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Published in the USA
International Journal of Media and Information Literacy
Issued since 2016.
E-ISSN: 2500-106X
2026. 11(1): 14-21

DOI: 10.13187/ijmil.2026.1.14
<https://ijmil.cherkasgu.press>



Modern Media Education of Youth: the Media-Creative Aspect

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Abstract

This article examines the role of media creativity as a key component of contemporary media education in the context of rapid digital transformation. The increasing scale of media flows and user-generated content intensifies risks related to media safety, misinformation, and the impact of destructive content, which underscores the need for effective media education strategies. The purpose of the research is to identify the theoretical foundations, pedagogical potential, and socio-cultural significance of media creativity in modern media education. The findings demonstrate that media creativity should be understood as a multidimensional pedagogical and socio-cultural phenomenon that combines the development of youth's technical skills, creative abilities, critical thinking, and media culture. It is shown that media-creative practices (blogging, digital storytelling, etc.) serve not only as tools for developing skill but also as mechanisms for personal self-realization, social participation, and identity formation among adolescents. Particular attention is paid to the role of critical media literacy, which enables young people to analyse media content, resist misinformation, and engage responsibly in the digital environment. It is argued that effective media education should not treat creativity as a supplementary element but rather as an important mechanism for developing the competencies necessary for youth's active citizenship and meaningful participation in contemporary media culture.

Keywords: media text, media culture, media security, media education, media creativity, critical thinking, youth.

1. Introduction

The rapid development of media in the modern world entails significant transformations related to how the contemporary digital generation uses the media environment. The substantial expansion of media flows and the Internet media space bring to the forefront the issues of media use, including the latest developments in neural networks and artificial intelligence, in the processes of upbringing, education, and development of the younger generation. Moreover, the expansion of the capabilities of the modern media environment does not resolve the problem of potential risks and dangers associated with ensuring media security for the younger generation, nor the negative impact of destructive media content on mass audiences. In addressing these challenges, it seems important to define the possibilities of modern media education for young people, which in recent decades has become increasingly widespread.

At the present stage of development, media education is widely used in patriotic (Chelysheva, 2025), civic (Mikhaleva, 2021), moral (Kuptsova, Vladimirova, 2024), and aesthetic upbringing (Fedorov, 2015; Khilko, 2004, 2006). Media education, aimed at fostering the critical autonomy of the individual, developing analytical competencies, and expanding creative possibilities related to the media sphere, among other equally important tasks, is becoming increasingly essential for

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modern digital society. It is no coincidence that the full-scale use of media education has become the subject of interdisciplinary research and is being examined by philosophers, educators, psychologists, sociologists, and political scientists.

The development of media technologies today opens up increasingly broader opportunities for media creativity, which has become one of the key directions in media education. The creation of original media content, its analysis, and creative application in various spheres of life have drawn the attention of researchers to this issue. For example, “with the spread of the internet and social networks, media creativity is gaining new dimensions and becoming a socio-cultural phenomenon. The emergence of platforms for content sharing and the development of user-generated content (UGC) lead to the widespread distribution of media creativity” (Kulikovskaya, Brezhnev, 2025: 105).

2. Materials and methods

The material underlying this study includes scholarly works on contemporary media education of youth in the context of media creativity, including dissertations, monographs, research articles, etc. The research methods include theoretical analysis and synthesis; generalization and classification, content analysis, analogy, induction and deduction, abstraction and concretization, generalization. The methodological basis of the study is the research of L. Masterman (Masterman, 1985), C. Bazalgette (Bazalgette, 2009), D. Buckingham (Buckingham, 2004), A. Silverblatt (Silverblatt, 2016), and others.

3. Discussion

The modern world of culture is closely connected with the media environment, and the media space today encompasses a wide range of issues related to various aspects of human activity. At the same time, “the media environment provides additional opportunities in the fields of education and upbringing. The organic perception of media texts by the younger generation serves as a mechanism for transmitting the value-meaning complex of Russian culture. The most relevant forms and methods of media education aimed at shaping value orientations and the intellectual and creative development of the individual include online events, interactive live streams, festivals and competitions in virtual space, engaging and useful content on official social media accounts of educational institutions, and social networks as a creative platform for youth” (Kuptsova, Vladimirova, 2024: 63).

