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Media ecological approach in the context of state and municipal policy in vocational education

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Abstract. This study addresses the integration of media ecological principles into educational policy and practice, particularly within state and municipal initiatives aimed at improving vocational education. Media ecology, as an interdisciplinary approach, examines the effects of media environments on human behavior, culture, and learning processes. The study underscores its significance in fostering media literacy, critical thinking, and the development of creative skills among students. The research highlights the role of state and municipal authorities in promoting media education through innovative programs, teacher training, and partnerships with educational institutions and private organizations. It draws on the example of the “Media Class in Moscow School” project, showcasing how municipal support can enhance the quality of education. The project achieved significant outcomes, including improved student performance in specialized exams, increased participation in pre-professional activities, and a rise in high-achieving students. These results demonstrate the efficacy of collaborative efforts in aligning educational policies with the principles of media ecology. Additionally, the study emphasizes the importance of providing teachers with the necessary professional competencies to implement media ecological practices. By fostering a supportive informational environment, schools can protect students from harmful media influences while leveraging digital tools for educational and professional development. The article concludes that the application of media ecology in vocational education not only enhances student engagement and learning outcomes but also prepares them for active participation in the information society. Strategic collaboration between educators, local authorities, and stakeholders is essential for sustaining these innovations and ensuring the successful integration of media literacy into state and municipal education policies.

Keywords: media education, media competence, educational innovations, media literacy, critical thinking, internet safety

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Медиаэкологический подход в контексте государственной и муниципальной политики профессионального образования

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Аннотация. Рассмотрена интеграция принципов медиаэкологии в образовательную политику и практику, в частности в рамках государственных и муниципальных инициатив, направленных на улучшение профессионального образования. Медиаэкология как междисциплинарный подход изучает влияние медийных сред на поведение человека, культуру и образовательные процессы. Исследование подчеркивает значимость медиаэкологии в развитии медиаграмотности, критического мышления и творческих способностей у студентов. Выделена роль государственных и муниципальных органов власти в продвижении медиаобразования через инновационные программы, подготовку учителей и партнерство с образовательными учреждениями и частными организациями. Примером служит проект «Медиакласс в московской школе», демонстрирующий, как муниципальная поддержка может повысить качество образования. Проект достиг значительных результатов, включая улучшение успеваемости учащихся на специализированных экзаменах, увеличение участия в предпрофессиональных мероприятиях и рост числа высокоуспевающих студентов. Эти результаты подтверждают эффективность совместных усилий по согласованию образовательной политики с принципами медиаэкологии. Кроме того, исследование акцентирует внимание на важности обеспечения учителей необходимыми профессиональными компетенциями для внедрения медиаэкологических практик. Создание благоприятной информационной среды в школах позволяет защитить учащихся от вредного влияния медиа, одновременно используя цифровые инструменты для их образовательного и профессионального развития. Сделан вывод о том, что применение принципов медиаэкологии в профессиональном образовании не только повышает вовлеченность учащихся и улучшает образовательные результаты, но и готовит их к активному участию в информационном обществе. Стратегическое сотрудничество между педагогами, местными властями и заинтересованными сторонами является ключевым для поддержания этих инноваций и обеспечения успешной интеграции медиаграмотности в государственную и муниципальную образовательную политику.

Ключевые слова: медиаобразование, медиакомпетентность, инновации в образовании, медиаграмотность, критическое мышление, безопасность в Интернете

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Introduction

Media ecology, as a field studying the multiplicative effects of media technologies on human culture and psychology, is gaining critical importance in the context of modern educational innovations [1]. With the development of digital technologies and the increasing integration of media into daily life, the need for systematic media literacy education is growing, especially in the context of school education. This task involves not only teaching students the technical aspects of using media as a tool for achieving educational goals but also fostering their critical attitude toward the information circulating in the media environment [2].

Undoubtedly, the key to the effective application of the media-ecological approach in education lies in creating a stimulating informational environment that promotes the comprehensive development of students' intellectual and creative potential. This implies not only protecting them from the destructive influence of media but also actively utilizing its educational potential, as discussed by Buckingham [3], who emphasizes the need for media literacy education to address the evolving media landscape in modern culture.

Foundations and Application of Media Ecology

Media ecology as an academic discipline emerged at the intersection of several fields, including communication, cultural studies, sociology, and information technology. It focuses on studying the impact of the media environment on individuals and society, considering media not merely as tools or channels for transmitting information but as active environments that shape our reality, perception, thinking, and culture.

