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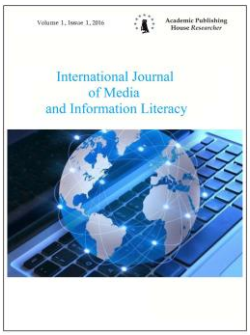

Articles and Statements

Media Literacy Education in Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan

Irina Chelysheva [a, *]

[a] Rostov State University of Economics, Russian Federation

Abstract

The article is devoted to the development and current state of media literacy education in a number of Central Asian countries (Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan). The author analyzed the goals and objectives, key concepts, structure, content, main stages of development, models of mass media education in Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan, scientific works and practical experience in the field of media literacy education in the countries of Central Asia in the post–soviet period. The author considers the priority technologies of modern mass media education; systematization of the material under study was carried out, the main theoretical concepts of mass media education were identified, and key trends in further development were identified.

Keywords: media, media literacy education, goals, objectives, concepts, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Kyrgyzstan.

1. Introduction

The origins of media literacy education in the CIS countries date back to the traditions of the Soviet school. Once a single educational space united by the common idea of educating the younger generation in the spirit of communist ideology has received new vectors in the post–Soviet period that are closely connected with the identity of each sovereign state of the former Soviet Union. Media literacy education approaches in Central Asia, the former Soviet republics of the USSR – Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan – were no exception. Their development after the collapse of the Soviet Union can be conventionally divided into two periods.

The first stage (1992–1999) is connected with the period of transformation of all state and socio–cultural spheres of society, significant changes in education and culture.

The second stage (2000–2019) of media literacy education development is the modern stage of the post–Soviet space closely connected with globalization processes, general world tendencies: the advent of the digital era, the transition to medialized communication, etc. Computerization, the rapid development of the Internet, and social media, the emergence of new risks and challenges that have arisen in society in connection with the need to ensure the media security of the younger generation, entailed significant transformational changes in all areas of modern society.

At present, media literacy education around the world is becoming more and more widespread, as all spheres of communication, education, and creative implementation of modern society are inextricably linked to the media. Nowadays, people of various ages, professions, and

* Corresponding author
E-mail addresses: ivchelysheva@yandex.ru (I. Chelysheva)

social strata are actively involved in this process. In this regard, the development of media competence with the help of media literacy education is one of the most urgent tasks in the world.

2. Materials and methods

The subject of this study is the problems of theory, methodology and practice of media literacy education in the CIS countries, in this case – in Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan in the period from 1992 to 2019 in terms of justification of the main goals and objectives of media education, key theoretical approaches and models of the media literacy education process, the development of trends and prospects for mass media education. An important aspect of the analysis of the main vectors of media literacy education development in Central Asian countries is the identification of prospects for the further development of the Russian media education process.

The following methods were used in the course of the research: historiographical and descriptive–analytical method, theoretical analysis and synthesis and comparison.

3. Discussion

The problems of media literacy education development in Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan are being studied by many modern researchers (Abdurakhmanov, Beknazarova, 2011; Ablazov, 2013; Allagurov, 2016; Imankulov et al., 2018; Izmailova, 2016; Kozitska, 2018; Rustamova, 2013; Shturkhetskiy, 2018 and others).

Considering the modern media literacy education in Central Asia as an independent direction in education, providing the process of socialization of the individual, E.E. Ablazov emphasizes that its prospects are directly related to the process of social modernization, the problems of formation of the foundations of civil society and media culture of the XXI century (Ablazov, 2013). Therefore, it is no coincidence that one of the trends in the development of media education in the CIS countries is the actualization of the development of mass forms and methods of media education activities of the population of different age and social groups (Chelysheva, 2018).

Presenting the history of media literacy education in the Soviet Uzbekistan, K.P. Abdurakhmanov and S.S. Beknazarova (Abdurakhmanov and Beknazarova, 2010; 2011) address the problems of practical media education and the use of media in the educational process. In addition, the works of these researchers consider the process of development of an integrated media education approach in the study of a number of academic disciplines that were born in the wake of the creation of educational films and have been further developed at the present stage, proving the effectiveness of integration of media literacy education not only in achieving the learning objectives of the material, but also in the development of information and communication competence.

