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Published in the USA Media Education (Mediaobrazovanie) Has been issued since 2005 ISSN 1994-4160 E-ISSN 2729-8132 2021. 17(4): 675-683

DOI: 10.13187/me.2021.4.675 https://me.cherkasgu.press



Creating University Students' Civic-minded Culture by Analyzing Russian Feature Films

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Abstract

The article discusses the following research areas in the context of educating university students for civic engagement based on the material of Russian feature films:

- analysing patriotic feature films, historical dramas and war films about the exploits of Russian people, films about love and self-sacrifice for the Motherland;
- analysing Russian feature films about real heroes and their exploits, as well as films about heroic deeds committed by ordinary people in peacetime, films about public and official duties;
- analysing film images of famous Russian historical personalities in Russian and foreign feature films;
- analysing feature films about love for the "small" homeland, about professional and civic responsibility;
- analysing film images of national heroes or famous citizens of various professions who contributed to the development of Russia, its culture, science, art, sports, etc.;
- a comparative analysis of Russian and foreign film adaptations of classic Russian literary works, a critical analysis of national stereotypes in Russian and foreign feature films;
- a critical analysis of antisocial images in feature films in order to form correct models of social and civic consciousness and behaviour among university students;
 - film education of youth based on social film dramas.

Keywords: civic engagement, civic-minded culture, film education, socialization, media education, media text, stereotypes, feature film, university students, film image, social drama.

1. Introduction

A comprehensive analysis and development of methods for promoting university students' civic engagement on the material of Russian cinematography is linked to the search for new ways of social and civic education of the younger generation in Russia in the new educational situation. In this regard, film education of young people is actualized in the context of encouraging their social initiative, civic consciousness, feelings of patriotism and pride in their country on the example of Russian feature films about outstanding contemporary and historical personalities, war heroes and volunteers.

When we use the term "civic-minded culture", we mean a social and pedagogical phenomenon based on cultivating a civic ideal and self-awareness among young people, as well as a socially responsible worldview. Hence, the main goals are to contribute to the political, cultural and civic socialization of university students by means of film education based on a critical analysis of feature films about self-sacrifice, charity, moral and ethical relations and socio-historical responsibility; to encourage them to articulate their active civic position in relation to acute social and political issues occurring in their country and in the world, thus developing students' critical thinking.

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2. Materials and methods

The research is based on the following psychological, pedagogical and sociological principles: the principle of socially determined upbringing; the principle of the determining role of a person's activity in their own development; principles of purposefulness and an integrated approach to solving social problems.

The research methods are data collection (books, monographs, scientific articles), theoretical research methods (comparison, juxtaposition, analogy, abstraction and concretization, theoretical analysis and synthesis, generalization).

The materials of the research are Russian feature films of different genres, mainly films reflecting civil and patriotic values and qualities, such as historical and social dramas.

3. Discussion

Many Russian scholars devoted their scientific researches to creating civic-minded culture of children and youth (Benin, 2016; Bocharova, 1994; Likhachev, 2010; Makarenko, 1988; Shatskiy, 1989, etc.) and laid the conceptual foundations of personality education in the socio-cultural environment.

Various aspects of film education for children and youth audiences in terms of aesthetic and sociocultural aspects are reflected in the researches by Russian and foreign scholars (Baranov, 2008; Camarero et al., 2019; Chelysheva, 2016; Fedorov, 2015; Khilko, 2001; Penzin, 2005; Polichko, 1987; Sharikov et al., 2006; Usov, 1989). In particular, O.A. Baranov, S.N. Penzin, Yu.N. Usov examine media education of students on the basis of screen arts. A.V. Sharikov highlights the sociological aspects of media culture.

A.V. Fedorov deeply analyzes the issues of developing university students' critical thinking and media competence, as well as teaching them critical, comparative, and cultural approaches to analyzing films of different genres: university students discuss pressing social issues of modern society, analyze stereotypes of politically engaged media texts (Fedorov, 2012a). In particular, the critical analysis of the manipulative impact of media texts on the youth audience is very important (Levitskaya, Fedorov, 2020; 2021).

The findings by foreign researchers also reveal certain important aspects of film education as a factor in the socio-cultural development of university students. L. Masterman defined the basic principles of critical analysis of media texts and critical autonomy of the individual: "Its primary objective is not simple critical awareness and understanding but critical autonomy, the ability and willingness of students to bring a critical understanding to the media they will encounter in the future" (Masterman, 1996: 75).

