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Professional Culture of the Specialist of the Future

**MEDIA AND INFORMATION LITERACY IN THE MASTER'S
PROGRAMS OF RUSSIAN UNIVERSITIES**

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Abstract

The article is devoted to a new sphere of the Russian humanitarian knowledge and practice – Media and Information literacy. The author believes that Media and Information literacy as a competence is a necessary attribute for a specialist of the Information Society epoch, ensuring a sufficient level of his professional culture. This is true for all specialists of communicative sphere (librarians, journalists, manager, etc.), especially for educators. The purpose of the article is to present the advanced experience in the field of training such specialists. Based on monitoring of master's programs at Russian universities, the author draws a conclusion about the nature and condition of this new sector of Russian higher education, as well as the reasons for the current situation and the prospects for its improvement. In addition to this, the author has attempted to compare the Russian educational practice in the field of Media and Information literacy with similar foreign experience.

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Keywords: Journalism, media and information literacy, media education, master program, organization of activities with young people, pedagogical education.



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1. Introduction

In the XXI century, in Russia and elsewhere in the world the term "media and information literacy" is gaining a special popularity and importance. An assertion stating that it is the universal media and information literacy (accompanied by a high level of the development of scientific knowledge in the field of mass media and media education) that is a condition for a successful movement of this country towards a knowledge society and steady development, as well as a guarantee of the media security of the population and each person as an individual is becoming an axiom in the epoch of intense and uncontrolled information flows.

The media science in Russia, as contrasted to that of the Soviet period, is developing productively nowadays, whereas the practical activity in the field of media and information literacy is still in its infancy. For instance, no specialists in this area have been educated anywhere until recently, and no effective increase of the level of media and information literacy is practically possible without systematic efforts on the part of specially trained personnel. Some Russian universities have begun to open various educational programs for training specialists of the corresponding profile at the level of master courses after having realized their responsibility in this matter.

2. Problem Statement

The relevance of the research we are undertaking is determined by the lack of systematization of the national scientific and educational practice in the field of media and information literacy: the teaching experience available in universities is not described or generalized; the theoretical positions on which it is built are not reflected and not conceptualized. In addition, there is no comparison of Russian scientific and educational activities in the field of the media and information literacy with similar foreign experience. The absence of generalized works on the media and information literacy in the conditions of the Russian higher education system limits the development of Russia's scientific and educational schools, condemning our researchers "to ignore our national and cultural characteristics and needs, to build research trajectories on alien patterns" (Korkonosenko, 2017, p. 21).

3. Research Questions

The main research questions of this article are listed below.

- What is the evolution of concept "media and information literacy" in Russia and in the world?
- What is the media and information literacy from the theoretical point of view?
- Who is the leader in the field of media and information literacy among Russian universities?
- In what educational areas does the training of specialists for media and information literacy develop in Russia?
- What is the specificity of the national educational practice in the field of media and information literacy?

4. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the paper is to present the Russian advanced experience in the area of the media and information literacy that is being implemented against the background of dynamic theoretical discussions as to the place and role of the media and information literacy in the body of other "literacies" that are topical today.

5. Research Methods

In accordance with the goal of the present work, the following set of scientific tools is applied herein: a conceptual and classificatory analysis was used while studying the theoretical aspect, whereas monitoring was applied as the main method of collecting empirical materials regarding master's programs at Russian universities, including that of official websites of educational institutions. In addition to this, we have attempted to compare the Russian educational practice in the field of the media and information literacy with similar foreign experience.

6. Findings

The idea of a need for citizens to become literate from the viewpoint of information in order to live and be competitive in the emerging information society was expressed more than forty years ago (in 1974) by Paul Zurkowski who was then the President of the Association of Information Industry of the United States (Horton, 2008, p. 1). However, later on it began to be developed mainly by experts in the field of informatics, who rather specialised in computer competence and afterwards in network and digital literacy, as well as by librarians who sought to provide the wide audience with stable skills of orientation in directories and various information stores. As far as the matter of educating the audience with a view to the skilled handling of mass and communications media, as well as information products disseminated by them is concerned, it was media specialists themselves (mainly journalists) that practiced it under the banner of universal media literacy.

