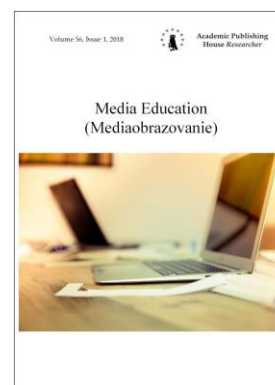




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## Soviet Feature Films about Children in the War and It's Use in the Training of Future Teachers

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### Abstract

The article gives the theoretical justification of a professionally oriented approach to the analysis of the film and its application in the educational process. The main category of professionally-oriented approach is the pedagogical analysis of the film, which is understood as a set of targeted intellectual actions to identify and substantiate the socio-psychological, historical, moral and ethical problems of the film, educational situations, factors that create conditions for the development of personal qualities of children and youth, their worldview and behavior patterns. The pedagogical essence of Soviet cinema as a means of personality formation is disclosed. It is noted that the Soviet feature film about children in the war reveals the features of the socio-psychological and ideological conditions for the development of the child's personality, shows the circumstances that contribute to the unity of young citizens with the adult world and increase the effectiveness of education. The main thematic lines of Soviet films about children in the war are highlighted. The results of the study of the potential of Soviet feature films about children in the war as a means of moral and civic education and the ideas of future teachers about the conditions and ways of using these films in educational work are analyzed. The specific elements of methodological support for preparing students for the use of Soviet films about children in the war in the educational process are described.

**Keywords:** Soviet feature films, children at war, future teachers, professionally-oriented approach, pedagogical essence of the film.

### 1. Introduction

In the year of the 75th anniversary of the Victory in the Great Patriotic War, all Russia bow their heads before the feat of the generation of the 40s. These were people of the highest moral strength, who managed to survive in incredibly difficult conditions and save the country and the whole world from fascism. In this generation, children were worthy of adults, together endured all the pangs of war, worked, helped each other, believed in the future. Today, carrying out patriotic education of students, we must turn to the unique human spiritual experience of those years.

The lessons of World War II should not be forgotten throughout the world. The main task of mankind is to prevent military conflicts, learn to overcome all contradictions in the dialogue, and develop friendly and partner relations between peoples. It is children – the future of all nations – who must learn the clear principles of pacifism, non-acceptance of violence, and learn to empathize with other people.

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The custodians and translators of the memory of the war are teachers. The ability to create conditions for students to understand the essence of war and peace, the universal human ethical principles of building relationships between people is the most important element of professional pedagogical competence. One of the sources of historical and moral experience can be feature films about the war. At the same time, films about children in the war are more accessible for schoolchildren to understand, since at a young age the experience of peers is much closer. Films about the war show their peers in a critical situation in which all their best qualities are manifested - stamina, disinterestedness, industriousness, and the ability to be friends. Soviet cinema presents outstanding examples of films about children in the war. Therefore, mastering by future teachers how to use Soviet feature films about children at war in the educational process becomes one of the key tasks of training in a professional pedagogical educational institution.

The aim of our study is, within the framework of a professionally oriented approach to the analysis of feature films, to develop and test the content and methods of preparing future teachers for the use of Soviet films about children in the war in educational work with students.

## 2. Materials and methods

The article describes the results of the initial stage of the study. A theoretical analysis of the main approaches to the study of Soviet cinema, including children's cinema, is carried out. The own experience of using cinema in the process of training future teachers is generalized. The theoretical foundations of a professionally oriented approach to the study of cinema are highlighted. Methodological developments on the research topic have been completed.

A survey of students of the Kurgan Pedagogical College – future primary school teachers was conducted. The aim was to identify students' knowledge in the field of Soviet feature films about children in the war, their ideas about the possibilities of using these films in educational work with schoolchildren. 41 respondents participated in the survey.

We also used the analysis of the products of the activities of future teachers – an essay with a pedagogical analysis of films.

