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Challenges of modernity and the influence of mass culture on the quality of education (based on the results of sociological research in the sphere of education)

Summary

Education is one of the most important social institutions that ensure the socialization of the younger generation: the interiorization of social values, norms, behavior patterns that characterize the basic culture of a society, the formation of life skills and competencies necessary for successful adaptation, personal and social development in current socio-economic, political and socio-cultural conditions.

The results of sociological research carried out within the framework of the republican monitoring of the quality of education are analyzed.

Keywords: contemporary challenges, mass culture, social stigmatization, social institutions, education, social values.

Mass culture surrounds the modern student at every step. Mass culture products play an important role in the socialization of adolescents and young people.

Therefore, it is so important to study mass culture, the ways of its influence on human consciousness.

The term “mass culture” was first used by the American scientist D. MacDonald in 1944. He emphasizes the prevalence and accessibility of spiritual values, the ease of their assimilation, which does not require a particularly developed, refined taste and perception. As a rule, the modern interpretation of “mass culture” is based on the provision on the influence of mass media and new, so-called “technical types of art” on it, primarily on-screen (cinema, television, video)¹.

Mass culture is inseparable from the media of communication. Channels for the dissemination of mass culture: radio, television, video, sound recording, cinema, the Internet, etc. Thanks to them, the systematic dissemination of cultural products through print, radio, television, cinema, global social networks, etc.

The mass media constitutes a specific social institution, i.e. addressing to the society in the course of mass information support of its functioning. The mass media is turning into the main tool for distribution and broadcasting these messages that are urged to influence the public consciousness².

Under the influence of fear, worry and scarcity of reliable information are born stereotypes and social stigmatization.

Today, during a pandemic, popular culture is essential for education. With the help of the TV screen, people get access to the museum hall, and to a lecture by a scientist, and to a concert of a virtuoso performer, and to a theater hall. Mass culture is, in fact, the environment in which a person is placed. The media (radio, print, Internet, television) are, in fact, the factor that allowed popular culture to reach its peak. Media and popular culture are closely related.

In the youth group of respondents (from 18 to 30 years old) there were equal parts of those who see both good and bad in mass culture (22% each)... More than half of young people said that they „like” the Internet, social networks (82%), foreign films (76%), contemporary music (72%), self-education (62%), contemporary domestic cinema (55%), fashion and design (51%)³.

Electronic media – television, radio, video, and the Internet – fill a significant part of teenagers’ leisure time. Through them today the inner world is formed schoolchildren, pupils, students, their artistic preferences, value orientations, cultural attitudes.

The comprehension of the problems and challenges of our time, caused by the socio-cultural transformations that are taking place in our society, is reflected primarily in the normative legal documents that regulate the activities of various subjects in the field of education and determine the directions of its development.

Let us dwell in more detail on the main aspects that reflect the specifics of the current state and directions of modernization of the education sector, associated with the current trends in the socio-cultural development of society.

¹ <https://ru.scribd.com/document/340722968/Dwight-Macdonald-A-Theory-of-Mass-Culture-pdf>

² <http://rulb.org/en/article/manipulyativnyj-potencial-smi-v-politicheskom-diskurse/>

³ <https://rg.ru/2019/06/17/sociologi-popytalis-vyiasnit-cto-neset-nam-massovaia-kultura.html>

The main regulatory document containing key information about the education system of our country is the Code of the Republic of Belarus on Education dated January 13, 2011 No. 243-z (hereinafter – the Code). Currently, the Draft of the new Code, which will be amended and clarified, is under discussion, which is also a reflection of the profound transformation processes affecting the field of education today.

According to Article 89 of the current document, the educational process in educational institutions is organized on the basis of:

1. Principles of state policy in the field of education;
2. Educational standards;
3. Achievements in the field of science and technology, implemented in the sectors of the economy and the social sphere of innovation projects;
4. Choice of forms, methods and means of teaching and education;
5. Cultural traditions and values of the Belarusian people, achievements of world culture;
6. Modern educational and information technologies⁴.

The following are defined as the main principles of state policy in the field of education:

- education quality as a priority direction of public policy;
- priority of universal values, human rights, humanistic nature of education;
- guarantee of the constitutional right of everyone to education;
- ensuring equal access to education;
- compulsory basic education;
- integration into the world educational space while maintaining and developing the traditions of the education system;
- reinforcement of environmental education and ecological worldview;
- support and development of education, taking into account the tasks of the socio-economic development of the state;
- state-public nature of education management;
- secular nature of education⁵.

The new edition of the Education Code suggests changing some approaches. For example, to approve the principle of compulsory general secondary education and improve the quality of education and the general educational level of the population of our country. The development of education can be carried out both in its individual aspects (educational standards, curricula, teaching aids, etc.), subsystems (preschool, general secondary, special, secondary specialized, vocational, higher education, etc.), and at the level general paradigm of teaching and upbringing, defining the principles and approaches on which pedagogical science and practice are based.