C. Bazalgette and D. Buckingham (Bazalgette, 2001; Bazalgette, Buckingham, 2012) are studying a wide range of issues related to integrating film studies in the education system. They draw special attention of media educators to the fact that "moving-image media are not 'superior' to print, although it might well be proposed that film is 'more multimodal' than print, but simply that the important formal and institutional differences between these two forms are worth learning about and understanding" (Bazalgette, Buckingham, 2012: 100). D. Buckingham explores promoting civic education of youth through media education (Buckingham, 2000; Banaji, Buckingham, 2013).

A number of Russian and foreign researches consider film education as a factor of social transformations involving active media-competent youth under the guidance or at the initiative of media educators: "media literacy gives a citizen a certain feeling of freedom in a democratic society through participation in media creation where media users can express themselves and contribute to national or global media production" (Fedorov, Mikhaleva, 2020: 155).

Moreover, there is an increasing tendency to promote media and information literacy for social change: "Life story is a really useful skill in the design of programs to training the use of technology and media literacy, which is based on psycho-educational settings that encourage young people to use it in a positive way, and among other aspects, there is the personal contribution of those who will want to develop their interactive projects, yet as an opportunity to make the world a better place" (Camarero, Varona, 2016: 10). A similar experience is described by S. Goodman, the founding director of the educational video centre in New York. For many years now, he has been holding documentary seminars on social justice for students from low-income communities and for teachers. S. Goodman writes about youth media, critical literacy, civic activism and educational reforms (Goodman, 2018).

Some studies are devoted to fostering civic and political activity of youth through media and film education: a critical analysis of media representations of social challenges (Friesem, 2015), the use of social networks to form the political activity of citizens (Bennett et al., 2010; De Zúñiga et al., 2012; Gálik, 2020; Gáliková Tolnaiová, 2019), the impact of social networks on enhancing civic participation on the Internet and strengthening citizens' confidence in government institutions (Warren et al., 2014), patriotism and propaganda (Eisman, 2003), the role of the media in shaping civic and political engagement of citizens (Lee, 2013; O'Neill, 2010), sociological studies of media consumption and civic involvement of audiences (Boyd et al., 2011; Erentaitė et al., 2012; Livingstone, Markham, 2008), media and civic socialization of youth (De Zúñiga et al., 2013: McLeod, 2000; Mihailidis, 2014), the role of media education in increasing the civic engagement of young people (Culver, Jacobson, 2012; Goessling, 2016; Hobbs et al., 2013; Martens, Hobbs, 2015), using films to improve civic literacy and civic activism among young teachers (Deneen 2002; Hallam 2012; Jocius 1991; Parkhouse 2015).

However, until now, a comprehensive analysis of the socio-cultural, political, psychological, and pedagogical conditions that determine the essence and prospects for fostering university students' civic engagement on the basis of cinematography has not been presented in Russian and foreign studies of film education, including the main directions, forms and methods of using the potential of film education at the present stage in solving this socially significant challenge.

4. Results

The analysis of researches related to film education of modern youth has allowed us to identify several areas of work in the context of promoting students' civic engagement on the material of Russian feature films.

The analysis of patriotic feature films, including the content analysis of historical dramas about the exploits of Russian people, for example, during the Great Patriotic War, about war heroes and love for the Motherland, about self-sacrifice in the name of the country, has significant educational potential in civil patriotic education of young people. Here are just a few of the war films that can be studied in practical classes on media culture: *The Cranes Are Flying* (USSR, 1957), *The Volunteers* (USSR, 1958), *Fate of a Man* (USSR, 1959), *They Fought for Their Country* (USSR, 1975), *The Dawns Here Are Quiet...* (USSR, 1972; Russia, 2015), *Officers* (USSR, 1971), *Only "Old Men" Are Going Into Battle* (USSR, 1973), *One-Two, Soldiers Were Going...* (USSR, 1977), *The Battalions Ask for Fire* (USSR, 1985), *The Crew of a Battle Vehicle* (USSR, 1983), *The General* (Russia, 1992), *The Star* (USSR, 1949; Russia, 2002), *In August of 1944* (Russia, 2000), *Battle for Sevastopol* (Russia, 2015), *T-34* (Russia, 2019), *Immortality Corridor* (Russia, 2019), *Zoya* (Russia, 2021) and many others.

