the mass media education is an intricate process integrating various forms, approaches and trends of activity.

**Mass Media Education as a Complex Process:** The mass media education now features the following trends: (1) the mass media education of future professionals in the sphere of culture (journalists, script writer, camera men, editors, critics, managers, producers and others); (2) the mass media education of future educators at universities, pedagogical institutes, at the professional education institutions; (3) the mass media education as the general education component of school children and students of public schools, lyceums, higher education institutions; (4) the mass media education at cultural and recreational centers; (5) the remote mass media education; (6) the independent (continuous) mass media education which may last throughout the life span.

The UNESCO materials contain the following definition of mass media education: "The mass media education (mass media education) should be perceived as the educating the theory and practical skills of learning the modern mass media treated as a portion of the specific

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autonomous sphere of intelligence of pedagogic theory and practice; it should be discriminated from the mass media application as an auxiliary means of teaching other spheres of intelligence, such as mathematics, physics, or geographer" [1]. In other words, UNESCO treats the mass media education as the 21st century pedagogy priority trend, the information factor leading the education process.

The famous British researcher and pedagogue L. Masterman comments that "the central and integrating concept of mass media education is representation; the mass media represents the reality rather than reflect it". The main aim of mass media education is the mass media "denaturalization". The mass media education is the research process, in the first place. The mass media education is based on the key concepts which are more the analytical tools than the alternative content [2].

S. Feitlitzen has an appealing view point according to which the "mass media education implies the teaching of critical thinking; its essential component is that the students should "develop own mass media products. The mass media education is necessary to take active part in the democratic process and the globalization process and should based on the study of all mass media types" [3].

The "encyclopedic" viewpoint is: "The mass media education is the mass media study against the study with the mass media help. The mass media education relates to the simultaneous study how the mass media texts are created and circulated and to the development of analytical capabilities in order to interpret and to evaluate their content, while the mass media study (mass media studies) is usually combined with the ð practice of creating mass media texts. The mass media study (mass media studies) is aimed at achieving the purposes of mass media literacy" [4].

It is apparent that the *mass media education closely* relates to the *"mass media literacy"*; the pedagogues treat the mass media essence differently.

The "mass media literacy" is the capability to adapt, interpret, analyze and create mass media texts [5].

The "mass media literacy" is the capability to use, analyze, estimate and convey messages in various forms [6].

The "mass media literacy" is the process of training the "mass media literate person" possessing the developed capability to perceive, create, analyze and evaluate the mass media texts, to comprehend the sociocultural and political context of the mass media

functioning in the contemporary worlds, the code and representation systems which the mass media employed"[7].

It is noteworthy in the comparative analysis of these definitions that both the "mass media education" and "mass media literacy" sound as synonyms for many theoreticians and practitioners. Some different interpretation can also be found in practical approaches to the mass media education.

The poll conducted by the Association of cine-education and mass media pedagogy several years ago has revealed that Russian experts believe that the most essential mass media education are the following: (1) development of auditorium capability to critical thinking (84%); (2) development of auditorium capability to perceive, evaluate and analyze mass media texts (69%); (3) preparation of auditorium to live in democratic society (62%); (4) development of individual communicative capabilities (57%); (5) teaching the auditorium to create mass media texts (50%); (6) teaching the auditorium the background and theory of the mass media culture (48%) [8].

As regards different responses between foreign and Russian experts, it is evident that foreign experts emphasize mainly the role of training youth to live in democratic society, while Russian experts emphasize the development of the capability of auditorium to perceive, evaluate and analyze the mass media texts. Meanwhile, both experts place the first the individual capability of critical thinking.

The authors believe that the complex approach is basic in the mass media education involving several sciences, including the culturology, politology, the science of law, economics and art disciplines, in addition to pedagogic and psychology. The problem is that the theory lags behind the practice apparently; the latter often evolves as the experiment exactly in the sphere of pedagogic activity" [9].

**Theoretical Concepts and Practice of Mass Media Pedagogy:** The analysis of the theory and practice of mass media pedagogy in various countries leads to the idea that so far there is not any single theoretical concept, though there are the following theoretical approaches in this domain:

The *mass media education is the theory of development of critical thinking among students*. It has been remarked that British researcher L. Masterman is the brightest its representative.

The main concept is the background and the theory of mass media culture when the mass media seams to be the "fourth power" which spreads the "behavior models" and the moral values to the public. Therefore, the main objective of mass media education is to teach the public to orient in the modern society information flow: to analyze and reveal the mass media manipulation effects. L. Masterman strives to orient the public towards the development of "critical thinking", the evaluation of mechanisms of effects and at the values of some information [10].