## 3. Discussion

Justifying the requirements for the organization of teacher training, Western researchers argue that teacher educators engage in simultaneous innovation in three related, but distinct aspects of program design and implementation: organizational structures and policies, content and curriculum, and teacher education pedagogy (McDonald et al., 2014). Among the key areas of research in teacher training (analysis of the relationship between theory and practice, routes in teaching, various contexts for teacher education, primary teacher education, assessment of teacher education and others) one of the important places is the use of technology (Livingston, Flores, 2017). A. Brew and C. Saunders suggest that in the twenty-first century context there is a need for teacher education to be proactive in generating self-reflective teachers with the capacity to shape classrooms and schools to meet changing needs, for this it is necessary to apply research-based learning in teacher education (Brew, Saunders, 2020). We believe that these approaches are applicable in the process of organizing media education of future teachers, in particular in the context of studying the educational potential of films.

Currently, there are several basic approaches in Russia to the analysis of films, including children's ones. So, the ontological approach considers such a phenomenon as the experience of the cinema viewer, which is never individual, since cinema is a mass phenomenon. The relationship between the technical and existential aspects of cinema is studied (Kurtov, 2012).

The socio-cultural approach involves the separation of the inextricable link of the children's film with the political and socio-cultural conditions and tasks of the state in the period under review. Cinematography is considered as a factor having a significant role in the formation of the cultural space of society and human culture, especially in the Soviet historical period. It is noted that cinematography, based on a synthesis of arts and syncretism, allows the formation of universal cultural and aesthetic values (Lubashova, 2013).

The hermeneutic approach includes the analysis of stereotypes, ideological analysis, identification analysis, iconographic analysis, plot analysis, analysis of character characters. Media text is compared with historical, cultural tradition and reality (Chelysheva, 2019).

Using the tools of these methodological approaches, we recognize the need for a professionally oriented approach, in which cinema is considered as one of the effective means of

achieving the goals of professional activity. Such an approach must necessarily take into account the content, worldview and technological aspects of each profession, as well as the process of its development by future specialists. The specifics of the teaching profession is that its subject is the process of formation and development of the child's personality, that is, a process that has the characteristics of creation and self-realization; a process determined by the socio-cultural conditions of human life; the process, which is based on personal and educational communication, in which dialogue develops into polylogic. Cinema has all of the above signs and dependencies, therefore, cinema corresponds to the nature of the teaching profession, not only organically reflects its centuries-old experience, but also affects the direction and dynamics of its changes. We can argue that, since the formation of a person's personality as a social being requires the presence of a mentor (parents, teachers, peers, other representatives of social institutions can act as a mentor), cinema can also become an effective mentor. In the process of training, the development of the personality of the future specialist continues, therefore, the movie as a potential mentor of the future teacher can realize its functions of modeling social and professional reality, problematization of the goals and content of human relations in the educational process, updating the relationship between the internal side of human life and external social influences.

At the same time, Soviet cinema is attractive for its orientation toward the formation of a certain model of the worldview and behavior of both an adult and a child. The behavior patterns of an adult and a child in Soviet cinema are harmonious, consistent with each other and with the principles of building a society, based on universal moral standards, and therefore can be accepted by a young teacher quite naturally. From the point of view of the educational function, Soviet cinema is not outdated, even despite the significant ideological changes that have occurred in Russian society since the beginning of the 90s of the XX century. Therefore, we believe that in relation to Soviet cinema, the concept of "pedagogical essence" can be used as a characteristic of its conformity to the goal-setting, content and technological tools of the pedagogical profession. Since the teacher interacts with the child in the educational process, it is precisely films about children, age-related features of their development, their personal crises, communications, experiences, the connection of their life with the life of the country in a particular historical period that potentially become mandatory material for study.

V.B. Khramov sees the reasons for the successful development of cinema in Soviet times in the fact that cinema belongs to synthetic forms of art. By their nature, synthetic species are closest to the social trend of democracy, associated with the participation of citizens in the construction of the state, and this trend intensifies during the revolution. Therefore, it is no coincidence that during the revolutionary period it is precisely synthetic forms of art that require many people to collaborate in creating a concrete work of art: the creative team, and administrators, and philanthropists, and others – become the main, socially approved, dominant in culture (Khramov, 2009). Studies of Soviet cinema, including films about the war, undertaken by Western researchers (Beumers, 2009; Gillespie, 2014; Youngblood, 2007). It is noted that war films have long been the most influential genre in Soviet cinema, since Soviet society was militarized, that cinema played a major role in propaganda efforts during World War II.

