Prospects for Contemporary Media Education in Russia Based on Feature Films in the Focus of Family Education: A Theoretical Review of the Problem

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Abstract

The article examines family education as reflected in Russian cinema art in the context of using media education potential. As is known, media education has a very strong educational potential and is one of the key factors in understanding audiovisual media production.

In the current situation, it becomes increasingly obvious that media education for the younger generation should become not just a tool for comprehending the media space, but also a key that opens the doors of meanings and images hidden in the media reality. Over the years, the issues of family education have been reflected in films of various genres – comedies, dramas, adventure and detective films, etc. And the family image presented in different historic periods has also been ambiguous. It is known that cinema is an important factor in the socialization of the younger generation that is able to form a picture of the world, values, spiritual and moral orientations. That is why cinema art has a powerful educational impact on today's youth, the modern digital generation.

Keywords: media, media education, feature films, family education, the younger generation, parents, children.

1. Introduction

Media education in family upbringing has not lost its relevance for many years. Although media education in learning institutions has been given more and more importance in recent years, the issues of media education in family education are still not given due attention: "Today we are witnessing large exposures of modern families to mass media, as well as families' crisis. The crisis of the modern families is evident in professional stress and rhythm of life, alienation, lack of communication and responsibility, and the weakening of family and social ties. With a child's genetic potential and the impact of environment on child development and formation of his personality, parenting it is extremely important" (Petani, Brcic, 2014). The challenge of educating parents on media education, also forms and methods of family media education, including those aimed at promoting creativity of the younger generation, still remain beyond the scope of scientific research.

Although in recent years there has been an increase in the number of various blogs, competitions, events, platforms with media content aimed at involving parents in media education (mainly applied media creation), these measures do not provide a systematic solution to the problem.

Feature films perform an essential social and educational function. They have become an important tool for understanding and accepting the phenomenon of family and family

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relationships, where the key factor is parenting and relationships between adults and children, which should be based on mutual understanding, trust, responsibility and goodwill.

That is why it is necessary for the audience to have a desire not just to watch and discuss certain issues raised in the film, but also to think about what ways can be found to get out of these difficult and, as it sometimes seems, hopeless situations. This process requires thoughtful and serious work on the audiovisual media text that is being analysed, makes it necessary to analyze not only the characters or individual episodes, but also the social and cultural contexts of a media text as a whole, which, in fact, is the key factor in the analysis of a piece of cinema art.

2. Materials and methods

The major material of this study is contemporary Russian media education based on feature films in the context of family upbringing. The research methods: search, generalization, analysis and synthesis; generalization and classification, content analysis, analogy, induction and deduction, abstraction and concretization.

3. Discussion

Various aspects of family education are reflected in numerous scientific studies of the Soviet and post-Soviet period. However, to date, insufficient attention has been paid by researchers to the evolution of this topic in Russian cinema in terms of highlighting the prospects for media education from the Soviet period to the present day. The exception is only a few studies (Penzin, 1973, 1986; Chelysheva, 2013, 2022) devoted to certain aspects of family education in the media education context. It is obvious that the topic is interdisciplinary in nature and should be considered in the pedagogical, psychological, and social aspects.

If we turn to the historical aspect of the issue, we can state that the findings made by Russian researchers of the Soviet period on family education (Paramonova, 1976) were not free from the ideological dominants of the historical time when they were created. Respectively, film production was considered from the viewpoint of its compliance with the political views and ideology of the epoch. This position did not allow for a comprehensive analysis of media texts and significantly narrowed the scope of media education.

A number of foreign publications on media education and media culture (Masterman, 1985; Buckingham, 2014, 2015; Silverblatt, 2001) also practically do not study the issues under consideration. The main dominants in these researches relate to media literacy and media education in formal education, and the issues of media culture in family education are not actually discussed, especially on the basis of Russian media texts. For instance, Len Masterman defined the fundamental critical principles of analysing media texts and critical autonomy of the individual (Masterman, 1985).

Obviously, the representation of the family and family issues on the screen is rather ambiguous. Transformational changes in the family image and family education presented in Russian feature films are closely related to cultural, political, and social aspects that are characteristic of certain periods of historical development. G. Abikeeva, in particular, notes in her study that "cinema, like no other art, in practice reflects the specifics of the national identity, namely, it represents the artistic model of society in all its complexity – from its constituent elements – the individual and the family, to the reproduction by means of art of the very structure of the community and the nation as a whole in close connection with national iconography" (Abikeeva, 2010). V. Tyulyunova also emphasizes that cinema art, due to its "mass" nature, is able not only to respond sensitively to any changes in social development, emerging acute problems, but also to have a socio-psychological, educational impact on consciousness, worldview, value ideas of people (Tyulyunova, 2019).

As the analysis shows, though the issues of family education and family relationships are reflected in the entire genre diversity of Russian feature films.

4. Results

Various aspects of this problem were covered in several researches of the Soviet period (Baranov, 1979; Kabo, 1974; Paramonova, 1976; Penzin, 1973; 1986; Stroeva, 1962).

In the post-Soviet years, certain aspects of the family and family education in Soviet and Russian media texts of various types and genres are reflected in the researches by J. Cantor (Cantor, 1998).

Some researchers analysed the theme of violence reflected in Russian media texts and its impact on the younger generation (Fedorov et al., 2018; Chelysheva, 2013). O. Baranov and S. Penzin (Baranov, Penzin, 2005) considered the influence of media culture on the aesthetic ideas and values of the modern family. A. Fedorov presented a comprehensive description of school and university in the mirror of Soviet, Russian and Western audiovisual media texts (Fedorov et al., 2020). G. Mikhaleva studied the civic and patriotic media education of children and youth based on Russian feature films (Mikhaleva, 2021).