One of the fundamental concepts of modern media education is promoting a critical attitude towards media information of various types and genres. It is reasonable to agree with the view that “the critical component within the concept of media literacy is today regarded as a key factor in fostering civic responsibility and the ability to make thoughtful, well-reasoned decisions based on the critical processing of information received through various media channels. The ability to recognize and avoid spreading fake news and disinformation has become a defining characteristic of a high level of media literacy in contemporary society” (Chicherina, 2022: 74). It is no coincidence that many contemporary researchers emphasize the importance of a critical approach in media education (Fedorov, Levitskaya, 2015; Gálik et al., 2024; Tinák, Gálik, 2026).

It should also be noted that traditional methods of working with media texts aimed at developing critical thinking among children and young people are well established in media education practice. These include working with problem-based questions, studying professional reviews written by media critics, and engaging students in creative tasks and exercises related to analyzing the content of media texts, identifying typical stereotypes of main and secondary characters, and determining the sources of media information, among other approaches.

At the same time, in recent years, the tasks of developing critical thinking within media education have also been implemented through independent media creativity. In particular, this includes working with numerous blogs that are becoming more and more prevalent in the media space. According to the definition given by R. Bliznyak and I. Gerasimova, “blogging can be defined as a set of actions performed by an individual in maintaining an electronic diary (blog), carried out with a certain regularity and aimed at expressing their own opinion on particular topics, events, and actors, as well as attracting the attention of other participants in the blogosphere to this opinion” (Bliznyak, Gerasimov, 2017: 222).

In the study carried out by A. Shesterina, it is stated that “within the educational process, video blogs can perform the following functions: illustrative, modelling, communicative, utilitarian,

and others. These functions can be realized in different genres. The most common include video courses (specially prepared series in a unified style and format), vlogs (regular releases in which media experts or major researchers share their knowledge with a wide audience), streaming (live broadcasts of public lectures by specialists in the field of media education), entertainment films (complex aesthetically structured video material with a recognizable dramatic and audiovisual composition), and animation” (Shesterina, 2021: 375).

The rapid expansion of media environment capabilities opens new prospects for media creativity for present-day young people. It is reasonable to agree with the view of I. Kulikovskaya and G. Brezhnev that “in contemporary pedagogical science, media creativity is considered one of the key competencies for successful adaptation to the conditions of the digital economy and information society. Special attention is given to the development of creative thinking, critical analysis of information, and skills of communication and collaboration in the digital environment” (Kulikovskaya, Brezhnev, 2025: 105).

Modern formats of youth media education are closely connected with media-creative activities. For example, blogging has become one of the most widespread ways of rapidly reaching a mass Internet audience today and serves as a kind of platform for discussing a wide range of issues concerning users. Bloggers of various levels publish information in the form of short videos, posts on social networks, and so on. Among the many video materials and blogs presented, there are also educational ones. Examining their characteristics, D. Sterlikov identifies: “1) video content dominated by classical educational genres and formats; 2) video content dominated by genres and formats of video blogging. In the first case, such genres as video lectures, webinars, master classes, and workshops prevail. Educational excursions appear less frequently. The main format is classic horizontal video. In the second case, there is a much greater variability of genres and formats, which is driven by the need to adapt to the content distribution channel – the online network environment – and to audience demands. This includes educational genres such as documentaries, docudramas, mockumentaries, guides, reviews, commentaries, essays, life hacks” (Sterlikov, 2024: 1011).

4. Results

In contemporary media education, media creativity is viewed as a complex pedagogical and sociocultural phenomenon that integrates artistic self-expression, personal development, and media culture within the modern educational environment. Taken together, these dimensions make it possible to identify several key aspects that reveal the practical and theoretical significance of media creativity in work with children and adolescents. Some scholars highlight that young people are no longer simply audiences but creators who engage with media through remixing, storytelling, and networked interaction: Valerie Wee (Wee, 2017) captures this transformation by describing the intensification of multimedia engagement, where youth simultaneously consume and produce content across platforms. This participatory condition aligns with Henry Jenkins et al. (Jenkins et al., 2016) who conceptualize contemporary youth culture as a participatory culture in which creative expression is collaborative, socially embedded, and often tied to civic and political engagement. In this sense, creativity is not an isolated act but a networked practice shaped by interaction and feedback: Jenkins et al. (Jenkins et al., 2016) argue that participatory media practices can lower barriers to civic engagement, thus enabling young people to use creative outputs – such as videos, memes, and social media posts – as forms of their political voice. This highlights the potential of media creativity, which extends beyond one’s personal expression to collective action and public discourse.