N.F. Khilko identifies 12 main thematic areas in Soviet children's cinema. Among them – the theme of friendship and love, morality and human relations, the spiritual greatness of the feat, social responsibility of the individual and others. The scientist notes such a feature of Soviet cinema as faith in children, inextricably linked with faith in the future (Khilko, 2011). A.K. Bernatonite notes that Soviet films for children were the foundation of the ideological foundation and offered certain behaviors for both the adult (parents or teachers) and the child. Cinema visualized the problems of children of a certain age and showed various aspects of overcoming the impasse. Watching the film contributed to the optimal finding of a way out of both the private (for example, lying, inability to establish contact with peers) and the more general problem (such as relations with the teacher, patriotism, professional honor and dignity). The scientist believes that it is impossible to unequivocally answer the question about the need for modern children to watch children's films of the Soviet era due to a change in moral and spiritual guidelines, the pace and rhythm of everyday life. But Soviet children's cinema is universal. It carries the light of simple and understandable truths; it is characterized by the ability to build intrigue. Throughout the entire Soviet cinema for children, the thought passes that trials temper the spirit and help find the right solution (Bernatonite, 2019).

O.A. Baranov and S.N. Penzin substantiate the union of pedagogy and cinema on the basis of the function of broadcasting the ideal. In their opinion, a film is such a media text that places high demands on the audience; in most other mass media, the concept of “artistic image” is absent. School and university film education does not prepare film experts, but full-fledged, competent viewers, educates them in the need for real cinema (Baranov, Penzin, 2005).

The need to include the formation of media literacy in teacher education is justified by Western researchers. Various methods of integrating the formation of media literacy into teacher education have been studied (Butler, 2019; Gretter, Yadav, 2018; Meehan et al., 2015; Schwarz, 2001; Yeh, Wan, 2019). R. Hobbs notes that in many nations, teacher education in media literacy uses both informal and formal approaches depending on the types of expertise available. In both formal and informal settings, it is still typical for media literacy programs to rely on the enthusiasm of the individual teacher, who may teach it as a ‘hobby subject.’ Few training institutions offer the subject at all either in terms of content subjects (in communication studies) or of methodologically-oriented training (in education) (Hobbs, 2007). Involving students in active learning and open research, personalizing instruction, new forms of online education, a process-oriented approach to developing competencies in the field of media and information literacy are becoming the key principles of media education (Oberg, Ingvaldsen, 2016).

In Russia, A.V. Fedorov distinguishes three main areas of media literacy education for future teachers: 1. Literary and imitating, dramatizing and situational, graphic and imitating creative studies for the audience to obtain creative skills on media material via heuristic activities, games and ICT. 2. Creative studies aimed at developing the audience’s adequate perception of media texts. 3. Creative studies aimed at developing the audience’s ability of media text analysis (Fedorov, 2010). Common to them is the principle of active work with a media text that creates the conditions for the development of creative and critical thinking, the value sphere of students. Media literacy education includes goals for personal development, training and educational tools, a pedagogical model, functionality and communicativeness (Fedorov et al., 2014).

In our opinion, the study of the general principles of the methodology, content, and technological methods of using cinema in the educational process inevitably leads to attempts to study the particular aspects of cinema pedagogy – highlighting individual thematic elements of the content of films, analyzing the conditions and methods of their use in educational work with students of different ages, identifying them parameters with professionally-oriented specifics. Therefore, the study of the role of films about children in the war in the process of training future teachers is an urgent scientific and methodological problem.

#### 4. Results

We conducted a survey of students of graduation groups – future primary school teachers on the topic "Soviet feature films about children in the war and their use in professional activities." When answering the question “Do you consider it necessary to use Soviet feature films about children in educational work with primary school students?” 97.5 % of respondents answered positively. This testifies to the recognition by the vast majority of students of the great educational potential of Soviet films about children.