S.S. Beknazarova (Beknazarova, 2011) is devoted to the analysis of the introduction of media education elements into the educational process. The subject of the author's research is the analysis of the possibilities of integrated media education component in the structure of the modern lesson. Among the main factors contributing to the inclusion of elements of media literacy education in the educational process of S.S. Beknazarova are the following: activation of cognitive interests of the audience to the topic under study; optimization of students' performance at different stages of studying a particular subject (Beknazarova, 2011).

In particular, when studying physics with students, the integrated curriculum includes analysis of media education approaches in the pedagogical context and considers the best domestic and foreign media literacy education practices. The main emphasis is placed on the development of analytical skills of the audience to work with media information.

In the structure of an integrated media education lesson, special attention is paid to the organization of independent work of students in the context of the implementation of a personality–based approach: for media education to be successful, i.e. to fulfill its purpose and prepare new generations for life in a mediatized society, it must be, first and foremost, accessible. And this applies equally to professional and non–professional types (Beknazarova, 2011).

The main objectives of media education in Uzbekistan, according to K. Izmailova, are aimed at educating the population, and mainly young people, in working with information, interacting with the media, forming a critical perception of media products and on the basis of this improvement of the media culture of the audience as a whole (Izmailova, 2016). K. Izmailova believes that the following aspects can be considered as positive trends in media education:

– gradual awareness of its importance by the public of the country and the adoption of media literacy education as a topical area of education;

– interaction between state structures and public organizations in an effort to raise the status of media literacy education in the country;

– apealing to the best international practices of the leading countries in media literacy education;

– expanding the range of forms and approaches to media education activities, taking into account regional and national peculiarities;

– growth of the movement of initiators and enthusiasts of mass and professional media literacy education (Ismailova, 2016).

E.E. Ablazov notes similar trends in media literacy education in developing countries, including Central Asian countries. Modernization processes related to the education system and modernization of the socio–cultural environment cannot be considered outside the modern information space. Accordingly, among the main challenges facing media literacy education in these countries, the author singles out the problems associated with the expansion of the media field of modern society, increasing the level of media security of the younger generation. According to E.E. Ablazov, the following aspects can be singled out among them: computerization of mass libraries, museums and archives; creation of public databases and data banks in the field of humanities and social sciences; creation of a wide network of cultural and information centres in the regions of the country; creation and development of the national sector on the Internet; ensuring information security for individuals, society and the state (Ablazov, 2013).

In recent decades, with UNESCO's support, several major media literacy education projects have been implemented in Central Asian countries. Their results are reflected in textbooks, dissertations and scientific articles. For example, if we talk about media literacy education in Uzbekistan, one of the key ones is the textbook *Uzbekistan on the Way of Media Education Development* (Uzbekistan..., 2015), where media and information literacy is viewed as a tool of democracy, including all media resources (media, libraries, archives, etc.).

One of the key factors in media and information literacy is the methods for assessing media information. This handbook includes several training modules on the essence of concepts; youth–media interactions; value conceptions of media; analysis of basic approaches to media interpretation; and the role of media and information literacy in communication cooperation. All modules include theoretical sessions, training workshops on media education topics on press, television, radio, Internet, etc.

A number of higher education institutions in Uzbekistan have launched media literacy education web resources. For example, since 2011, the Tashkent University of Information Technologies has initiated the Media Education Portal project (http://mediaedu.uz). K. Abdurakhmanov was the head of this project, and S. Beknazarova was the developer. The creation of this portal, according to its creators, is closely connected with the need for students to study educational courses or modules, using elements of media education as an effective means of developing a creative, independent and critically thinking personality in the face of an intensive increase in information flow (Beknazarova, 2011). The importance of this portal for mass media education is that the materials presented are aimed not only at training media professionals (journalists), but also at developing media literacy among the general public.

The development of media literacy education in the Asian CIS countries in the post–Soviet period was focused primarily on the development of new information flows, the spread of which around the world has led to the development of media technologies. Media literacy education process has been particularly active in Kyrgyzstan over the past two decades. For example, in early 2012, the first major research project aimed at studying the media literacy of the younger generation was implemented there. The Media Literacy project (http://newreporter.org/2012/05/07/konkurs–na–uchastie–v–media–literacy–cource–v–bishkekskom–lofte/#sthash.6pscociP.dpuf) was educational in nature and included a series of classes aimed at mastering the basics of media literacy among schoolchildren and students.