In addition, one can also analyze feature films created during the Great Patriotic War. Interestingly, in the opinion of many film critics and historians, Soviet wartime cinema was the "freest" from the ideological influence of Soviet propaganda in the entire history of the Soviet cinema. We mean such famous historical and patriotic films as *Alexander Nevsky* (USSR, 1938) and *Ivan the Terrible* (USSR, 1944) by S. Eisenstein. For example, in the film *Alexander Nevsky* the song "Arise, Russian people!", echoing the wartime song "Arise, the giant country, arise for mortal fight!", symbolizes the struggle of the Russian people with foreign invaders in the past and present. In our opinion, the problematics and aesthetics of war films are the best fit for the civic education of young people forming such important moral qualities as love for and devotion to the Motherland, a sense of civic duty and responsibility to oneself and compatriots, awareness of one's belonging to the history and culture of their people, pride in the heroic past of their country.

In practical terms, when studying the above-mentioned feature films, one can refer to a comparative analysis of a literary work of art (prose) and its screen adaptation; a hermeneutic or ideological analysis of Russian and foreign films about Russia; the analysis of national stereotypes and the enemy image in patriotic films; a comparative analysis of the war image in the cinema of the Soviet and post-Soviet periods; a structural or narrative analysis of audiovisual media texts based on the same novel, but produced in different years; analyzing authenticity and mythmaking in historical and biographical feature films, etc. Deep and detailed examples of analyzing feature films in the student audience are presented in the monograph by A.V. Fedorov "Analysis of Audiovisual Media Texts" (Fedorov, 2012b).

The analysis of images of famous Russian historical personalities in Russian and foreign feature films created in different periods can also contribute to promoting social activity of young people, their historical and civic consciousness, a sense of patriotism and pride in their country. Such historical, biographical films and TV series include: *Suvorov* (USSR, 1940), *Admiral Ushakov* (USSR, 1953), *Ivan the Terrible* (USSR, 1944), *Alexander Nevsky* (USSR, 1938), *Yaroslav the Wise* (USSR, 1981), *Bagrationi* (USSR, 1985), *Mikhailo Lomonosov* (USSR, 1986), *Peter the Great: The Testament* (Russia, 2011), *Chapaev* (USSR, 1934) and *Passion for Chapaev* (Russia, 2017), etc.

It is also possible to conduct a comparative analysis of several film adaptations created in different years and by different directors about a famous Russian historic personality in the student audience, taking into account the socio-cultural, political and ideological contexts of the period of their creation, for example, feature films about Peter the Great – *Young Russia* (USSR, 1981), *At the Beginning of Glorious Deeds* (USSR, 1980), *The Youth of Peter the Great* (USSR, 1980), *Peter the Great* (USSR, 1985), *The Sovereign's Servant* (Russia, 2005), *Peter the Great: The Testament* (Russia, 2011). The analysis of historical drama films about Catherine the Great may enable the audience to compare the Russian and foreign feature film images of the empress: *The Scarlet Empress* (USA, 1934), *Young Catherine* (USA, 1991), *The Rise of Catherine the Great* (Russia, 2014), *Catherine The Great* (Russia, 2015), *Catherine the Great* (Great Britain, 1968, 2005), *Catherine the Great* (USA, 2019).

A comparative analysis of Russian and foreign film adaptations of classic Russian literature, including the analysis of the film images of Russia and Russians, makes it possible to teach university students to be critical of the biased representation of national stereotypes in Russian and foreign cinematography. As a rule, the foreign film image of Russia is based on the traditional stereotyped symbolism of Russian culture and folklore. At the same time, both the storyline of the original classics and the created cinematic characters are often simplified and reduced in Western mass culture, while Russian film adaptations have always sought to popularize the Russian literary classics by means of cinematography. For example, such Russian and foreign film adaptations of A.S. Pushkin's "Eugene Onegin" as: *Eugene Onegin* (USSR, 1958) and *Onegin* (UK, USA, 1998).