When answering the question “What features of Soviet feature films about children do you consider the most significant for achieving pedagogical goals?” 59 % of students chose the option “these films about peers are the most understandable, affect common problems, interests, experiences of students”, 53.8 % – “these films show high standards and behaviors”, 38.5 % – “these films reveal relationships children and adults in the context of universal and traditional Russian norms and values. ” 59 % of respondents said that "these films allow us to see the norms and values of collectivism, selflessness, patriotism, empathy and mutual assistance that have been significantly lost today." 35.9 % of students believe that "these films allow us to study the Soviet period in the history of our country, to correlate it with the present." Thus, future teachers are aware of the need to maintain a connection with the history of the country, as well as the high moral level of human relations that students can perceive by watching these films. In addition, students know the age characteristics of children who will understand peer experience much better than theoretical reasoning by adults.

When answering the question “Do you consider Soviet feature films about children in war to be an effective means of forming morality and patriotism among elementary school students?” 95 % of students responded positively. It turned out that future teachers watched a number of

Soviet films about children in the war – *Son of the Regiment*, *The Fate of a Man*, *Eaglet*, *Ivan's Childhood*, *Squad of Trubachev Fighting*, *Winter Morning*, *Five of the Brave*, *Oginsky's Polonaise*, *Kingfisher*, *Young of the Northern Fleet*, *Alexander the Little*, *Saved Name*, *Night Witches in the Sky*, *Girl from the City*, *Legend*. 50 % of respondents named at least one movie. However, half of the respondents could not name a single film, which indicates the need to introduce them to the study of this subject of cinema.

When answering the question “Have you used Soviet feature films about children in the war in educational work with younger students?” only 35 % of respondents answered in the affirmative. This means that it is necessary to involve students in the development and application of various forms of work with schoolchildren, where these films will be used. At the same time, it is necessary to replicate the positive experience of those students who have already used these films in educational work.

When answering the question "What forms of work using Soviet feature films about children in the war did you use?" only 18 responses were received. Of these, 44.4 % of respondents indicated a film lesson and a quiz, 33.3 % – a drawing contest and discussion, 11.1 % – a museum lesson, 5.6 % – an exhibition and a social project. No one used the children's film club.

The question “Do you consider it necessary to master the future teachers in the process of training in a professional educational institution in the ways of using Soviet feature films about children in the war in educational work with schoolchildren?” showed that only 7.7 % of respondents deny the need to master forms of work with children's films about children in the war in the process of training future teachers. 84.6 % of students answered in the affirmative, doubt – 7.7 %. These results confirm our assumption that in the teaching of pedagogical disciplines it is necessary to include assignments for the study and use in educational work of Soviet feature films about children in the war.

Students were asked to name the reasons why they would not want to use Soviet feature films about children in the war in educational work with younger students. The answers were received: “these films are difficult to understand at such an early age,” “these films can adversely affect the psyche of children,” “not all children like to watch films, especially black and white.” But these answers are single. In addition, students did not take into account that only films with an age limit of 0+ or 6+ in accordance with Russian law can be selected for use in work with younger schoolchildren. Of course, films whose content does not correspond to the age characteristics of elementary schoolchildren and can harm their nervous system and emotional state cannot be used. But in Soviet cinema, the war was very carefully and correctly shown, while at the same time not hiding its true essence - the destruction and death of all living things. Soviet films about children in the war were psychologically verified. It does not focus on external effects, but serious attention is paid to the image of feelings and emotions, which is necessary for the formation of the emotional-sensual sphere of personality.

The results of the questionnaire strengthened our desire to carry out educational work with students in the field of Soviet feature films about children in the war, to develop methodological support for the future teachers to master the educational potential of these films.

We can distinguish the following Soviet feature films about children in the war, the content and duration of which correspond to the age characteristics of younger schoolchildren.

The film *Son of the Regiment* (*Soyuzdetfilm* studio, 1946) was created on the basis of the novel by V. Kataev. Ivan Solntsev, a village orphan boy, was found by artillery battery scouts. Everyone loved the clever and clever boy, especially the battery commander, Captain Enakiev, who wanted to adopt him. The boy became a scout, showed high stamina and courage, being captured by the Nazis. After the death of the captain, the boy was orphaned a second time. He was sent to the Suvorov School, and you can be sure that he will become a worthy officer.

