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Media Literacy and Social Responsibility of Educators in the Conditions of Information War: The Problem Statement

Słowa kluczowe: zdolności medialne; społeczna odpowiedzialność; edukacja dorosłych; prywatność; bezpieczeństwo; etyka.

Keywords: media literacy; social responsibility; adult education; privacy; security; ethics.

Introduction

Today, in the conditions of information war, Ukrainian society is in dire need of media and information literacy skills, which is an essential issue of national security and defense. As the Doctrine of Information Security of Ukraine (2017) states, one of the priorities of state policy in the information sphere is “improving society’s media literacy, promoting the training of professionals for the media sphere with a high level of competence”. However, the solution to this problem is complicated by the lack of an adequate number of specialists in media literacy, training programs, and advanced training. Higher education institutions make almost no use of opportunities to form a conscious citizen who can distinguish the necessary information from manipulation, facts from fakes, and so on. In a situ-

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ation of hybrid conflict, the skills of separating propaganda from reliable information, in particular fact-checking, are especially critical among adults and older persons (Frantsuz A., 2020; Hajder T., 2019). Simultaneously, the current research question is whether teachers use media literacy skills in their practice. After all, on the one hand, it must ensure the social role of the subject (mathematics, geography, history, etc.), remaining within the pragmatic translation of academic knowledge, and on the other – must actively implement social responsibility practices in the educational process and beyond. The authors are going to be involved into the project “Media Literacy and Social Responsibility of Educators in Information War”.

The authors of this article have the thorough work of many years in developing the problems of the progress of Ukrainian higher education in a hybrid war. One of the significant scientific developments of the project participants in 2016 is the article *Hybridity in the higher education of Ukraine: Global logic or local idiosyncrasy?* (Gomilko O. et al., 2016) which offers a theoretical and methodological apparatus for analyzing the challenges of higher education in a hybrid war. In 2017–2020, S. Terepyschchy and D. Svyrydenko developed problems of higher education in the conditions of Information Warfare in the framework of the project “Development of a conceptual model of reintegration of Ukrainian displaced universities”.

Previous projects’ results give the authors reason to say that one of the key issues of education in wartime is media literacy and social responsibility (S. Terepyschchy (2017), S. Terepyschchy and G. Khomenko (2019), A. Oleksiyenko et al. (2020), etc.). However, a holistic science-based and practice-oriented adult media literacy program still not conceptualized.

In international and Ukrainian discourses, there are thorough developments of media literacy’s potential for the critical perception of the complex processes of the formation of the global information society. Including in societies where various forms of military conflicts and information wars take place. In particular, E. Thoman and T. Jolls, (2004) investigated the issue of media literacy as a national priority in a dynamic world.

The possibilities of media education to counteract fake news were studied. In addition to the general international context, there are works by domestic authors focused on the possibilities of media literacy in the current Ukrainian situation. R. Hobbs et al. (2009) address the problem of the development of civic responsibility, active citizenship, and the development of democracy through media literacy etc. Of particular importance are the works that expose the peculiarities of the information warfare in Ukraine and justify the need to develop media literacy and critical thinking of all population and age groups without exception (Murrock E. et al.,

2018), V. Saran (2016), J. Szostek (2018, etc.). A separate unit of research consists of attempts to substantiate effective educational strategies for the development of media literacy of different age groups in pedagogical discourse (Rasi P. et al., etc.). The work of R. Vasilescu et al. (2010) is devoted to identifying correlations between the development of civil society and the social responsibility of universities. The articles by C. Shu-Hsiang et al. (2015) – to the substantiation of ethical principles of social responsibility of teachers and universities. Thus, on the one hand, the problems of ensuring media literacy of different age groups, researching the role of media literacy in the context of information influences, understanding the role of teachers in developing mechanisms to counter misinformation, and finding mechanisms for academic social responsibility are not new for modern socio-humanitarian studies. On the other hand, there are no holistic studies that would combine these separate research topics considering the current Ukrainian socio-cultural situation.

Methodology

Methodological principles of media literacy and social responsibility research are based on the intersection of interdisciplinary and trans-disciplinary approaches, which is due, on the one hand, trends in modern socio-humanitarian sciences, and on the other – the specifics of the subject. The project is based on the classic principles of systematics, objectivity, integrity, historicism, and development. The following traditional descriptive and analytical methods are used: analysis, synthesis, abstraction, comparison, systematization, classification, etc. An important place belongs to the interpretation method, where media literacy is understood as from the etymological-semantic point of view. The structural-functional method, prognostic method, and schematization elements will be used to clarify specific issues of ethics of social responsibility. Maintaining the integrity of research is associated with a combination of classical scientific methods, on the one hand, and with their critical understanding and increasing the role of transdisciplinary communication, on the other.