Underlying all these perspectives are due to digital media that make such creativity possible. Low barriers to entry, multimodal tools, and networked distribution systems enable young people to create and share content with unprecedented ease. Yet, as David Buckingham (Buckingham, 2013) cautions, that access alone does not guarantee meaningful participation; creative engagement depends on the development of one’s critical skills, guidance, and opportunities. Inequalities in access and competence, along with the influence of institutional and commercial structures, continue to shape how and to what extent youth can participate creatively.

First and foremost, media creativity is interpreted as an activity-based, practice-oriented experience aimed at creating one’s own media products (video materials, audiovisual works, digital stories, etc.). For example, the study guide “Media Creativity: Practical Aspect” (Vidnaya, Kisileva, 2017), emphasizes the applied nature of this activity: it describes the stages of media production, methods for organizing university students’ work, and the mastery of technical and artistic tools.

Thus, media creativity serves as a tool for developing specific skills – from conceptualization to the realization of a media project.

N. Khilko considers media creativity from the perspectives of cultural studies and pedagogy (Khilko, 2004; Khilko, 2006) as part of audiovisual culture and socio-cultural activity, emphasizing its role in transmitting values, norms, and symbols. The author focuses on the pedagogical potential of screen-based creativity, associated with aesthetic perception, imaginative thinking, and the ability to interpret media texts. In this context, media creativity is understood not only as technical production but also as a culturally conditioned process that involves mastering the languages of screen arts.

Significant attention in a number of publications is given to the personal development of adolescents. For instance, T. Gorodilina (Gorodilina, 2018) substantiates media creativity as a space for creative self-realization, where adolescents can express their individuality, develop their creativity, and enhance their reflective abilities. Similarly, I. Voynya (Voynya, 2008) views the development of skills in creating artistic media products as a pedagogically organized process that includes cultivating students' artistic taste, compositional thinking, and skills in working with expressive means.

The works of M. Kuzmina (Kuzmina, 2014) and A. Machenin (Machenin, 2014) explore media creativity in the context of media culture and the educational environment. M. Kuzmina emphasizes the importance of students creating their own video materials for developing their critical attitude towards information, understanding media languages, and mastering communicative strategies. A. Machenin, in his turn, stresses the important role of the school media centre as an organizational form that facilitates the integration of media creativity into the educational process and enhances the pedagogical potential of media education.

The socio-cultural dimension of media creativity is revealed in studies devoted to adolescents' social activity and identity. For example, M. Moskvitina (Moskvitina, 2024) considers media creativity as a means of shaping adolescents' ethnocultural identity, thus emphasizing its potential in helping them reflect on cultural heritage and present themselves in the media space.

Within educational contexts, youth media creativity is often framed as something that can be cultivated through structured pedagogical approaches. For example, Kadi Bliss (Bliss, 2015) demonstrates how integrating social media into the classroom can create experiential learning environments in which students actively produce and share content. Likewise, Brian Gleason and Scott von Gillern (Gleason, von Gillern, 2018) emphasize the role of participatory practices in teaching digital citizenship, where creative engagement with social media becomes a means of learning collaboration, communication, and responsibility. Heidi A. Fuller and Amy M. Damico (Fuller, Damico, 2008) further argue that educators must adapt to the realities of teen media use by incorporating creative media practices into curricula. However, these perspectives also reveal some tension: while schools attempt to formalize and guide creativity, much of youth's most dynamic media production occurs informally outside institutional settings, where peer interaction are less constrained.

Overall, our analysis allows us to state that in the pedagogical discourse, media creativity is interpreted as a multidimensional process that combines the mastery of media technologies and languages, the development of artistic and creative abilities, promoting media culture and critical thinking, the support of young people's personal self-realization, and the inclusion of adolescents in socially and culturally significant activities. That is why media creativity functions not only as a teaching method but also as an important mechanism of socialization and cultural identification of the individual in the media environment.

Hence, it is not surprising that a key theme in international academic literature is youth's sociocultural participation. For example, B.J. Selznick (Selznick, 2008) emphasizes that children's engagement with media is connected to broader notions of citizenship, where young people are enabled to contribute to cultural and public life. Similarly, other scholars (Fields et al., 2014; Kafai et al., 2011) focus on "DIY" (do-it-yourself) practices in media education, proving that creative production – such as game design, programming, or the creation of digital artifacts – fosters such competencies in adolescents as collaboration, collective problem-solving, and communication.