In some cases, it is also useful to compare the original literary work with its screen adaptation created in different years, since the screen adaptation of the classic literature never exactly repeats the authentic text, but is a kind of interpretation that embodies some sociocultural, aesthetic, ideological, socio-political meanings, ideals, attitudes and cultural codes of the period when this or that screen version of the literary prototype was created. In this regard, it is advisable to turn to the semiotic and ideological analysis of the audiovisual media texts under study. In addition, we must not forget about the inevitable plot-content transformation of a literary original source to please the commercial ambitions of the creators of the screen version of the original work. These are some famous film adaptations of Russian literature: *Dead Souls* (USSR, 1984), *Heart of a Dog* (USSR, 1988), *War and Peace* (USSR, 1965; Italy, France, Germany, Russia, Poland, 2007), *Demons* (Russia, 2014), *Doctor Zhivago* (USA, Italy, 1965; Russia, 2005), *The Karamazov Brothers* (1969; 2009), *A Hero of Our Time* (1965; 2006), *The White Guard* (Russia, 2012), *Ward No. 6* (Russia, 2009) and others.

On the other hand, sometimes it is necessary to turn to a critical analysis of antisocial or negative film characters who due to some external social or internal subjective reasons, violate social and moral norms, lead an asocial mode of life or do not fulfil their civic duty. The topic of moral and ethical choice, active citizenship is especially relevant for the younger generation since it helps to place the right social and behavioural accents and form adequate models of social and civic consciousness and behaviour in the student environment. For this purpose, the following feature films can be analysed: *A Few Days from the Life of I.I. Oblomov* (USSR, 1980), *Scarecrow* (USSR, 1983), *The Prisoner of Château d'If* (USSR, 1988), *The Garage* (USSR, 1979), *Afonya* (USSR, 1975), *The Visit of the Lady* (USSR, 1989), and others.

The analysis of film images of different professionals contributes to the cultural and civic socialization of university students since such films focus on fulfilling one's professional, official and civic duties. In this context, one can turn to the analysis of film images of national heroes or famous people of various professions who made a great contribution to the development of our country, its culture, science, art, sports, etc. For example, in such Russian biographical films as Alexander Popov (USSR, 1949), Lermontov (USSR, 1986), Pushkin: The Last Duel (Russia, 2006), Bagrationi (USSR, 1985), Mikhailo Lomonosov (USSR, 1986), Dostoevsky (Russia, 2010), Marshal Zhukov (Russia, 2010), Stolypin: Unlearned Lessons (Russia, 2006), Gagarin: First in Space (Russia, 2013), The Champions (Russia, 2014), The First (Russia, 2018), Legend No. 17

(Russia, 2012), The Spacewalker (Russia, 2017), Lev Yashin: The Dream Goalkeeper (Russia, 2019), Vysotsky, Thank You for Being Alive (Russia, 2011) and others.

Heroism as the highest form of civil or military courage, a manifestation of valour, dedication, fearlessness and determination, is reflected in feature films about heroic deeds of people of different professions, thus serving as a vivid example for young people nowadays. First of all, these are feature films about real military exploits of heroes of the Great Patriotic War or heroes of labour, for example, *Panfilov's Twenty-Eight Guardsmen* (Russia, 2016), *The Young Guard* (USSR, 1948; Russia, 2015), *Zoya* (Russia, 2021), *Battle for Sevastopol* (Russia, 2015), *The Dawns Here Are Quiet...* (Russia, 2015), *Stalingrad* (Russia, 2013), *The Brest Fortress* (Russia, Belarus, 2010), *Indestructible* (Russia, 2019), *AK-47* (Russia, 2020), *Sobibor* (Russia, 2018), *Podolsk Cadets* (Russia, 2020) and others. But it can also be film stories about heroic deeds of ordinary people in peacetime who by the will of the circumstances faced a difficult moral choice, as well as films about self-sacrifice, public benefit, civic feat, for example, *Ivan's Launch* (USSR, 1972), *Air Crew* (USSR, 1979), *Flight Crew* (Russia, 2016), *The Icebreaker* (Russia, 2016), *Metro* (Russia, 2012), *No Escapes* (Russia, 2020), *Chernobyl: Abyss* (Russia, 2021) and others.

