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## **MEDIA PSYCHOLOGY AS A CONCEPTUAL BACKGROUND FOR MEDIA EDUCATION: BEST PRACTICES IN UKRAINE**

Information challenges are between all the problems that face human beings, but educational institutions do not pay enough attention to preparing children for effective interaction with media space. Results of monitoring show: a low level of media consumers' critical thinking is breaking an integrated system of high-quality media as necessary institution of civil society. Media education experiment in Ukraine based on the media psychological developments is presented in the article. Media psychological background is overviewed: it consists of the media risks and media misused concepts, but proposes media creative educational practices, which motivate children to friendly communicate and productively collaborate on the base of reflexive feedback. New challenges of media education implementation are discussed.

*Key words:* media education, media literacy, media creativity, youth leisure activities, virtual environment, reflection, reflexive approach

### *Informational challenges and efforts of educational institutions*

The mankind has entered a new phase of its global development determined by two types of the most significant challenges: ecological and information ones. First ones determine the conditions of the physical (material) human survival on the planet. The biosphere of the latter suffers irreversible changes influenced by anthropogenic activity. Information challenges are between all the problems that face human beings. It is owing to the fact that ideas (thoughts, decisions, criteria, approaches, values and other intangible assets) are created and spread in the area of information that can affect all the aspects of human life. The last decades are characterized by the increasing of time spent by the people in interacting with information world of processed by various media. A particularly noticeable is moving children's and youth's leisure activities into the virtual world (from listening to music of different radio stations up to social networks in Internet). Human life is characterized by post-virtual qualities; but virtual media events (and sometimes even simulacra) are crucial in taking vital decisions, setting life goals, shaping one's own future.

Educational institutions don't pay enough attention to preparing children for effective interaction with media space despite undeniably important role of information from the media for the human life in general and contemporary children's in particular. Educational system content and its organizational structure don't meet the requirements imposed by the

changes that humanity faces though it stays in the old material and industrial approach. Adopting a dynamic modern information environment where child lives is spontaneous; there is no constant educational support. It happens rather often that adults let their children to be in media space without any compass, and don't teach them to navigate by the stars. Unfortunately children face media-risks that can harm, destroy their health and psychological well-being, retard in mental and physical development, and make relations more complicated [1].

'Media education needs to be recognised as a fundamental human right' – said at A global strategy for development of Media Education, proposed by UNESCO at 2001 [2]. Media Education is a branch of the pedagogical science teaching and practice aiming at finding effective ways of overcoming challenges of the information space; ensuring children's preparation for effective interaction with modern media, as well as developing media-immunity, critical thinking, the ability to media-creativity, general media literacy and media culture. Media education has been the construction of different roads linking sometimes-isolated areas of news literacy, digital literacy and so on. As media grow and change continually as media education must overtake always. But the opposite way may be. Start point of media education is not from media, but from psychology of children.

The conceptual background for modern media education in Ukraine is Media Psychology. The latter is a new social-psychological field combining psychology of mass communication and new media, psychological approaches to mediation, communication psychology in both virtual and real worlds and psychology of social dialogue in general. New Social Media-Psychology is a branch serving to civil society rather than media-producers as it used to be earlier. The mission of Media-psychology is in assisting media-educators in mutual influence of producers and users of information products moderation, preparing children for effective interaction with the world of modern media.

*Creation of the laboratory of mass communication psychology and media education*

Laboratory of mass communication psychology and media education of the **Institute** of Social and Political Psychology of the National Academy of Pedagogical Sciences of Ukraine has the leading role in establishing media psychology in our country for past 8 years. The need for creating specialized laboratory was defined by information space and Ukrainian citizens' public opinion poll investigation results, carried out by the **Institute** by means of monitoring, including confidence in the national media (since 2003) [3; 4] and the leading national TV channels [5]. Data analysis revealed as following: media-sphere in the country is changing greatly in the conditions of its independence, transition from totalitarianism to democ-

racy, commercialization, convergence etc. But citizens' views of media are mainly defined by out-of-date paternalistic expectations, without considering major changes, until recently. Media consumers don't require real high quality production, they don't understand the nature of language and level of modern media-messages; thus they are vulnerable to media manipulation etc. A low level of media consumers' critical thinking is broking an integrated system of high-quality media as necessary institution of civil society. Consequently education system should consider the urgent public demand, and scientists should provide grounding for changes needed for creating methodological and theoretical bases for media education development.