Among the main (updated) methods of this work is *policy analysis*, a method used in public administration to allow civil servants, activists, and others to study and evaluate existing options for implementing laws and elected officials' goals. The authors will also use a method such as *discourse analysis*, an approach to analyzing written, oral, or sign language use, or any significant semiotic event. The objects of discourse analysis are discourse, writing, conversation, and communicative event. Postcolonial

studies and hybridity theory are the new theoretical and methodological framework of the study taking into account ones' corresponding to the modernization processes in Ukraine (Svyrydenko D. & Yatsenko O., 2018).

Also, the adapted to the project objectives, the qualitative methods of sociological research – individual interviews and focus groups – will be used in the research. The method of individual in-depth interviews has several advantages. First of all, in a personal conversation, the respondent is more open than to strangers in the group. Secondly, the researcher can respond more flexibly to the course of the interview to adapt to the respondent's individual style. At the same time, there is no mutual enrichment of the discourse, as it can be with a focus group. Focus group research also has some advantages. Firstly, this method is a recognized qualitative method of collecting information. Secondly, this method is the most relevant for education research and coincides with the tasks facing researchers. However, with the focus group method, there is a risk that respondents will be less outspoken, as most questions concern the personal sphere. It is planned to conduct about 40 individual interviews and 15 focus groups with participants from different regions of Ukraine.

Interim Conclusions and Discussion

In Ukrainian society, there is a demand for the implementation of media literacy programs. Still, theoretical and practical developments and projects focus on implementation in schools and, partly, higher educational institutions. At the same time, other target audiences (adults, older persons) are not covered. Given academic social responsibility, universities must become providers of media literacy in all age and social groups. As for the research conducted in the world and Ukraine, they cover certain aspects of the problem, without combining media literacy with social responsibility, as is the case in this project. The Ukrainian transit society is a heuristic field of such research taking into account the special logic of transition and hybrid war challenges (Liashenko M. & Subina O., 2020; Soroka L., 2019; Yakushik V., 2018).

Analysis of the documents and recent publications of the project proves that media literacy and social responsibility have practical value, as they are an important national security issue and defense issue. This is confirmed by the fact that some international documents have been adopted over the last ten years: the UNESCO's Declaration on Media and Information Literacy (2011); Global Alliance for Partnerships on Media and Information Literacy (2013); UNESCO's Paris Declaration on Media Informa-

tion Literacy in the Digital Era (2014), and since 2015 the Global Media and Information Literacy Week has been launched. However, the provisions of these documents have not been implemented in Ukraine. Some positive changes in media literacy development were initiated and implemented by public activists, media experts, individual teachers (Academy of the Ukrainian Press, StopFake, IREX, Media Detector, Telecritics, Internews-Ukraine, etc.) with the assistance of foreign partners and donors. Besides, there is a concept for the introduction of media education in Ukraine, which was developed and approved based on the National Academy of Pedagogical Sciences of Ukraine (April 21, 2016) with an emphasis on secondary school and teacher training. At the same time, there is still no holistic scientifically-based and practically-oriented program of media literacy of adults in the academic environment or in Ukrainian society in general.

First of all, the participants of the Council of Europe and UNESCO summits systematically emphasize the need for the purposeful development of media literacy or information immunity in society, which will comprehensively protect ordinary citizens from “viral” messages through the introduction of media education. However, in Ukraine, which is in a state of information war, there is no comprehensive practice-oriented program of adult media literacy in the educational environment and Ukrainian society. There is almost no methodological support for the training of specialists in the field of adult media literacy, and their training programs are only at the stage of projects and declarations.

Secondly, the ongoing information war in Ukraine affects the education system directly from school to university. Also, the “fourth power” status has long been enshrined in the media, as the agenda of any society has traditionally been formed within this sphere. Therefore, the development of ways to overcome security problems in the field of education in the context of media attacks, fake news, and the development of mechanisms for shaping the values of privacy and personal life is an essential task for today’s Ukraine.

Thirdly, the contradictions related to academic integrity at all levels have recently intensified: from school research papers (Junior Academy of Sciences of Ukraine) and students’ works (diploma, master’s theses) to candidate and doctoral dissertations. These problems are closely related to media literacy (for example, the ability to quote correctly) and social responsibility (awareness of the consequences of their dishonest actions for education, science, and society in general). Therefore, the development of ethical issues related to media literacy and social responsibility of educators: the values of knowledge as such, plagiarism, the code of integrity, etc. has undoubted relevance.

Researchers understand Ukraine's socio-cultural landscape as an arena for the implementation of neo-colonial practices by Russia, which has strong imperialism and is implemented in hybrid strategies in most spheres of society. Higher education is one of the essential areas in which hybridity is realized in mixing the discourses of national and postcolonial, global and local, etc. Media literacy and social responsibility of the teacher, respectively, is one of the important elements of ensuring the development of Ukrainian higher education on the basis of rationality and the idea of counteracting neo-colonial strategies by Russia.