L. Masterman calls his theory the "representative paradigm" emphasizing that it implies the "understanding of methods the mass media employ to represent the reality, technologies and ideologies which are used to this end and which are necessary for the future citizens of democratic society" [11].

J. Gonet, director of the French mass media educational center CLEMI, also shares the orientation towards the development of critical thinking model assuming that the main idea is to help students become free, tolerant citizens of the democratic society possessing autonomous thinking [12].

**Culturological (Esthetic) Mass Media Education Theory:** Its proponents have been many leading Russian mass media pedagogues for long years. This trend was pursued in the cinema education at secondary and higher school in the 1920-s — 1980-s. the basic content is the study of history of the mass media culture (cinema, video, radio, television, multimass media, net arts and others), "the author world" as the mass media text creator, the specifics of author's artistic thinking, style, etc.

But the main aim of mass media education seems to be the assistance to the public to comprehend the basic regularities and the language of mass media texts relating directly to arts, to develop the esthetic perception and taste, the capability of artistic analysis, in other words, the criticism.

This theory has strong position in Great Britain and Canada where G.M. MacLean ideas are particularly popular [13]. This theory is supported by many in Germany, France and Russia.

**Mass Media Education as the Theory of Sociocultural Activity:** The theoretical base is the synthesis of culturological and sociological spheres; as a result, the education becomes the integral component of sociocultural activity, like the mass media functioning.

It means the public education to perceive the mass media culture mass mediator role as the dialog catalyst: between the individual and the society, the socium and the power, between countries and continents. The mass media pedagogues teach the public to interpret the mass media texts in order to reinforce the "dialog aspect" rather than to impose it to the auditorium.

**The Semiotic Theory of Mass Media Education:** It rests on the theoretical works of M. Bakhtin, R. Bart, V. Vibler, Ju. Lotman, Ju. Kristev, M. Jampolskii and others. Their first and foremost aim was to study the mass media language as the sign system. This theory is based on the fact that the mass media language is often concealed, while the nature of texts is polysemantic threatening the free information consumption. The public, children and teenagers, in the first place, are often not ready to understand complex mass media texts. Therefore, the mass media education aim is to help students to 'read' the mass media text. The main mass media education content becomes the "mass media alphabet", "codes" and "symbols", in other words, the mass media language, while the pedagogic strategy is the teaching of the rules of "decoding", i.e., the analysis of mass media text.

**The "Practical" Theory of Mass Media Education:** In this case, the practice moves to the foreground. It implies that the practical skill to handle the mass media equipment by students should be as good as the multiplication table. Since the teenagers and youth are interested in the mass media equipment, they should be taught to take videofilms and telefilms, they should be taught to assemble, to dub and create the internet sites, et cetera.

**The Ideological Theory of Mass Media Education:** The ideological theory is based on the fact that the mass media are capable to manipulate the public opinion purposefully. The juvenile public is the most vulnerable target for the mass media mental influence.

The pedagogic strategy is reduced in this case to revealing political, social, national and economic aspects of mass media culture and mass media creativity as the objects of manipulation from the viewpoint of some social group, religion, or nation.

The ideological concept of mass media education was intensively employed since the 1920-s until the late 1980-s. It is understandable: the world existed in the cold war conditions between two sociopolitical systems.

Now this theory of mass media education relates to the study of how to manipulate the mass media and the awareness that profits from them [14].

**The "Injection" (Environmental) Theory of Mass Media Education:** This theory is often called the "theory of civil defense" (it implies the protection from negative mass media influence), or the theory of "cultural values". The pedagogues strive to help students understand the difference between reality and "virtual reality", they teach to comprehend the mass media text decimating its positive from negative message in the 'yellow' press, comics, promotion, cinema, television, computer games and others.

The 'protection' movement gained the encouragement of UNESCO International chamber on Children Violence on the Screen in the 1990s.

The method of application of the theory of "civil defense" is reflected in the monograph by A.V. Fedorov – the Child Rights and Problems of Violence on the Russian Screen [15] which treats possible ways of counteracting the negative screen effect on the teenagers.

**The Ethical Theory of Mass Media Education:** It deals with the fact that the mass media are capable to produce certain public moral values, particularly, among the teenagers. Hence, the main purpose of the ethical mass media education is to adapt the youth to some moral behavior model relating to the civilization progress level, the features of democracy, the particular religion, et cetera. The pedagogic strategy is also based on the synthesis of esthetic and ethic aspects of mass media education. The author of the present article was an ardent partisan of this concept in the 1990s. [16].