Since Laboratory of mass communication psychology and media education was created its efforts were aiming at developing conceptual apparatus, criteria and research methods of personal and mass media culture as the most widespread phenomena. It integrates a wide range of media literacy phenomena, media-competency, digital and information literacy, e-health, cyber-culture etc. A nationwide media culture monitoring of the Ukrainian population was started [6]; the first in Ukraine experimental program for senior pupils media culture (N.I. Cherepovska) and corresponding teacher guide [7] were developed. The Concept of implementation media education in Ukraine [8] was approved in 2010 based on scientists works on media-psychology of National Academy of Pedagogical Sciences of Ukraine. Ministry of Education of Ukraine issued a Decree on National Experiment of Media Education Introduction in 86 secondary schools, Autonomous Republic of Crimea and 8 regions of Ukraine (Ministry of Education order # 886 dated July 27, 2011).

#### *Media psychological developments for media education*

The article is aimed at reviewing the contents of Laboratory scientific research results held in last four years under the topic "Social and Psychological Aspects of Information and Educational Spaces Interaction in Ukraine" (2009-2013). The main objective of the research was aimed at identifying specific features of information and educational spaces interaction in the conditions existing nowadays concerning Ukrainian society informatization, defining contradictions and effects of media and education mutual penetration, determining place and role of media and media education in personality socialization, developing theoretical and methodological backgrounds of age media psychology, meeting requirements of new challenges as well as the main media psychological aspects of children's development in society.

Theoretical search resulted in creation age periodization of media risks on the base of reflexive approach (L. A. Naydonova [9]), several concepts and patterns: social information types (O. T. Baryshpolets [10]), complex media cultural phenomenon (O. L. Voznesenska [11]), five

measurements of media virtual environment (L. A. Naydonova [12]), socio-psychological temporal mechanism of media dependence formation (G. V. Myronenko [13]) media creativity and media perceptive communication (N. I. Cherepovska [14]).

Theoretical elaboration verification was based on sufficient empirical background: all-Ukrainian mass representative surveys of population and parents of children of all the ages (approximately 4,000 persons), two mass diagnostic tests in experimental secondary schools (approximately 6,000 persons), local empirical studies of children and their parents, students and pupils of all the ages.

The national socio-psychological pattern of school media education was suggested based on the researches performed. Conceptual framework of media psychological framework of creating school programs on media education for children of all the ages was developed. A competition on school programs by joint efforts with NGO's was launched and their experimental testing was started. Conceptual backgrounds for asynchronous media education, pupils' media socialization in individual form of education, animation studio as a form of creative media education for pupils, media club as form of media education for general public. All of the abovementioned is represented in a number of educational programs for pupils, students, and teachers' professional development.

N. I. Cherepovska had enunciated the idea of individual's media creativity as its important social and psychological resources in the conditions of human life in the information society media reality. Media creativity resource is a possibility of implementation new communication types. The concept of "media perceptive communication" was introduced. It defines recipient's inter-psyche communication with media texts created by others. The concept of media perceptive communication is revealed by means of two new phenomena: "*self to gadget*" describing specifics of human existence in modern conditions, and "one-on-one with media text ("*self to media text*") clarifying viewer's interaction with a cultural text, i.e. visual media text under the rules of its perception, a way of processing visual information, the ability to apply fragments revised. The method of "Media reflection" for youth introspection to develop a focused, meaningful approach to visual display, self-regulation on consumption of visual media products was created.

O. T. Voznesenskaya analyzed perception of mass media content by children of all the ages. She defined age specifics of media using by pre-school children. It sets the background of age periodization in child's interaction with information space. The suggested concept of *complex media-cultural phenomenon* as a form of media space self-organization assists in understanding specific of interaction with modern media space. It provides

different social sub-systems mutual penetration. Thus, images and characters created in the sphere of media are widely used for commercial purposes, become elements of everyday life; penetrate into the educational environment representing values and moral principles. The phenomena of vampire-trends, Potter-trends and other that were studied as ones influencing greatly children's environment could be examples of such complex phenomena.

Psychological well-being of the child can suffer from harmful influence because of potential dangers of complex media cultural phenomena in case if there is no systematic media education creating media immunity and critical thinking skills. O.Ye. Golubeva has made family-content analysis of major Ukrainian news channels in this context. Considerable image distortions of a typical Ukrainian family were found [15]. Those are: underestimation or even complete disregard for father's role, negative association of large families as a source of problem family etc. Considering the tendency of children's excessive consumption of media products out of parents' control and its negative influence on the family system it is the necessity of media education family the need for family media education was grounded. It means the possibility of raising media culture in the family by direct influence on the family by the child. Family is the nearest social environment, where all the media risks of the child can be recompensed at the appropriate level of media literacy of parents and media culture of the family in general. The program and guidelines for club meetings of social rehabilitation "Family Media Education" for art groups and general secondary education institutions were created by O. T. Voznesenskaya and O.Ye. Golubeva.