It is very important to expand the socio-cultural horizons and professional experience of university students in professional training of future social teachers. And in this sense, film studies have a significant developmental and educational potential. In the context of creating university students' civic-minded culture and encouraging their active civil position in relation to the social challenges of our time, it is advisable, in our opinion, to turn to film education based on social film dramas and melodramas for critical analysis of audiovisual media texts representing acute and urgent social problems. These are feature films about the problems of juvenile adolescents (*Minors*, USSR, 1977; Where is your son?, USSR, 1986), about social injustice and insecurity of the "little man" and their inability to fight against the social system (One thousand two hundred and ten, Russia, 2012; All Our Hope, Russia, 2016; The Plant, Russia, 2018), about the indifference and inaction of officials (Emergency Condition, Russia, 2011; The Fool, Russia, 2014), about orphanhood and problems of children in orphanages and boarding schools (Awakening, Russia, 2005; The Excursionist, Lithuania, Russia, 2013; It's Not Forever, Russia, 2019; Etude No. 2, Russia, 2020; No One's Child, Russia, 2017; Roadside, Russia, 2013; A Cat for Sale, Russia, 2012; Yarik, Russia, 2007), about the "difficult" age and the problems of growing up and teenagers' relationships (Scarecrow, USSR, 1983; Games 14+, Russia, 2019), about dysfunctional or incomplete families (I've Bought Myself a Father, USSR, 1963; Mother's Paradise, Russia, 2010; My Son, Russia, 2009; Eva, Russia, 2019), about the care and support of the elderly and disabled people (There is No God but Me, Russia, 2019), about freedom and choice (The Right to Choose: Faith. Russia, 2019), about homeless and socially unprotected people, outcasts (Hello, Baby!, Russia, 2001), about moral choice and self-sacrifice (Farewell in June, Russia, 2003), about one's struggle against drug addiction and alcoholism as socially dangerous phenomena (The Parent, Russia, 2021), about the socialization of people with disabilities (Time for Rest from Saturday to Monday, USSR, 1984; Country of the Deaf, Russia, France, 1998; The Fool, Russia, 2005; I Want to Be Loved, Russia, 2013; Corrections Class, Russia, 2014; Through the Black Glass, Russia, 2018), about the generation gap (Fathers and Sons, USSR, 1982; We Were Neighbours, USSR, 1982: Van Goahs, Russia, 2019: Chupacabra, Russia, 2020).

In general, unfortunately, we have to admit that very few feature films about youth and for youth about friendship, mutual assistance, volunteering, charity, tolerance, youth movements are being shot in present-day Russia, although these issues are widely represented in contemporary Russian documentary films.

5. Conclusion

The analysis of publications related to film education of modern youth, as well as the content analysis of Russian feature films, have allowed us to identify several research areas in the context of educating university students for civic engagement based on the material of feature films:

 analysing patriotic feature films in the student audience, including the content analysis of historical dramas about the exploits of people, in order to cultivate such important moral qualities as love for and devotion to the Motherland, a sense of civic duty and responsibility to oneself and compatriots, awareness of one's belonging to history and the culture of their people, pride in the heroic past of their country;

- analyzing film images of famous Russian historic personalities presented in Russian and foreign feature films in order to encourage the social activity of young people, their historical and civic consciousness, a sense of patriotism and pride in their country;
- analyzing Russian and foreign film adaptations of classic Russian literature in the student audience in order to develop students' critical thinking and awareness of biased representations of national stereotypes in Russian and foreign cinema;
- analysing feature films about love for the "small" homeland and the importance of diligent and responsible performing professional, official and civic duties, including the analysis of film images of "ordinary" people of different professions;
- analysing film images of national heroes or famous citizens of various professions who made a great contribution to the development of our country, its culture, science, art, sports, etc. in order to set examples for students to follow and inspire their social initiative;
- analysing Russian feature films about real military or professional exploits of heroes, as well as films about the heroic deeds of ordinary people in peacetime, films about self-sacrifice, public duty and responsibility;
- film education of youth on the material of social film dramas based on a critical analysis of media texts representing current urgent social challenges in order to expand the socio-cultural horizons and professional experiences of university students;
- a critical analysis of antisocial images in feature films in order to form correct models of social and civic consciousness and behaviour among university students;
- practical film education may include a comparative analysis of works of art (prose) and their screen adaptations; a hermeneutic and ideological analysis of Russian and foreign feature films about Russia; a critical analysis of national stereotypes and the image of the enemy in Russian and foreign patriotic films; a comparative analysis of the war image in the Soviet and post-Soviet cinema; a structural and narrative analysis of audiovisual media texts based on the same novel, but in different historic periods; analyzing authenticity and mythmaking in historical and biographical films, etc.

In our opinion, it is necessary to further analyze creating university students' civic-minded culture by means of film education, including the development of socio-cultural, psychological, pedagogical, and political foundations of this problem.

6. Acknowledgements

The reported study was funded by RFBR and EISR, project number 21-011-31036.

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