The media and school movement is currently being actively developed in Kyrgyzstan. Professional cameramen, directors, and journalists are trained in filmmaking, photography, and reporting in Kyrgyzstan's media schools, which have a practical educational character. For example, in April 2019, the Kloop media school (https://kloop.kg/blog/2019/03/26/nauchis–

snimat–i–montirovat–video–nabor–na–kurs–mediashkoly–kloopa/) started its work, the subject of which is dedicated to videotaping of thematic videos. Theoretical classes at the school are accompanied by mandatory practice: video tests and recording of small video fragments, the best of which are published on the online resources of Kyrgyz media editors.

In addition, by participating in the work of this media school, students can get acquainted with modern video recording technologies, video genres, audiovisual series design, the basics of modern editing computer programs, etc. By participating in the classes, the audience has the opportunity to expand their knowledge in the field of professional media sphere, as the classes include familiarity with the professions of cameramen, journalists, including the legal framework of this activity, the features of the choice of topics and conducting interviews, reports, etc. After mastering the theoretical course, the students start shooting their own videos under the guidance of experienced cameramen, directors and video editors.

Another practice–oriented media school in Kyrgyzstan, which is open to both amateur photographers and newcomers, is dedicated to the study of photography. The Media School "Photography Workshop" (https://kloop.kg/blog/2019/03/18/masterskaya–fotografii–uchim–vystraivat–kompozitsiyu–i–delat–horoshie–snimki/) is built on the same principle as the school of cameramen. There is also a practice of combining theoretical classes devoted to the basics of professional photography with a practical block of tasks and exercises, including the creation of a series of photographs on specific topics.

The best graduates of media schools of video footage, photography, basics of journalism, courses for reporters, etc. have the opportunity to undergo an internship in the editorial offices of the Kyrgyz media after the classes.

At the same time, despite the development of practice–oriented forms of media literacy education, the development of media competence, the formation of an academic base for mass media education, the inclusion of media education in the educational programs of educational institutions at all levels, and the holding of scientific forums and conferences on media education remain an open question in Kyrgyzstan's media education. This is evidenced by the results of a survey to assess the level of media literacy in Kyrgyzstan. The implementation of this media education project, this time a sociological one, was organized by the Public Foundation Media Policy Institute in 2017. This survey included qualitative and quantitative data on such indicators as evaluation, analysis, access, creation and dissemination of media content.

The results of the survey were reflected in the recommendations addressed to state authorities, civil society, donor agencies and representative offices of international organizations, mass media. The recommendations note that despite the integration into the modern information society, the population of Kyrgyzstan have not been prepared for the changing realities, especially with regard to the availability of competencies that allow them to be effective and information responsible citizens. In particular, it is a set of knowledge, attitudes and skills that allow access to information and knowledge, to analyze, assess, use, create and disseminate them with maximum productivity in accordance with legal and ethical standards and respect for human rights (Report, 2018: 94). In other words, the modern mass media education of Kyrgyzstan is focused on critical thinking and assessment of media information, i.e. development of media competence.

The development of media literacy in Turkmenistan has very similar positions to Kyrgyzstan in terms of the priority of practice–oriented development of media resources (Yildiz, 2010). In Turkmenistan, the problem of media development (in particular, cinema, television and radio) is being developed at the Turkmen State Institute of Culture. In recent years, Turkmenistan has hosted several thematic exhibitions and scientific conferences dedicated to the latest achievements in science, technology and innovative technologies. However, the development of media literacy education in Turkmenistan is less intensive than in other Asian CIS countries.

4. Results

An analysis of recent academic literature on the development of media literacy education in Central Asian countries (Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan) shows that media education is becoming more and more popular, as almost all age and social categories of the population of the former Soviet republics are involved in interaction with the media. A special target group of interaction with the media is the younger generation. As in other countries, media literacy

education in Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan is acquiring an interdisciplinary character, including cultural, pedagogical and technological approaches.

Analysis of the scientific literature shows that the priority theoretical platform for the development of media literacy education in Uzbekistan for almost two decades has been the development of critical autonomy and creative development of the media space. Kyrgyzstan has the strongest position in terms of practical accents in mastering media literacy.