The film *Daughter of the Commander* (*Belarusfilm* studio, 1981). The daughter of the Soviet officer Val and his young friends goes through the horror of the outbreak of war – the defense of the Brest Fortress. The girl's fortitude is amazing – even standing in front of the Nazis, risking being shot, she does not ask for mercy. She does not agree to persuade the defenders of the fortress to surrender. A girl is by no means a “superhero” from an action movie. She cries, she is scared, she has to gather all her strength. But debt is stronger than fear, the defenders of the Brest Fortress do not give up, children are worthy of adults in steadfastness and heroism.

The film *Sit next, Mishka!* (*Gorky Film Studio*, 1977). In 1941, Misha Afanasyev, the resident of Leningrad, was preparing to enter the first grade of the school, but in the summer, he gets scarlet

fever and ends up in a children's hospital. June 22 begins the Great Patriotic War. The main character has to endure many trials – wound, hunger, separation from parents. His friends give concerts for wounded soldiers and officers. Only mutual assistance and faith in victory helps the residents of Leningrad survive. Mishka meets with his friends on May 9, 1945.

The film *Ivan Makarovich* (Belarusfilm studio, 1968). The peaceful childhood of 13-year-old Ivan was interrupted by the war. The father went to the front, and the boy loses his mother during the evacuation. Adults do not leave him without help, the boy shows such a strong will and independence that others call him by middle name. He works at the factory, maintaining kindness and faith in life.

The film *Street of the Youngest Son* (Belarusfilm studio, 1962) was created on the basis of the novel by Soviet writers L. Kassil and M. Polyanovsky about 14-year-old Vladimir Dubinin, the son of a sailor, a resident of the city of Kerch. When the Nazis occupied Kerch, in the autumn of 1941 Vladimir left with a partisan detachment in a quarry and became the commander of a detachment of children-scouts. Several times he went upstairs and brought valuable information that saved the life of the soldiers of the detachment. Nothing could break the guerrillas' stamina. Vladimir Dubinin gave his life to save his homeland, but his memory lives in the hearts of his descendants.

The film *A Girl Seeks a Father* (Belarusfilm studio, 1959). A partisan detachment is operating in occupied Belarus. The Nazis are trying to capture the little daughter of his commander, but the locals help the girl. The forester's grandson, Janka, actually becomes her older brother. The leading theme line of the film is salvation. Saving lives, the best feelings of the Motherland, which is possible only with the unity of children and adults (Films..., 2020; Portal..., 2020).

This is only a small part of the huge legacy of Soviet cinema. All these films are united by the presence in children of amazing willpower and courage. They are one with their country, family, friends, neighbors. Having lost their parents, they do not break, but endure all hardships, without losing optimism, without being hardened. And although they grow up early, they retain the ability to rejoice. These children are real citizens. Undoubtedly, they can become an example for modern youth, which, unfortunately, is often infantile and not always aware of its civic responsibility. Another feature of these films is the mutual trust of children and adults. The sensitive, touching attitude of adults towards children and their feelings is not isolated cases, it is the principle of life of the whole generation. Adults did everything possible to save the life and health of children, to provide them with normal conditions, even among the horrors of war. Many researchers note the excessive ideologization of Soviet cinema. But the production of cinema in the Soviet Union was state-owned, and it was the state's value orientations of patriotism, honesty, productive labor, and commonwealth that were reflected in the content of the films. Government officials understood that cinema is a natural and effective means of shaping the worldview of citizens. A movie is a work of art that cannot be without an idea. Even strong ideologization is better than an ideological vacuum (provided that positive ethical attitudes are promoted). Soviet films evoke deep feelings of bright feelings, form an attitude to follow high moral principles in one's own life. In them there is a clear division of the heroes into positive and negative, which is clear to children. Soviet cinema did not always reflect the real life of people, but it showed what it should be, what all citizens should strive for.

We can distinguish the following thematic lines in Soviet films about children in the war, which have a moral-aesthetic and civil-patriotic content and create conditions for the audience to experience and relate to the characters in the films:

- unexpectedness, criticality of changes in the social and life situation and adaptation to them;
- suffering and temporary loneliness;
- awareness of the meaning of peaceful life, a conscious coming to the denial of war and violence;
- civil and human unity with the people of their country and allied countries, mutual assistance, empathy;
- growing up, overcoming, preservation of moral character and spiritual growth.

The selection of each of the named thematic lines and the creation of conditions for their understanding by schoolchildren is one of the main tasks of a teacher when working with cinema material in the educational process.