L. Gritsai (Gritsai, 2013) presented the family phenomena and family education in Russian media texts using animation as an example. O. Lebed and V. Mishchenko (Lebed, Mishchenko, 2015) examined the image of the family in Russian feature films from a sociological perspective. G. Abikeeva (Abikeeva, 2010) analysed the family image in the cinema of Central Asia in the context of cultural identity, etc.

Certain aspects of the presented topic were also considered in the researches by foreign authors of different years. D. Buckingham discussed the theory and methodology of media education (Buckingham, 2014, 2015). The studies conducted by B. Duncan, N. Andersen, J. Pangente, O'Malley (Andersen et al., 1999; Pangente, O'Malley, 1999) are devoted to the history of foreign media education and its present-day state. S. Livingstone emphasised fostering children's critical digital literacy (Livingstone, 2018).

J. Moore, analysed the influence of TV and cinema on children and youth audiences (Moore, 1969). J.D. Zurcher, S.M. Webb and T. Robinson made a study of Disney animated films as an influential form of media production that shapes children's development of beliefs about the world surrounding them, including the family construct (Zurcher et al., 2018).

E. Levi examined the family and family-related values as portrayed in American cinematography (Levy, 1991). M.L. Moore inquired into American family television series that represented family portrayals as conventional or nonconventional (Moore, 1992). W. Douglas and B.M. Olson devoted their inquiry to the family portrayal in domestic comedies (Douglas, Olson, 1995). N.C. Staricek provided a textual analysis of gender in domestic sitcoms (Staricek, 2011).

S. Stewart and J. Nuttall developed the aesthetic theory of screen education (Stewart, Nuttall, 1985). J. Pungente is the author of a number of scientific researches on promoting media education in Canadian secondary schools (Pungente, O'Malley, 1999). B. Duncan considers the aesthetic and developing potential of cinema art (Duncan, 1989). M. Callister, T. Robinson and B.R. Clark analysed television portrayals of families and the way they influence young children's conduct and emotional perception (Callister et al., 2007).

I. Chelysheva studied the issues of family education and its interaction with the media world. In particular, she considered mastering the media space by schoolchildren, the major mechanisms of media influence on a minor audience, as well as the educating and developing opportunities of the media (Chelysheva, 2013; 2022).

The issues of media education as a means of fostering interethnic tolerance, including family media education, were partially touched upon in the researches carried out by I. Chelysheva and G. Mikhaleva (Chelysheva, 2021; 2022; Chelysheva, Mikhaleva, 2021).

In a nutshell, the evolution of the family theme reflected in Russian feature films can be described as follows: as evidenced by the analysis of scientific researches on the topic under study that belong to the Soviet period, the idea of the family in media texts of various types and genres is united by a single ideology, consonant with the tasks of socialist construction. For example, in most Soviet feature films, the image of a complete family is presented, where we see parents who are passionate about their work and pay attention to raising their children. Moreover, the education models reflected the social situation of a particular period in accordance with the epoch. If we take, for example, films created in the 1930s and 1940s, children there were treated like grownups: the main emphasis was on developing their independence and responsibility. It is no coincidence that many feature films of that period presented children's images, who, along with adults, worked, learned new things, and explored the world. The so-called "mythology of a happy childhood" can be traced in Russian feature films quite often, since "children's cinema of the Stalin era is characterized by the image of a child who, as soon as possible, should become a conscious member of a communist society, fighting for the ideals of collectivism, social heroism. The meaning of happiness in the films of this period was expressed in such axiological categories as honesty, self-sacrifice, love for the motherland" (Zaitseva, 2016). Hence, we see the representation of family education models on the screen in the appropriate vein, including the values of future generations

which put service to the Motherland at the forefront, thus forming the appropriate ideas about family happiness and the picture of the world of a person in a socialist society.

In later periods, Soviet cinema increasingly raised acute social issues that concerned every person: loneliness in the family, unhappy family relationships. But, despite this, the theme of eternal values, such as trust, love, mutual understanding, remained dominant in Russian feature films about the family.

At the present stage, it seems to us that the issues of representing the family image and family education in the context of Russian feature films of various genres deserve special attention. Family relationships that we see on the modern movie screen are very different from the films of the Soviet era. As an example, we could mention such serious social dramas as *Bury me behind the plinth* (2008, film director S. Snezhkin), *Spinner* (2008, film director V. Sigarev), *Ain't No Love* (2017, film director S. Zvyagintsev), etc. We can see very absolutely different models of upbringing and family relationships, trying to answer the eternal questions of the relationship between "fathers and children" in these and other films. It goes without saying that every film about the family and family education raises urgent and not always solvable social problems that the viewer could and should think about. And the task of media education is precisely to encourage reflection, analysis and search for a way out of difficult life situations shown on the screen.

5. Conclusion

To conclude, the theme of family and family education has always been and continues to be one of the central in the cinema. The transformational processes taking place in society could not but influence the reflection of this topic in Russian media culture of different historical periods.

The urgent need for paying closer attention to this challenge is dictated by the ubiquitous distribution of media culture which has an increasingly significant impact on all spheres of life of a modern person, determines young people's value orientations and life guidelines.

Over the years, the family and family education have been covered in feature films in different periods from different points of view, and have been the subject of heated discussions in the press, on television, and on the Internet. Nevertheless, the analysis of these processes is becoming more and more relevant due to the fact that in modern society the attitude towards the family and family values is changing significantly. We are convinced that preservation of the best family traditions is one of the most important tasks of modern society.

The study and systematic analysis of these issues are not only vital for the theoretical research, but also have a practice-oriented meaning. Research in this area from the point of view of pedagogy, psychology, sociology, and cultural studies can find application in various activities by school and university teachers, students, and will also be of interest to a wide range of readers, including parents.

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