⁴ http://kodeksy-by.com/kodeks_ob_obrazovanii_rb/89.htm

⁵ http://kodeksy-by.com/kodeks_ob_obrazovanii_rb/89.htm

Currently, the competency-based approach is defined as such a fundamental methodological approach. So, in the Code of the Republic of Belarus on Education, this approach is indicated as one of the main requirements for the organization of the educational process, along with ensuring the quality of education, protecting the health of students, creating conditions for the development of students' creative abilities, special conditions for receiving education by persons with psychophysical development, etc.⁶

Evaluation of the results of educational activities of students through the triad “knowledge – skills – skills” (the so-called ZUNs) has practically become a thing of the past. When defining learning objectives, attention is focused on the formation of students of certain competencies.

According to regulatory documents, competencies are understood as “the ability acquired in the process of training and education to carry out activities in accordance with the received education”⁷.

The priority of the competence-based approach in education is expressed in the updated content of education (on the basis of this approach, in the last academic year, most of the curricula in academic subjects for general secondary education institutions were revised), the content of textbooks and control and measuring materials for assessing the educational achievements of students. This is due to modern socio-cultural trends, the inclusion of our country in global cultural and information processes.

A significant role in the spread of globalization processes in the field of education is played by the activities of international organizations that determine key problems, directions of development of educational systems and indicators of the quality of education at the international level (Lipai, 2011).

J. Dewey, who studied the issue of the goals of education, noted that “at different times, such goals as the completeness of life impressions, the improvement of methods of learning a language, the replacement of verbal methods with practical ones, social effectiveness, personal culture, service to society, all-round development personality, encyclopedic knowledge, discipline, development of aesthetic tastes, practical benefits, etc.” (Dewey, 2007 [1916]).

Currently, regarding the assessment of learning outcomes, UNESCO identifies the following components:

- knowledge – the basic cognitive results that all students who have completed a course of study should possess, which includes literacy in reading, writing, counting and knowledge of the basics of academic subjects;
- values – solidarity, gender equality, tolerance, mutual understanding, respect for human rights, rejection of violence, value of human life, self-esteem;
- skills and competencies – skills in problem solving, organizing experiments, teamwork, interacting with other people, ability to learn;

⁶ http://kodeksy-by.com/kodeks_ob_obrazovani_rb/89.htm

⁷ <https://www.adu.by/images/2019/01/obr-standarty-ob-sred-obrazovaniya.pdf>

— behavior – the willingness to put into practice the knowledge gained (Valdman, 2008).

Another mechanism of globalization in the field of education is international programs for studying the quality of education. Currently, the following international comparative studies of the quality of education are widely used:

Programme for International Student Assessment. PISA measures 15-year-olds' ability to use their reading, mathematics and science knowledge and skills to meet real-life challenges.

The Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC) is a programme of assessment and analysis of adult skills. The major survey conducted as part of PIAAC is the Survey of Adult Skills. The Survey measures adults' proficiency in key information-processing skills – literacy, numeracy and problem solving – and gathers information and data on how adults use their skills at home, at work and in the wider community⁸.

PIRLS, the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study, is one of the core studies of IEA. Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) is a global assessment of reading literacy in more than 50 countries.

The Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS), the purpose of which is a comparative assessment of the quality of mathematical and natural science education in primary and basic schools (organizer of research – IEA). The IEA's Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) is a series of international assessments of the mathematics and science knowledge of students around the world.

In 2018, the Republic of Belarus took part for the first time in the international study of the quality of education PISA, which is conducted under the auspices of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) on the basis of a sample of 15-year-old students. The diagnostic toolkit of this study consists of practice-oriented tasks, most often of an interdisciplinary nature, for the solution of which the ability to apply knowledge of academic subjects in real life situations is required⁹.

The PISA program examines the following main problem blocks:

- mathematical literacy as the ability to formulate, apply and interpret mathematics in a variety of contexts, including mathematical reasoning, the use of mathematical concepts, procedures, facts and tools to describe, explain and predict a phenomenon);
- reading literacy as the ability to understand and use written texts, reflect on them and engage in reading to achieve their own goals, expand knowledge, actively participate in the life of society;
- natural science literacy as the ability to use natural science knowledge to pose questions, master new knowledge, explain natural science phenomena and

⁸ <https://www.oecd.org/skills/piaac/>

⁹ The main results of the international comparative study PISA-2018 -sravnitel'nogo-issledovan-ija-pisa-2018.html

- formulate conclusions based on scientific evidence; the ability to exercise an active civic stance when considering problems related to natural science;
- financial literacy – knowledge and understanding of financial concepts and financial risks, as well as the skills, motivation and confidence necessary to make effective decisions in a variety of financial situations that contribute to improving the financial well-being of an individual and society, as well as the ability to participate in economic life.

The priority area of this research in 2018 was reading literacy. At the same time, the concept of reading literacy was somewhat changed in accordance with the transformations in society associated with the culture and technologies of reading. New information and communication technologies being actively introduced into everyday life have changed the nature of reading and transmitting information. In various spheres production has increased the need for specialists who can quickly adapt in a changing context, work effectively and learn, using various sources of information.

