

DEVELOPING CRITICAL THINKING IN THE INFORMATION SOCIETY

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Abstract

Personal development is no longer measured by the physical accumulation of information, but by the ability to extract necessary, reliable, and useful information from it. In an information-saturated environment, people are under dual pressure: on the one hand, opportunities for acquiring knowledge are expanding, while on the other, manipulative technologies and fake news limit a person's right to make independent decisions. Therefore, media literacy is becoming a prerequisite for personal development. It requires critical thinking and a critical approach to perceiving each piece of information.

Keywords: Information society, personal development, media literacy, critical thinking, information culture, hygiene of values, manipulation.

Introduction

The essence of the information society and its transformation

The concept of the information society was first put forward in the second half of the 20th century by scientists such as M. Castel's, D. Bell and E. Toffler. According to them, the main productive force in such a society is knowledge and information. However, by the 21st century, information overload has created new dangers for the human psyche and intellect. Today, information has become not only a source of knowledge, but also the most powerful tool for managing society, shaping the worldview of an individual and influencing social consciousness. Personal development in the information society means not only acquiring professional skills, but also not losing one's identity in an endless flow of information, being able to correctly sort information and use it for personal and social development.

Personal development is now measured not only by the ability to collect information, but also by the ability to extract from it what is meaningful and useful. In an information-rich environment, a person is under a double influence: on the one hand, the opportunities for acquiring knowledge expand, on the other hand, manipulative technologies and fake news limit a person's right to make independent decisions. Therefore, media literacy is emerging as an indispensable condition for personal development. What is media literacy? Media literacy is the ability to search for, analyze, evaluate and create information in various forms (text, video, audio, social networks). A media literate person:



- ✓ Checks the source of information.
- ✓ Can distinguish between advertising and hidden propaganda.
- ✓ Can ensure their own safety in the digital world.

Media literacy as a means of social adaptation of an individual.

The multi-level structure of media literacy. The concept of media literacy is not limited only to technical skills (using a computer or smartphone). In a broader sense, it means a person’s culture and safety in the media world. Scientific research indicates the following four main components of media literacy:

1. Technical competence: The ability to manage digital platforms, algorithms and tools. This is a basic level that allows a person to enter the information world.
2. Cognitive analysis: Understanding the logical structure of the received message. For example; understanding whose interests an article in a news feed serves.
3. Ethical and aesthetic evaluation: Observing the rules of ethics (netiquette) in virtual communication, being able to resist cyberbullying and hate speech.
4. Creativity: The formation of a person not only as a consumer of information, but also as a creator of high-quality and useful content.

Psychological aspects of media education.

Media literacy performs a psychological protective function in the maturation of a person. Psychology states that people with low media literacy are more susceptible to “information stress”. They experience a feeling of dissatisfaction with their own lives (FOMO effect) when they see idealized pictures of life on social networks. A mature person realizes that the media space is virtual, and the information there is often “filtered” for a specific purpose. This understanding helps to maintain a person’s inner peace and self-confidence. Media literacy also accelerates the process of a person’s socialization. A person becomes aware of global problems, learns to understand different cultures and views. However, this process must necessarily go in parallel with critical thinking.

What is critical thinking?

Critical thinking is the process of logically questioning and examining information rather than blindly accepting it. It is not about “doubting everything,” but rather “asking the right questions.”

Critical thinking is an intellectual freedom and a defense mechanism.

The psychological nature of critical thinking Critical thinking is not just “doubting”, but the art of constructing a hierarchy of evidence and drawing logical conclusions. In psychology, critical thinking is considered the highest stage of personal development. In this process, a person uses two different thinking systems (according to D. Kahneman’s theory):

1. Fast thinking: Intuitive, based on emotions. Advertising and propaganda in the information society attack this very system.
2. Slow thinking: Analytical, requiring attention. Critical thinking activates this very system.

The role of critical thinking in personal development is that it takes a person out of the “autopilot” state. When receiving information, a person asks himself “Who is this message useful to?”, “What facts are hidden?”, “What emotions (fear, anger, joy) does the author want to arouse in



me?” learns to ask questions like. Media literacy and critical thinking are the “life belts” needed to avoid drowning in the ocean of information. Today, the biggest problem is not the abundance of information, but its quality and accuracy.

Manipulation technologies and the fight against them

There are several dangerous types of manipulation in the information society, which are aimed at distorting the worldview of a person.

- “Fake news”: Completely or partially fabricated information. They serve to cause confusion in society or to distort the image of a person or system.
- “Post-truth”: In this case, emotions are more important than facts. Critical thinking allows a person to check the facts calmly, without getting carried away by emotions.
- “Exo-camera” and “Filter bubbles”: Social network algorithms show us only the information we like and that matches our views. This leads to one-sided development of the person. A mature person has to consciously study different views.

Digital hygiene and spiritual stability

An important component of personal development in the information society is digital hygiene. This concept is as important as physical health. Constantly being in front of a screen, scrolling through endless social media feeds (doomscrolling) distracts a person and weakens their ability to observe deeply.

Digital detox and personal development:

For personal growth, it is necessary to disconnect from the flow of information from time to time and communicate with the “inner world”. In this process, a person examines his values. Realizing that popularity or visual appeal in the virtual world is actually fleeting is a sign of spiritual growth. A person should not confuse his “self” with his “profile” on social networks.

Strategic tasks of education and society.

The formation of media literacy and critical thinking is not only the individual work of the individual, but also a strategic task of the state and society. The following reforms are necessary in the education system:

1. Integration of media education: Introduction of the culture of working with information as a separate subject or module in school and higher education programs.
2. Lifelong learning: Increasing digital literacy among the adult population, since the victims of manipulation are often representatives of the older generation.
3. Support for scientific research: Studying the impact of information on the human brain through research in the fields of information psychology and neurobiology.

In conclusion, personal development in the information society means not only mastering high technologies, but also having a high intellectual and spiritual culture. This is a continuous, complex and multifaceted process. Today, “power is not in knowledge”, but “power is in the ability to correctly sort and apply knowledge”. If media literacy opens the doors to the information world for us, then critical thinking acts as a “customs officer” who controls every piece of information entering through these doors.



Only a person with a high media culture and the ability to think independently can preserve his national and personal identity in the midst of globalization, fully demonstrate his creative potential and make a worthy contribution to the development of society. The greatest test that the information age poses to man is not to become a “digital slave”, but to become a “conscious creator of the digital world”.

Important note: In the information society, a person is not just a “consumer”, but a creator of useful knowledge and values - a sign of true maturity.

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