The basis of a professionally-oriented approach to cinema within the framework of the pedagogical profession, we consider the pedagogical analysis of the film. By the pedagogical

analysis of the film we understand the set of purposeful intellectual actions to identify the socio-psychological, historical, moral and ethical problems of the film, highlight and justify the solution of situations of an educational nature, reflecting the dynamics of the relationship between children and adults, factors that create conditions for the development of personal qualities of children and youth, their worldview and behavior patterns. We offer students the following algorithm of pedagogical analysis of the film:

1. Determine whether the film has pedagogical problems (the presence of elements of the pedagogical process as the subject of the image in the film, the subjects of the pedagogical process and their relationships, the identification of contradictions, dependencies, mutual influences).
2. Describe the main idea of the film – is it pedagogical? Highlight the complex of pedagogical problems reflected in the film.
3. Describe the dynamics of personality development of the main characters of the film. How do they influence the socio-psychological circumstances in which they find themselves? What moral values are the images of the main characters, do they strengthen along the way?
4. Highlight the pedagogical situations in the film, describe how they are solved. What are the principles and conditions for the interaction of children and adults, is there a dialogue between them?
5. What is the pedagogical essence of the film for you? Have you gained professional knowledge, values, ideas? Do you consider the ideas and content of the film to be in line with modern goals, directions, means of the educational process?

After the questionnaire, students of graduation groups were invited to watch one of the Soviet feature films about children in the war on their own and write an essay. An analysis of the essay showed that most future teachers are able to highlight pedagogical issues in films. Students understand the dramatic fate of the main characters, highlight individual characteristics of the relationship of children and adults shown in the films. A certain difficulty is the analysis of the historical context in Soviet films, which is associated with a sufficiently large difference in the time of making films (more than 30 years). Students note the possibility of using Soviet films about children in the war to conduct educational activities with younger students. Among the forms they offer are dominated by conversation and quiz.

The development of forms of educational work with the use of Soviet children's feature films about children in the war was proposed by us as a variant of one of the tasks in the course of educational and production practice at school. Some students noted the positive effect of events where they, together with younger students, discussed the ideas and significance of films. Children are trying to relate themselves to the main char.

For the next academic year, we will offer students the implementation of an individual research and methodological project "Soviet feature films about children in the war and the potential for their use in educational work." The project will be completed while learning the basics of classroom instruction. The aim of the project is to prepare a theoretical and methodological framework for the use of Soviet cinema about children in war in professional activities. During the project, students will create the list of films with selected topics, perform their pedagogical analysis and develop activities with various options for using films in educational work with younger students. At the same time, attention will be paid not only to feature films, but also to documentaries.

## **5. Conclusion**

Despite a certain idealization of the relationship between children and adults, Soviet feature films about children in war are a powerful educational tool. Movies contribute to the formation of empathy – the ability to empathize with movie heroes who find themselves in difficult life circumstances, but who have retained their stamina and ability to achieve their goals. The socialization of children shown in these films, in fact, can be called shock, since the war is rapidly destroying their lives, making it completely different. But war does not lead to social maladjustment. On the contrary, it enhances the unity of children with society. This unity is promoted by the common goal of children and adults – survival, saving the country, overcoming personal grief, which becomes an organic part of social grief.

At the same time, we note the insufficient distribution of work with films among young teachers. Measures are needed to expand the involvement of students in the study of the

educational potential of cinema. Studying Soviet cinema will contribute to the historical and spiritual continuity of generations.

The current direction of further work on the use of Soviet cinema about children in the training of future teachers, we consider the use of the potential of the Internet. We plan to attract students to the active use of sites, forums, social networks as a means of attracting a young audience to watch and discuss films, including in the framework of children's virtual cinema clubs.

The professionally-oriented approach to the analysis and application of films highlighted by us means the use of cinema, taking into account the specific goals and content aspects of the profession. For the teaching profession, this involves identifying the possibilities of educational dialogue between the film and the viewer. Considering possession of the analysis of the pedagogical essence of the film as an element of media literacy, we support the opinion of E. Thoman and T. Jolls that the main thing in media literacy is not the memorization of facts, but the development of mental operations, including analytical ones (Thoman, Jolls, 2004).

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