The consolidation of efforts to develop media literacy is facilitated by the exchange of experience and study of best practices in Russian and European media literacy education. In recent years, Central Asian countries (Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Turkmenistan) have maintained close ties in the field of media education with the Media Development Fund (Moscow), UNESCO, MediaNet (Almaty), and IREX Europe organizations, and have actively cooperated with the Association of Librarians in the field of media literacy development.

On the basis of these studies, the following aspects have been identified as the main reasons for teaching media literacy to the general public in Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan, in particular the development of media education for the younger generation:

– the media define the political and cultural life of modern society;

– the media form values and models of behaviour;

– the media have a significant impact on modern society, including the formation of types of perception and understanding of information;

– media development requires not only passive but also active participation of the audience (Kozinska, 2018).

In recent years, with UNESCO's support, several large–scale media literacy projects have been implemented (Kozinska, 2018; Shturhetsky, 2018, etc.), including surveys and the development of methodological tools. These projects address the theory, methodology and practical use of media resources in the educational activities of the younger generation.

For example, the recent IREX Europe project in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, launched in 2017, aims to increase the capacity of people in these countries to recognize false reports and misinformation, to make informed decisions and to promote understanding of the role and responsibility of the media in a democratic society (Sturkhetskiy, 2018: 3).

A number of training manuals have been published on the basis of the project materials. These manuals are presented in a modular form, which allows for partial use of the materials presented or for their variation depending on the readiness of the audience and the specific objectives of each session.

In the process of studying media education classes, the audience is offered several modules on media literacy: 1) basic concepts, 2) information security, 3) information and propaganda, 4) quality control, 5) news factory, 6) content creation (Sturhetskiy, 2018).

Theoretical material on media literacy education development is presented in the series of lectures and discussion workshops/trainings. The manuals also contain practical exercises on the topics under study. In addition to studying the basic concepts of media literacy education issues, the audience is offered sections on information wars in the media, problems of media hygiene, the study of media consumption, including the study of the propaganda function of the media and the study of the basics of critical thinking, etc. The Workshop section presents a variety of practical exercises and assignments for developing media competence. The technology of these classes, such as exercises for creating media texts, perception of media texts, critical analysis of media texts, and study of media texts, is based on the books and articles of A.V. Fedorov (Fedorov, 2001).

The manuals also contain thematic plans for integrated and specialized courses: "Media and Information Literacy (MIL)" (108 hours); courses for students: "Media Expertise", "Media Consumption", "Media Production" (each of which is designed for 72 hours); a three–day training program; a distance learning program for a wide audience "Media Education through Media Creation" (72 hours), etc.

These manuals are especially important for working with media texts and recognition of fake news, problems of classification indicators of modern media audience, formation of media content and assessment of the quality of media products with an emphasis on the practical development of media resources, including the creation of media texts on a given topic, presentations for lessons

and thematic classes, etc. As the analysis has shown, these topics are reflected in almost all media literacy programs.

At the present stage, media literacy segments are being intensively developed for Central Asian countries and for librarians. In particular, training courses on media literacy are being implemented in Kyrgyzstan for library stockholders, the aim of which is to develop media competence. These courses include several main sections: familiarity with the functions of the media; assessment of the impact of media information; the possibility of using the media in the professional activities of librarians; definition of their citizenship in relation to media texts of various types and genres; understanding, analysis and interpretation of texts in the media, etc. (Kozinska, 2018).

The situation of involving libraries in the process of mastering the media sphere is also characteristic of other Central Asian countries, which may indicate the inclusion of these countries in a single socio–cultural field of mass media education, as the practice of working with libraries to master media literacy is now actively developing around the world, including in Europe and the CIS.

Leading universities in Central Asia, such as the Tashkent University of Information Technologies, the Andijan State University and others, are involved in media literacy projects. The leaders in this area are Uzbekistan, where a large number of media literacy education projects have been implemented in recent years, including those based on the work of Uzbek researchers.

The development of media education in general and higher education institutions in Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan is closely linked to ensuring the information security of the younger generation and the ability to work with media information and analyse and interpret it from the point of view of civic position, critical, aesthetic, creative and other approaches. Thus, in the process of forming media literacy, students acquire the skills of effective and safe use of media, as well as an adequate, professional vision of the state of affairs in a particular area of public life, the formation of an independent civic position, and assistance in the formation of civil society (Mamatova, 2015).