The subject field of the research will include such concepts as "media", "mediatization", "media reality", "media technologies", the impact of NBICS-technologies on society, Big Data. Based on the development of a media-philosophical approach to understanding the socio-humanitarian consequences of the formation of digital media reality, the authors of the project analyze media-digital expansion in modern Ukrainian society, which is particularly vulnerable due to the information warfare. Media-tization is seen as the process of transforming a real object into an artificial one. This body is almost entirely "mediatized", functioning with neurocomputer amplifiers or prostheses, and speaking in an artificial voice. Just as our body mediates, our consciousness also changes.

Socio-humanitarian science needs to review its methodological guidelines and research strategies.

Firstly, the authors hypothesize that media and information literacy respond to the challenges of the digital age, where the influence of media and technology is snowballing. The pursuit of peace, equality, intercultural dialogue, and development requires a new literacy type to create a new world.

Secondly, it is expedient to rethink the ways of involving and forms of citizen participation in social life. Media literacy consists in overcoming the age restrictions of education. The Internet is an essential part of the life world of women and men of all ages and has become an integral part of children and young people's lives. Therefore, media literacy should be acquired by all citizens. This links media literacy to social responsibility.

Thirdly, the digital culture, the Internet, and computer algorithms are not morally neutral. There is a close link between media literacy and social responsibility and human rights. Therefore, the project is focused on the question: To what extent do the media contribute to the expansion of human freedom? After all, there is a real danger – the narrowing of the sphere of freedom, and manipulation of thought.

Fourthly, media literacy acts as "internal" expertise. There is no need for "external" (someone will say) expert opinion under this condition. Therefore, there is a need for critical competencies of media literacy to require:

a) transparency of information sources, b) the ability to analyze information in terms of its resources to strengthen or weaken freedom and human rights.

Fifth, it is necessary to rethink the concept of “knowledge society” (in the plural) in the context of the formation of a universal principle of the Internet based on human rights, openness, and accessibility. After all, the construction of a modern global media environment, which is digital in nature, requires the development of computer and media competencies as a basis for media literacy and the ethical issues of social responsibility.

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ZDOLNOŚCI MEDIALNE I SPOŁECZNA ODPOWIEDZIALNOŚĆ EDUKATORÓW W WARUNKACH WOJNY INFORMACYJNEJ: ZARYS PROBLEMU

(STRESZCZENIE)

W artykule poruszono kwestię potrzeby rozwijania teoretycznych, metodologicznych i praktycznych umiejętności korzystania z mediów (zdolności medialnych) w zróżnicowanych grupach społecznych, które zazwyczaj są wyalienowane z procesów edukacji medialnej (przede wszystkim dotyczy to osób dorosłych i osób w podeszłym wieku). Jednym z kluczowych założeń analiz jest idea wdrażania Deklaracji paryskiej ds. regulacji sfery umiejętnego korzystania z mediów oraz informacji w erze cyfrowej (2014), która dotyczy: prywatności, bezpieczeństwa cyfrowego i etyki przetwarzania informacji. Metodologicznie przeprowadzone badania nad umiejętnością korzystania z mediów i odpowiedzialnością społeczną opierają się na podejściu interdyscyplinarnym i transdyscyplinarnym. Autorzy zakładają także, że kultura cyfrowa, Internet i algorytmy komputerowe nie są moralnie neutralne. Istnieje bowiem ścisły związek między umiejętnością korzystania z mediów a odpowiedzialnością społeczną i prawami człowieka. Aspektem badawczym, na którym skupiają się autorzy, jest kwestia, w jakim stopniu media przyczyniają się do poszerzania wolności człowieka. Autorzy zauważają, że istnieje też realne niebezpieczeństwo zawężania przez media sfery ludzkiej wolności oraz manipulowanie ludzkimi postawami, poglądami itp. W badaniach w szczególności uwzględniono osoby dorosłe (które zazwyczaj nie są już zbyt zaangażowane w projekty rozwoju własnych umiejętności korzystania z mediów), a także przeanalizowano rolę oraz społeczną odpowiedzialność edukatorów medialnych w obliczu wyzwań spowodowanych wojną hybrydową.

MEDIA LITERACY AND SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY OF EDUCATORS IN THE CONDITIONS OF INFORMATION WAR: THE PROBLEM STATEMENT

(SUMMARY)

The article raises the need to develop theoretical, methodological, and practical principles of media literacy in various target groups traditionally not covered by media education (including adults and older persons). One of the key objectives is to promote the implementation of the Paris Declaration on Media and Information Literacy in the Digital Era (2014): privacy, digital security, and information handling ethics. Methodological research principles of media literacy and social responsibility are based on interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary approaches. The article shows that digital culture, the Internet, and computer algorithms are not morally neutral. There is a close link between media literacy and social responsibility and human rights. Therefore, the focus of this and future research is the question: to what extent do the media contribute to expanding human freedom. After all, there is a real danger – narrowing the sphere of freedom and manipulation of thought. The research also pays special attention to the adult people (who are not seriously involved in the media literacy development projects) and the role of educators' social responsibility in the face of the hybrid war challenges.

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