Another contemporary direction is the empowerment of youth through media creativity. S.R. Poyntz (Poyntz, 2006) points out that media education should go beyond the development of purely technical skills and provide young people with opportunities to express their views and critically engage with society. K. Johnston-Goodstar et al. (Johnston-Goodstar et al., 2014) develop

this idea in the context of social work, demonstrating how critical media practice can support youth identity development and participation in social justice efforts by providing tools for representing their own life experiences.

In this respect, E. Camarero, A. Fedorov, and A. Levitskaya dwell upon promoting youth's audiovisual and media literacy for social change: "In linking audiovisual and/or media literacy, empowerment and social change, the participatory and civic use of digital tools (and especially when learning leads to the creation or management of such resources) minimizes the existing digital divide affecting vulnerable groups and those at risk of exclusion. Users can create digital content to communicate and to participate in society while achieving empowerment" (Camarero et al., 2019: 360).

David Buckingham (Buckingham, 2013) also argues that media education must extend beyond critical analysis to include opportunities for creative production, thus enabling young people to understand media systems by actively participating in them. Similarly, Jason Ohler (Ohler, 2009) frames new-media literacies as a combination of technical skills, storytelling ability, and ethical awareness, positioning creativity as a core competency in modern digital environments. This perspective is further reinforced by Kathy T. Anderson and Peter H. Chua (Anderson, Chua 2010), who highlight digital storytelling as a key practice through which youth develop their narrative skills and express personal experiences using multimedia. Together, these authors suggest that creativity is not merely an outcome of media use but a fundamental dimension of how young people learn and communicate.

Moreover, digital environments provide spaces where young people can construct identities through creative expression, whether by producing videos, creating images, or sharing personal narratives. Some researchers (Wee, 2017) point to the fluidity of these identity practices in multimedia contexts, while the other scholars (Anderson, Chua, 2010) show how digital storytelling enables youth to articulate one's personal experiences. Media creativity, in this sense, becomes a tool for self-exploration and social positioning, allowing young people to negotiate how they present themselves to others.

Modern research also emphasizes that new media literacy is a multidimensional construct. For instance, Tzu-Bin Lin et al. (Lin et al., 2013) propose a theoretical model that includes not only functional and technical skills but also critical understanding of media texts and individuals' capacity for creative production. This aligns with the position of K.C. Montgomery (Montgomery, 2000) who describes the evolution of the digital media space and underscores the importance of preparing young people to navigate complex media environments shaped by commercialization, interactivity, and convergence.

Creative media practices, such as digital storytelling, are also seen as effective educational tools. For example, H. Truong-White and L. McLean (Truong-White, McLean, 2015) emphasize that digital storytelling contributes to the development of global citizenship by combining personal self-expression with critical reflection on global issues. Such practices demonstrate how creativity in media education can connect personal life stories with broader social and cultural contexts (Camarero, Varona, 2016).

The importance of critical and analytical thinking is also highlighted by P.A. Alexander (Alexander, 2014) who substantiates the need for well-developed critical-analytical skills among learners, which underpin their ability to evaluate media messages, construct arguments, and participate meaningfully in media production. This cognitive dimension complements the creative component, ensuring awareness and reflexivity in the process of creating media texts.

Taken together, these studies demonstrate that effective media education should not treat creativity as an additional element but should recognize it as a key mechanism through which young people acquire the competencies necessary for cultural participation, civic engagement, and critical understanding in the digital world.

5. Conclusion

The current stage of media education opens up broad prospects for incorporating the capabilities of new media into education and upbringing. At the same time, the rapid advancement of media technologies intensifies the risks and challenges associated with society's interaction with the media environment. These include unresolved issues related to the use and expanding potential of neural networks and artificial intelligence, problems of media safety for the younger generation, and the influence of destructive media content on youth, among others.

Overall, the media-creative aspect of contemporary youth media education is characterized by the following features: active participation in media culture; the development of creative, technical, and communicative skills; the expansion of youth media opportunities through self-expression and critical engagement; and the integration of critical thinking with creative practice.

In this regard, identifying the main trends of contemporary media education becomes highly relevant and requires careful analysis and interpretation.

6. Acknowledgements

This research is funded by the grant of the Russian Science Foundation (RSF, project No. 25-28-02450, <https://rscf.ru/project/25-28-02450/>) at the Rostov State University of Economics. Project theme: “Strategies for the Development of Contemporary Russian Media Education”. Head of the project is G.V. Mikhaleva.

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