This disunity was far from being expedient, and in this context UNESCO initiated a process of the integration of these tendencies in the framework of the Literacy Decade which began in 2002 (Gendina, 2012).

Thus, by the end of the first decade of the XXI century the term "media and information literacy" took a special position among concepts relating to literacy (basic literacy, visual literacy, civil literacy, dual literacy, critical literacy, cultural literacy, essential literacy, minimum literacy, advanced literacy, primary literacy, cross-border literacy, literacy in matters of health information, literacy in the field of augmented reality, literacy in a workplace, literacy in the field of copyright, etc.). In 2008, UNESCO initiated an activity aimed at creating a curriculum for the training of media and information literacy teachers, as some countries had already begun to impart the binding force to media and information education of school children. In parallel to the introduction of the new term, a process of the development of assessment mechanisms of an achieved level of the media and information literacy was underway. So, in November 2010 in Bangkok (Thailand) the first meeting of an international expert group was held on problems of the development of media and information literacy indicators. The publication of an education programme

"Media and Information Literacy Curriculum for Teachers" in 2011 in English for training teachers became an important achievement at the global level (Wilson, Grizzle, Tuazon, Akyempong, & Cheung, 2011).

It is significant that the final formulation of the integrated concept was recorded at the conference "Media and Information Literacy in Knowledge Societies" which was held in 2012 in Moscow and which adopted a corresponding declaration (Media and Information Literacy for Knowledge Societies, 2013).

The Moscow Declaration on Media and Information Literacy defines the media and information literacy as a combination of knowledge, attitudes, skills and practices required to access, analyse, evaluate, use, produce, and communicate information and knowledge in creative, legal and ethical ways that respect human rights. Media and information literate individuals can use diverse media, information sources and channels in their private, professional and public lives (Media and Information Literacy for Knowledge Societies, 2013).

Russian researchers and practitioners also began to support the integration of media and information literacy (Zhilavskaya, 2014; Fateeva, 2015). These tendencies had been hitherto developing in parallel and seen several decades of existence in Russia by the time of the integration.

So, some public organizations (for example, the Interregional Centre for Library Cooperation), library departments and numerous experts in the field of informatics and computer sciences, supported in due course by the state ("The Concept of Informatization of Education" was adopted in this country in 1990) were leaders of the movement for information literacy. And as for media literacy, this tendency developed primarily due to efforts of the Association of Film Education and Media Pedagogics of Russia (President – A.V. Fedorov), established as far back as 1988, and owing to organizations which united amateur authors of children's and youth press (for example, the "League of Young Journalists", YUNPRESS, etc.). However, in contrast to the course of informatics, media education in Russia was not included in the programme of secondary education as a mandatory component, as it happened long ago in Canada, Australia and – in 2008 – in countries of the European Union (Buckingham, 2007; Fedorov & Serdyukov, 2012; Levitskaya & Gorbatkova, 2014; Livingstone & Haddon, 2009; Onkovich, 2013; Pechinkina, 2012; Varis, Pihlajamäki, & Vuontisjärvi, 2008; The European Parliament, Committee on culture and education, 2008).

The integration of concepts of media literacy and information literacy in Russia paralleled the time of the mass transition of institutions of higher education to a two-level system (bachelor's degree course – master's degree course). The interdisciplinarity and theoretical compositeness, inherent in the media and information literacy, led naturally to the fact that it was master's programmes that blazed the trail in the field of the training of MIL specialists.

By analogy with European universities, pedagogical universities and institutes began to develop master's programmes in Russia.

