

**THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS FOR DEVELOPING DIGITAL CULTURE AND
MEDIA COMPETENCE IN PRIMARY EDUCATION**

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Abstract: This article analyzes the theoretical foundations of developing digital culture and media competence in the primary education system. In an era where modern technologies are increasingly integrated into the educational process, equipping students with skills to manage information, use digital tools wisely, think critically, and analyze media content has become a pressing issue. The article explores the concepts of digital culture and media competence, their characteristics relevant to primary school students, pedagogical approaches in this field, methodological recommendations, and international experiences.

Keywords: primary education, digital culture, media competence, digital literacy, media education, information security, critical thinking, pedagogical approaches.

*Education and upbringing are the foundation of society,
and the cornerstone of this foundation is the school.
The true strength of a school lies in its teachers.*

Shavkat Mirziyoyev

In the 21st century, digital technologies have permeated nearly every aspect of human life and activity. In particular, the digitalization processes occurring in the education sector demand the development of students' digital culture and media competence. Today, it is critically important to raise a new generation that is not only knowledgeable but also capable of using modern information technologies rationally and safely, thinking independently, and critically analyzing various types of content. The primary education stage is considered one of the most crucial periods for students' personal, social, and cognitive development. Therefore, it is necessary to cultivate digital and media literacy and foster a culture of working with information from the early stages of learning. This requires a deep understanding of the theoretical foundations of digital culture and media competence, and the identification of age-appropriate methodological approaches.

Extensive efforts are being undertaken in the field of education in Uzbekistan. Lessons are being organized based on advanced technologies and foreign pedagogical practices, enabling students to think independently, resolve problems, and draw conclusions. At the same time, developing media culture in primary school students is becoming an important pedagogical challenge in the context of globalization. As Marshall McLuhan stated: "To be truly literate, one must be literate in the world of media." The essence of media education lies in educating the younger generation through materials provided by mass media, which are becoming increasingly influential in their lives by offering a vast information environment.

This process involves organizing communication between students and other entities through media, utilizing media tools broadly, and transmitting large volumes of information. Students' ability to critically and creatively evaluate media content, interpret, analyze, and synthesize media texts, and use information and communication technologies consciously and rationally are indicators of a developed media culture. Developing a technology for enhancing media culture in primary school students in general education schools lays the groundwork for fostering immunity against information threats. This, in turn, underscores the necessity for developing media literacy, media knowledge, media skills, and media competence.

It is essential first to understand the concept of "media culture." What is meant by "media"? What is "culture"? What is "information"? Understanding the essence of media literacy will contribute, even in small ways, to developing students' media culture. The term "media" is derived from English and is not commonly used in the Uzbek language; instead, the term "mass media" is used, referring to the rapid, high-quality, and comprehensive dissemination of information to the public. The term "culture" comes from the Latin word *cultura*, referring to the achievements of society in production, social, and spiritual life. In some sources, this term was introduced into discourse by the Roman figure Marcus Porcius Cato. In cultural studies, media culture refers to the general and intellectual influence that mass media (primarily television, but also print, radio, and film) exert not only on public opinion but also on taste and values. Media culture is thus seen as a determinant of individual development. "Information" refers to detailed messages or data about a specific event. "Media education" is considered a modern type of education aimed at equipping individuals in the global information age with theoretical knowledge to select, filter, analyze, and critically assess information disseminated through the media. The main objectives of media education are to prepare the new generation for life in a modern information environment, to teach them to comprehend various types of information, understand its psychological impact, master influencing techniques, and engage in non-verbal communication using technical means. The term "media skills" can be defined as the ability to select, filter, analyze, and evaluate media content based on personal or professional interests, needs, and obligations using existing knowledge and skills. An individual's media culture is a necessary component of their overall culture and includes the ability to understand and analyze different types of media and the information they convey.

The development of media culture in primary school students depends on the targeted, consistent, and systematic organization of media education both within and outside educational institutions. However, media education must also be established at home. Parents themselves must act as media educators and possess the necessary knowledge, skills, and competencies to cultivate media literacy, knowledge, competence, skills, and culture in their children.

One of the most effective ways to foster media culture in primary school students is to integrate media education into the teaching system. Enhancing the effectiveness of media education and guiding primary students to "navigate correctly" in the information environment will contribute significantly to their development as mature individuals in the future.

In the Republic of Uzbekistan, various measures are being undertaken to develop media culture within the education sector. Notably, on February 7, 2017, President Shavkat Mirziyoyev issued a decree on the "*Action Strategy for Further Development of the Republic of Uzbekistan*," in which the need to enhance the continuous education system, improve the quality and accessibility of educational services, and promote the use of media products during lessons was emphasized. As part of this initiative, the creation of 10 mobile electronic resources and 100 multimedia educational products for new-generation textbooks was envisioned.