Analysis of parents' views on the TV-influence on their child [16] revealed the need for media-producers to solve the problem of threat to children's health and development. In particular, the relationship of excessive TV-watching by preschool, junior and senior school age boys leads to overweight [17]. Thus the risk of related diseases diabetes in particular and others has been confirmed in international studies for many times. The need for implementation a national system of more informative graphic warning signs to inform parents about potential danger for children of certain age from watching media production, which can be harmful, was grounded based on parents' views questionnaire. International experience proves the use of such systems to be an important part of state media education programs. Information section about warning signs is a part of the manual on "Media Culture" for 10th grade pupils, approved by the Ministry of Education of Ukraine and recommended for use in general secondary education institutions.

The work on media education is aimed at introducing scientific media psychology developments in the broad media education practice, creat-

ing media education movement of the public, scientific support of the network of Ukrainian media educators has good results.

*First results of media educational experiment and new challenges*

O.T. Baryshpolets has fixed an increase of general level of media education innovations support by teachers and pupils; Ukrainian teachers' community is becoming more prepared for introducing mass media education. Media culture of the adults and youth has positive trends in its development. These are as following: increasing the role of information needs and interests in leisure activities, increasing ability of navigating in information environment, selection approach, criticism, ability of identifying manipulative techniques in the information flows and opposition to the ideas promoted, although the amplitude of these shifts does not reach the level desired. The worrying trends are found and need further scientific research.

Thus, duration of viewers stay in the artificially created TV-reality that sometimes becomes the most important in defining attitudes, values and life decisions than influence of the nearest social environment. There is a virtualization of leisure activities of the youth; children spend more and more of the free time on the computer games, communication in social networks or information search on the web-sited (instead of needlework, contact with nature, family, relatives and friends, physical education and sports). We are witnesses of the ongoing Internet boom. Recent years are characterized by increasing the number (from 34% in 2008 to over 80%) of senior pupils relaxing and having fun in Internet. The frequency and duration of TV-programs watching among pupils and students is reducing but time spent on computer work and leisure as well as stay online is increasing.

Conceptual background for media hygiene as a system of cyber-users information and technological security and psycho physiological prevention from negative effects of multimedia technologies was created by G.V. Myronenko to overcome these challenges. A motivation and temporal pattern of media dependence development as non-constructive forms of interaction of the individual with multimedia technologies was created. Diagnostic parameters of Internet activity specific features of the youth and subjective time of Internet users were defined.

The appropriate diagnostic techniques of Internet users 'subjective time virtualization' were created. The phenomenon of "*online life saturation illusions*" (a combination of acceleration, moments of time and sense of inner the emptiness after staying in the Internet), "distance bias" (tracing the lives of others is more important than one's life as a tendency for living the "life of others" were recorded and described. As a result the sense of non-satisfaction with one's own life, low self-estimation level, depressive moods), "virtual acceleration of the subjective time" (the sense of accelerating course of time during virtual activity rather than real life) were recorded

and described as well. Media users' motivation and semantic sphere transformation (a kind of "shift from reason to the purpose" by O. Leontiev) become socio-psychological mechanisms of creating media dependence. It is based on double-natured modification of the subjective time, acceleration or and slowing down or "infantilization". A range of theoretical and practical problems as well as guidelines on "Media culture interaction with Internet reality" (for high school pupils, teachers, and school psychologists) was created.

Senior pupils' media culture monitoring revealed crucial role of audio media activity (listening to the music by means of various gadgets constantly ranked first in 2008-2015 years regarding leisure time). Thus N.O. Obukhova had started creating topics for audio media culture. An empirical study of the influence of audio media on the pupils' socialization, including individual forms of education was made. Criteria for audio media culture of the senior pupils were defined; practical methods for its improving developed were created.

#### *Conclusion and perspectives*

Specific features of information and educational spaces interaction are in recognition of media educational need by teachers, parents and pupils as subjects of educational system in post-totalitarian conditions and formation of media educational movements for safe and children-friendly media space. Media psychological background consist of the media risks and media misused concepts, but propose media creative educational practices, which motivate children to friendly communicate and productive collaborate on the base of reflexive feedback.

Scientific results of the Laboratory of Mass Communication Psychology and Media Education are being actively implemented in practical activity; its scientific staff is flexible to educators' social demand and of all the people in general. The increasing number of media educators' in the network and understanding media education as an important component of state information security cause a great demand of media psychological knowledge. However, development of media psychology requires fundamental researches of information behavior patterns in different sectors of the virtual environment, interaction of virtual and real communication, individual styles and specific features of different media practices of different subcultures representatives and local communities. The list of promising media psychological directions can continue because intensive changes in media space and society as a whole cause the need for constant reflection of themselves in the sphere of media necessary for preventing numerous media risks.

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