PISA 2018 also presents a new direction related to the study of global competencies, which are understood as the ability to critically consider problems of a global nature and intercultural interaction from different points of view; be aware of how cultural, religious, political, racial and other differences can affect people's perceptions, judgments and views; engage in open, respectful and effective interactions with others based on a shared respect for human dignity¹⁰.

Global competencies include interest and awareness of global development trends, the ability to effectively act individually or in a group in various situations, manage their behavior, openness and positive emotional perception of new things.

As experts in the field of education quality assessment note, the country's participation in international research gives a powerful impetus to the development of national educational systems. There is even such an expression as PISA-shock, which testifies to the strength of the cultural effect caused by the results of participation in such a study, which prompts a deep understanding and serious revision of the established education system, a revision of educational standards, curricula and teaching methods.

Another important factor inextricably linked with the processes of globalization is the informatization of society on the scale of the world community. If in 1997 Internet coverage was 1.7% of the world's population, then in 2014 this figure increased to 40.4%. The widespread dissemination of modern information and communication technologies has led to the formation of a new information and educational space, including a variety of Internet resources, to the digitalization of the education system as a whole. Such a form of education as distance learning is gaining in popularity.

In the educational process of educational institutions of various levels, starting with preschool education, modern information and communication technolo-

¹⁰ <https://boiro.by/activities/research-quality-education/research-pisa-2018-in-republic-belarus>

gies are actively used. The overwhelming majority of institutions of general secondary education are provided with access to the Internet, have their own official websites, which contain relevant information of an educational nature for different categories of participants in the educational process. Many institutions have interactive whiteboards, multi-boards, and other equipment necessary to use modern electronic educational resources.

As part of the activities of the program „Comprehensive Informatization of the Education System of the Republic of Belarus for 2007–2010” developed full versions of educational electronic publications (electronic learning tools). Currently, educational institutions are actively implementing the project „Approbation of the model of managed development of educational services for the formation and stimulation of self-educational activities of students by means of information and communication technologies” (Electronic School), which includes the student’s electronic document „Student Card” and an online service „Electronic journal / electronic diary”.

Much attention is paid to improving the ICT literacy of teachers and students, developing their competencies necessary for successful socialization in the modern information society, meeting the educational needs of students in this subject area. For these purposes, 23 programs of elective classes in informatics for students of grades V–XI have been developed and offered for use in the educational process of institutions of general secondary education.

In accordance with the Concept of Informatization of the education system for the period until 2020, it is planned to create unified information educational environment of the Republic of Belarus based on the use of „cloud” technologies, to implement the principle of learning mobility, and to widely develop the distance learning system¹¹.

Education is one of the most important social institutions that ensure the socialization of the younger generation: the interiorization of social values, norms, behavior models that characterize the basic culture of a society, the formation of life skills and competencies necessary for successful adaptation, personal and social development in current socio-economic, political and socio-cultural conditions. For the overwhelming majority of them (91.7%), the Internet is the main source of information about economic and political events in our country. In 2008 this numeral accounted for only 32.7%.

The more important channels for informing the population at that time were Belarusian radio and television. At present, the role of these mass media has somewhat decreased, giving way to Internet technologies. In the last poll, radio and television were cited as sources of information on socio-political issues by approximately two-thirds of students (in 2008 – 72.5%).

¹¹ <https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B8J0nDz4iJ4GMnpaRU8teVVPeG8/view>

During the last poll, radio and TV as a source of information was mentioned by about two thirds students (in 2008 – 72.5%). Also much less common high school students began to read the printed press. If in 2008 this answer option was indicated by more than half of the respondents (56.2%), now this indicator has decreased almost doubled.

It is worth agreeing with the majority of respondents who said that mass culture is a positive phenomenon, because its works are characterized by a clear separation of good and evil, a happy ending, and attractive images of heroes. Still believe that the cultural heritage of the past far exceeds today's creations.

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Wyzwania nowoczesności i wpływ kultury masowej na jakość kształcenia (w oparciu o wyniki badań socjologicznych w sferze edukacji)

Streszczenie

Instytucje kształcenia to jedne z najważniejszych organizacji społecznych zapewniających socjalizację młodego pokolenia: internacjonalizację wartości społecznych, norm, wzorców zachowań charakteryzujących podstawową kulturę społeczeństwa, tworzenie życiowych umiejętności i kompetencji niezbędnych do udanej adaptacji oraz rozwoju osobistego i społecznego w bieżących warunkach społeczno-gospodarczych, politycznych i społeczno-kulturowych. Przeanalizowano wyniki badań socjologicznych przeprowadzonych w ramach republikańskiego monitoringu jakości kształcenia.

Słowa kluczowe: współczesne wyzwania, kultura masowa, stygmatyzacja społeczna, instytucje społeczne, edukacja, wartości społeczne.