The above-listed concepts of mass media education manifest to some extent that each of the considered theories has the purpose of educating individual mass media culture, i.e. the process of individual socialization, including the world vision, the capability of critical thinking, the skill to read and analyze the mass media text, to deal with the mass media creativity, to absorb new knowledge with the mass media help, et cetera. [17].

**Models of Contemporary Russian Mass Media Education:** The Russian institutions of higher education began in the late 1990s to introduce and employ the electronic training soft in the teaching process, such as the *electronic tests, electronic manuals, training modules and cases, computer laboratory practical classes, multitasks media*

*business presentations, electronic reading books, et cetera.* They enable to promote the efficiency of information technology, computer majoring of students.

Among new training courses introduced at the Russian higher education institutions on the verge of 20th and 21st centuries, the following can be identified: Informatics, Electronic culture, Multimass media technologies, Multimass media and web-design, Electronic business technology and others.

The culture industry is one of the rapidly growing sectors in the contemporary post-industrial society. The conception of the electronic culture phenomenon permits to identify its essence, to outline the probable orientations in the contemporary information space, new method of acquiring information and to realize its place in the century-long history of mankind.

In 2003, with UNESCO encouragement, the all-Russian module of mass media education was developed at the Lomonosov University faculty of journalistic. It is the basic multipurpose program with the account of regional features [18].

It is being tested at a number of universities as the model of open mass media educational system. For instance it is under test at the mass media education center established at the South-Ural State University in May 2004. [19].

**The Following to Priority Trends Can Be Identified:**

- The mass media education project as the factor of educating the mass media culture and overcoming the sociocultural hurdles and contradictions in the sphere of communication (model 1 of the Russian module of continuous education for the broad public).
- The school of information culture (model 2 of school education).

The school optional classes include the subjects of background of mass media education, speech culture, communication culture, fundamentals of journalist business and others.

- The youth mass media culture (model 3 – the higher education) assumes regular workshops for university students to discuss the problems of mass media education and information culture. The specialty of journalistic at the South Ural State University has now the special course of mass media culture.

- The project of information for all (model 4 – the education of unprivileged population groups) is implemented together with the UNESCO bureau in Moscow. Since March, 2005, charitable courses of computer literacy among pensioners have been conducted.
- The project of mass media education empowerment opportunities (model 5 – the education for educators and teachers). Within the project framework, the public workshops are arranged to discuss the information culture among teachers, at school, orphanages, boarding schools and social workers.

The appealing program of mass media education is advanced by the Committee for human resources of the Khanty-Mansy autonomous province administration. In addition to the electronic government site inaugurated in 1998, another step of educating individuals of mass media culture was made in 2005. It implies the adoption of International electronic citizen program developed under the ECDL foundation egis as the leading international body developing and introducing the uniform qualification standards in the information comprehensive technology domain.

The Ugorsk State University serves as the educational facility using various information resources and, in the first place, the internet resources of autonomous province. The electronic citizen program improved noticeably the public general information technology literacy in the province promoting it to the international standard [20].

There is another instance. The Ural scientific and methodological center of mass media culture and education was set up in 2006 in Yekaterinburg to help the lectures of humanitarian and engineering institutes. Under the guidance of and with the participation of the center, two international scientific conferences devoted to the screen culture in the contemporary mass media space (2006) and the mass media culture in new Russia [21]. Jointly with the chair of culturology and social and cultural activity of the B.N. Yeltsin Ural Federal University and the Ural Pedagogic University, there annually scientific and practical men in the world of culture conferences are held devoted to the matters of mass media studies. The Ural methodological center with the Ural Federal University has initiated the educational program and introduced the discipline of mass media culture and fundamentals of mass media management at the chair of culturology and social and cultural activity.

In 2011 the mastership studies of the profile of audiovisual communication and mass media technology in the sociocultural activity. The students study the following courses: the audiovisual arts, the audiovisual creativity, the development of the audiovisual, the audiovisual documentation, the electronic archives and others.

## CONCLUSIONS

The experience presented above proves that the prospects of mass media education in Russia are directly connected to the problems of mass media culture and formation of the literate 21st century information society.

Hence, one of the most essential trends of mass media education as the important factor of producing information society can be introduction of mass media logia at leading state universities, pedagogical institutes, institutes of culture to enable integration of the courses of background and theory of mass media culture, mass media semiotics, mass media philosophy, mass media criticism, mass media ethics, mass media pedagogic and others. The author of the present article has prepared relevant scientific and methodological basis [22]. This comprehensive curriculum will provide the students with the opportunity to become full-fledged 21st century specialists.

## CONCLUSION

Considering that UNESCO identified mass media education as the top priority sphere of the 21st century cultural and pedagogic development, it has vast prospects. The mass media education with its rich background and vast geography is more and more in demand and necessary in Russia.

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