So, Moscow Pedagogical State University (MPSU) became an objective leader in this sphere. In this university there are master's programs "Media Education" and "Media Education in the Library Area" within the pedagogical direction (code 44.04.01, in accordance with the current Russian classifier of higher education), as well as "Media and Information Literacy" and "Media Education in the field of interethnic relations" within the framework of "Journalism" (42.04.02). These programmes were opened at the UNESCO Chair for Media and Information Literacy and Media Education of Citizens (this chair was

formed in 2016, affiliated to the Institute of Journalism, Communication and Media Education; it operates on the basis of a contract with UNESCO). I. V. Zhilavskaya, President of the Association of Professional Media Education of Russia (the Association was established in 2014) was appointed head of the chair.

Another educational trend used for the education of MIL specialists in Russia, is "Organization of Activities with Youth" (Code 39.04.03). The branch of Rostov State Economic University in Taganrog (the former Taganrog State Pedagogical Institute) followed the same lines (Muriukina & Ryzhikh, 2010). Here, in 2015, the first turn-out of master's degree students trained to work with young people in the sphere of mass communications was carried out at the Chair for Pedagogics and Socio-Cultural Development of Personality.

It should be also borne in mind that in parallel with the training of specialists for media and information literacy in the system of higher education of Russia, experts are trained in the field of information literacy and digital literacy. For example, Kemerovo State University of Culture and Arts is a recognized centre in the field of information literacy education, and digital literacy education is being developed in Moscow State University named after M. V. Lomonosov.

It is hoped that tasks of increasing the general level of literacy of Russians in areas thematically connected with the circulation of information ("the new literacy of the XXI century") will become a kind of a professional and personal imperative for alumni in all the above-enumerated programmes, determining their life position for many years ahead.

The difference between educational systems in Russia and abroad does not enable to draw a direct comparison of pedagogical practices in the field of interest to us. The fact is that the so-called course system of higher education in Russia is still employed, in which a curriculum (and, respectively, a set of disciplines) is common to all students enrolled for a particular course (specialty). Moreover, a list of these specialties is limited. It is defined by the educational ministry, and the autonomy level of an educational institution in terms of the educational content is limited by the relationship with the Ministry to the same extent as the autonomy level of a student is limited by an educational institution. It is important to note that there are no positions related to media and information literacy / information literacy / digital literacy in the official classifier of higher education of the Russian Federation. Consequently, at the level of definition of objectives, software developers are forced to operate with other meaningful units, adapting them to selected problems.

They use a more liberal educational model in the West, using which both an educational institution in its interrelations with the society and every individual student in his or her interrelations with the educational institution are freer in choosing objectives and content of training. This model is more flexible and mobile. It responds more quickly to the dictates of the time. Particularly, subjects of education, using this model, who require an educational service in the field of media and information literacy can meet their demands directly and without a backward glance at administrators.

Considering this circumstance, contacts with foreign colleagues and international scientific and educational institutions assume a special significance for Russian universities.

7. Conclusion

Thus, at present there are three variants of officially admitted master's degree programmes in Russia, adapted locally to the solution of the task of training specialists in media and information literacy. These are programmes "Pedagogical Education", "Journalism", and "Organization of Activities with Youth". Graduates who finish these programmes in those educational institutions at which corresponding objectives are set have been trained for the elaboration and implementation of advanced methodical models, technologies and training techniques in the sphere of media and information literacy; for the analysis of results of the process of their application in organizations that carry out media literacy activities (in this regard, not only in the system of education). The systematization, generalization and propagation of domestic and foreign methodological experience in a professional field associated with media and information literacy and media education should become a sphere of their continuous attention in future.

Thus, the system of higher education of this country, organized on the principle "a standard curriculum is made by managers", responds to challenges of the information epoch and tries to keep up with advanced foreign universities which operate on the principle "an individual curriculum is made by students" and which are involved in the training of media and information literacy specialists owing to this.

If we do want the practice of the training of these specialists to become large-scale, it is necessary to seek recognition of the profession "media educator" from the Ministry of Labor and Social Relations. Also, we need to make officials adopt the professional standard for this profession, and - based on this - include the position "Media and Information Literacy" - in one form or another - in the classifier of areas of higher education.

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