One of the pressing problems remains the task of information security for the younger generation in the media space. With these goals in mind, recommendations are being developed for teachers and the parents' community in Central Asia to reduce the risk of children and young people turning to undesirable media content. Analysis of these recommendations allows us to highlight several key points, among which we can highlight the following:

– monitoring of the younger generation's access to social media;

– selection of media resources for the younger generation according to the following criteria: safety, attractiveness and usefulness for learning and development;

– use of reliable websites targeted at children's audiences.

A project entitled "Promoting stability and peace in Central Asia through increased media literacy, effective reporting and regional cooperation", aimed at developing critical thinking and countering extremism, is currently being implemented by Internews, an NGO supported by the European Union. The project is being implemented for a year and a half in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan. The project involves university, college and school teachers, media trainers and media literacy experts from Central Asian countries. As a result, projects are being developed and implemented to support and disseminate best practices that promote media literacy, digital literacy, and critical thinking, targeting journalism students, schoolchildren, civic activists, and media workers (Second..., 2018). In our view, these methodological events are of great importance for the exchange of experience in the field of media literacy education in Central Asian countries and can contribute to the consolidation of the efforts of states in the process of developing media and information literacy among the general public.

5. Conclusion

Thus, the study of the development of media literacy education in Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan in the post–Soviet period, allows us to identify two main stages of development of this process. For the first stage, the chronological framework of which can be defined from 1992 to 1999, the most typical tendencies were the processes related to the restructuring of the state structure of the sovereign republics of Central Asia, the formation and strengthening of innovation processes in the economy, politics, culture and education. Simultaneously with these processes, in this period, in accordance with global trends, information technologies began their development.

The next stage in the development of media literacy education in the CIS countries (2000–2019), accompanied by globalization processes and rapid information shifts, can be considered as a period of digital society development, and the emergence of new social media. As a result of this process, the emergence of global threats related to the development and interaction with the media: dangerous media content, excessive immersion in the virtual world, etc. At the same time, at the present stage, it is already becoming clear that not every single country is faced with the problem of interacting with the media. Media literacy education is becoming universal, and its relevance is becoming indisputable.

As a result of this research, the main theoretical platforms for media literacy education in the countries under consideration in Central Asia can be identified. Among them, practical, critical, and socio–cultural approaches have become most widespread. The practical approach related to the use of media to support the educational process is most characteristic of Kyrgyzstan. The utilitarian nature of media education is related to the practical use of media technologies, although in recent years there has been a significant shift towards a critical media literacy education paradigm.

One of the actively developing theoretical platforms for media education is the development of critical understanding of media information and the development of independent analytical thinking in working with information resources. It is becoming obvious that it is extremely important for the younger generation to learn to assess the quality and reliability of information, to be selective in its consumption, to select the necessary information, systematizing it in certain areas of science, to fit it into the knowledge provided by an educational institution, and to be critical of any information. All of the above will be the key to the formation of a modern educated personality (Beknazarova, 2011).

Modern media literacy education in the Asian CIS countries is becoming more and more in line with global trends: it puts the task of analytical thinking in the process of mastering media information, including its independent evaluation and selectivity in relation to information flows at the forefront. Particular importance in the modern media literacy education of Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan is attached to the issues of the security of the younger generation related to the media, such as the abundance of inaccurate information, the spread of media dependence, access to sites containing violence, etc.

E.E. Ablazov singles out the systematization of information and the identification of metaproject links in the information flow as priority tasks facing modern media literacy education in Central Asian countries. These tasks predetermine the pedagogical vectors for the development of the media education process: each teacher is faced with the task of not protecting the students from massive flows of various information, but teaching them how to use them, choosing the useful and reasonable. Ultimately, this helps to reveal the talents of each person (Ablazov, 2013).

In general, we can conclude that the goal of mass media education in Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan (Fedorov, Levitskaya, 2018; 2019) is to develop and increase the level of media literacy/media competence of the population (i.e., the culture of communication with the media, creative and communicative abilities, analytical thinking, skills of creation, dissemination, interpretation, analysis and evaluation of the role and functions of media in society, media texts of different types and genres).

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