These electronic resources, developed by specialists, are intended to enrich students' knowledge. The multimedia products aligned with the curriculum serve as valuable tools: they support teachers in instruction, guide parents in helping their children, and provide students with the means to fully master the educational content. The use of multimedia elements—such as animations, graphics, slide films, and video materials—makes lessons more engaging and effective.

In the primary education system, new pedagogical and information technologies play a significant role in stimulating students' motivation to learn. Lessons organized based on information technologies must align with students' needs in terms of structure and delivery methods, as such approaches are psychologically more appropriate for children. Motivation is achieved by evoking

interest, desire, and willingness in students to learn, fostering a deeper connection between teachers and learners.

Scientific research highlights that information and communication technologies (ICTs) greatly influence the development of students' theoretical, creative, and reflective thinking. The visual representation of events and processes enhances students' memory retention and aids in the scientific comprehension of educational materials. On a global scale, the rapidly expanding flow of information necessitates the creation, adoption, and practical implementation of ICTs. This also highlights the increasing demand for electronic textbooks and pedagogical software across all stages of education.

The use of ICTs helps make lessons more dynamic and serves as a vivid visual aid that facilitates better understanding of the subject material. First-grade students, for instance, enjoy interacting with fairy tale characters, correcting their mistakes, helping them overcome challenges, and offering their own solutions. This not only enhances communication but also encourages children to express their thoughts and make reasoned decisions without fear.

The effective organization of pedagogical activities, the modern structuring of lessons, and the implementation of interactive methods contribute to an increase in students' academic performance. In primary education, integrating ICT into the learning process is essential for activating cognitive psychology mechanisms and supporting both academic achievement and intellectual development. Applying innovative and information technologies to the educational process is a logical and necessary step in response to the development of the modern information society.

Children must be able to remember and apply specific educational functions of ICT tools. It is important to recognize that information technologies should serve as supportive elements of the learning process. It is hard to imagine today's so-called "Information Age" without telecommunications. Modern smartphones, tablets, laptops, and computers—through internet access—serve as indispensable tools for acquiring essential knowledge and information instantly. In today's world, the internet enables young people to access information within minutes, making the learning process more convenient and time-efficient. However, there is also a concerning side to this issue. Alongside the benefits of the internet, there exist harmful and destructive ideas, information attacks, and toxic content that can negatively affect young users. Youth who possess independent thinking and intellectual potential can protect themselves from such threats. In this regard, the cultivation of spiritual values and national culture in young people is of critical importance.

Shaping the moral immunity of youth and fostering scientific and secular worldviews are urgent matters. Like any process, information and communication technologies have both positive and negative aspects. It must be acknowledged that in earlier times, when ICTs and the internet were less widespread, young people were more inclined toward reading, studying, and engaging in physical activities. Today, however, many youth gravitate toward internet cafes and gaming centers.

At this age, however, they should be focused on acquiring knowledge, learning professions, and building their future. Unfortunately, various internet content—ranging from inappropriate messages and images to harmful videos and video games—is negatively impacting the intellectual and moral development of young people, distorting their attitudes toward life, the environment, and other people.

Violent computer games, in particular, are poisoning young minds. These games often involve killing characters, destroying surroundings, and promoting destructive ideologies. What kind of individuals will these children grow up to be if they are immersed in such virtual experiences? These games tend to desensitize youth, make them more aggressive, and distance them from

kindness and empathy. Moreover, they negatively affect the nervous system, leading to increased irritability and impulsive behavior, often causing harm within their own families. Between the ages of 7 and 10, children's ability to distinguish right from wrong is especially active. Therefore, it is crucial to provide them with accurate and appropriate information during this formative period.

At this age, children are just beginning to develop the ability to comprehend information. As primary school students are only starting to learn how to read, they often struggle to fully grasp the content they encounter. Due to their natural curiosity and attraction to colorful animations and engaging games, children frequently seek out such types of content. Fortunately, the internet offers a wide range of useful, educational, and entertaining information that, when used correctly and effectively, can help students expand their knowledge across various fields.

In conclusion, the ideas presented above suggest that media culture among primary school students is fundamentally based on the culture of transmitting and receiving information—a key quality in an information-oriented society. This, in turn, reflects the overall level of personal development. Enhancing the media culture of curious young learners in accordance with the demands of the time is a shared responsibility of both educators and parents.

The use of computer technologies enables the organization of lessons that align with international educational standards, offering an alternative to traditional teaching methods. Incorporating various interactive methods during lessons fosters deeper understanding and the further development of acquired knowledge. I believe that teaching students to critically analyze media content, think independently, form their own opinions, and resist external influences plays a crucial role in nurturing well-rounded and resilient individuals.

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