The fundamental ideas introduced by Marshall McLuhan and Neil Postman laid the foundation for media ecology as a discipline that examines the extent of media's influence on individuals and society.

Marshall McLuhan, a Canadian scholar, is known for his dictum “The medium is the message”, which means that each medium contributes to shaping our perception of the world and social organization [4], regardless of the content being conveyed. He suggested categorizing media into “hot” and “cool” based on the level of audience involvement required, and he argued that the advent of the printing press led to the creation of a “global village” and significantly transformed social structures.

On the other hand, American cultural critic Neil Postman focused his analysis on television as the dominant medium of his time, viewing it as a tool that turns serious social discourse into entertainment [5], thereby undermining the foundations of public dialogue and critical thinking.

Public Sector Impact on Media Education Implementation

When discussing the use of media ecology principles in studying changes in media literacy levels in pre-professional classes, it is essential to highlight the role of state and municipal authorities in facilitating the integration of these principles into educational practice. Media ecology not only involves acquiring technical media skills but also emphasizes cultivating students' critical thinking, media analysis capabilities, and the development of their own media projects. These components are aligned with the objectives of state and municipal policies aimed at improving the quality of vocational education. The implementation of media education programs in schools, driven by state and municipal initiatives, implies that teachers must acquire new professional competencies, including the basics of media ecology, methods for developing media literacy, and how to integrate these into the curriculum [6].

Municipal authorities play a crucial role in facilitating and supporting the implementation of media education programs. Through targeted policies, funding initiatives, and partnerships with educational institutions, local governments ensure that schools have the resources necessary to apply media ecology principles effectively. For example, in the 2022/2023 academic year, 1294 teachers took part in the Media Class in the Moscow School, of which 663, or 51%, took advanced training courses for the implementation of media educational programs that meet state educational standards. This initiative was supported by the Moscow government and demonstrates how a municipal policy can directly affect the professional development of teachers.

The project "Media Class in the Moscow School" serves as an example of how the principles of media ecology can be integrated into educational policy at the municipal level. Thanks to the creation of a joint educational environment in which schools, local authorities and partner organizations participate, this initiative demonstrates the potential of municipalities in promoting educational innovations. In the case of Moscow, 185 schools, 19 partner universities and 7 partner organizations worked together to provide students with access to modern media resources and real professional contexts, contributing to the implementation of state and municipal education policy. The active participation of the city in this project shows how municipal authorities can provide the necessary infrastructure and support to such initiatives.

The results of the project demonstrate its success in improving the media literacy and professional competencies of students. The analytical report of the project highlights key achievements, such as a significant increase in the percentage of students who have chosen two specialized subjects of the exam (57.65%) and those who passed these items above the average in the city (30.16%). In addition, 193 students received higher points in specialized subjects and the Russian language, which indicates the high quality of educational innovations promoted by municipal authorities.

The results of the scientific and practical conference and pre-profile exams once again demonstrate the effectiveness of municipalities in educational programs.

Compared to the previous school year, the number of participants increased markedly: at the preliminary stage, 123.85% more students were studied, and at the final stage — 148.50% more. The proportion of participants who became winners or prize-winners of the pre-professional exam amounted to 7.42%, which indicates the positive influence of municipal support on students performance. As noted in studies devoted to the use of digital technologies in the educational environment, the strategic use of media tools contributes to greater involvement and learning results among students [7]. Moreover, the flexibility of mixed learning models, as co-authors showed [8–10], can further expand the coverage and effectiveness of media literacy programs in various educational institutions.

Conclusion

The analysis confirms that the educational innovations based on the principles of media ecology supported by state and municipal policies play a key role in increasing media graphicity and developing critical thinking skills in pre-professional classes. The active role of the municipal authorities in promoting these programs — through financing, training teachers and partnerships — has proved its importance for the success of such initiatives. The study shows that the successful implementation of media education requires a comprehensive strategy, including advanced training of teachers, a favorable environment of training and active cooperation between schools, local authorities and educational partners. Such an integrated approach prepares students for active participation in the information society and gives them the skills necessary for successful social and professional adaptation. Moreover, the use of strategic methods for taking risks and informal learning, as is discussed by Hobbs, can further increase media literacy, encouraging students to study digital media tools and experiment with them in unstructured conditions. Finally, the theoretical foundations of the theory of activity that are related to understanding behavior when searching for information on the Internet in the context of educational innovations, help to develop a wider strategy for introducing media graphics in professional education.

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