

# SCHOOLS AND UNIVERSITIES IN AUDIOVISUAL MEDIA: EXPERTS' OPINIONS

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## ABSTRACT:

The objects of the research (as part of the project *School and University in the Mirror of Soviet, Russian and Western Audiovisual Media Texts*), are the opinions of international experts (media educators, researchers, media critics, media culture public figures) about the development of the school and university topic in the mirror of audiovisual media texts, about the transformation of basic concepts and stereotypical models of the school and university theme into media. The main hypothesis of the research is that the opinions of international experts will be based on the classification and comparative analysis of content models, genre modifications, stereotypes of media texts (feature films, documentaries, TV programmes, websites, etc.), related to the interpretation of the topic of school and university, and helped to confirm and refine the earlier theoretical model of audiovisual media texts on the subject of school and university. This model includes such structural components as the historical period of events in the media text; the environment; household items; methods of depicting reality; the traits of the main characters – teachers and students (their values, ideas, clothing, vocabulary, facial expressions, gestures, etc.); significant changes in the lives of characters; problems encountered and options on solving these problems.

## KEY WORDS:

audiovisual media text, cinema, experts, media, school topic, survey, university

## Introduction

In the framework of the project *School and University in the Mirror of Soviet, Russian and Western Audiovisual Media Texts*, I invited experts (media educators and researchers, media critics, media culture public figures) to participate in a survey aimed to clarify a number of issues concerning the topic.

A total of 27 experts from 11 countries (Australia, Bulgaria, Canada, Finland, India, Latvia, the Netherlands, Pakistan, Russia, Ukraine and USA) participated in the survey and here I would like to express my gratitude to these colleagues, since their expertise and professional experience enriched the research results significantly.

## Research Materials and Methods

The survey *Schools and Universities in the Mirror of Audiovisual Media* was administered via the Internet, especially e-mail and combined questions of closed and open type. The results of the analysis of 27 questionnaires filled by experts show that these experts answered the open-ended questions less enthusiastically compared to those that only required making a choice from the proposed options, which generally confirms the general trend



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of conducting opinion polls on any topic (respondents tend to save their time and, as a rule, are reluctant to give detailed answers; sometimes they do not even answer all the questions asked).

The objects of the research are opinions of international experts (media educators, researchers, media critics, media culture public figures) about the development of the topic of portraying schools and universities via audiovisual media texts, i.e. about the transformation of basic concepts and stereotypical models of the school and university theme in terms of media production.

As stated above, our main hypothesis was that the opinions of international experts would be based on the classification and comparative analysis of content models, genre modifications, stereotypes of media texts (feature films, documentaries, TV programmes, websites, etc.), related to the interpretation of the topic of school and university, and thus helped to confirm and refine the earlier theoretical model of audiovisual media texts focused on portraying school and university environments. This model includes the following structural components:

- the historical period of events portrayed in media texts;
- the environment;
- household items;
- methods of depicting reality;
- the traits of the main characters – teachers and students (their values, ideas, clothing, vocabulary, facial expressions, gestures, etc.);
- significant changes in the lives of the characters;
- the problems encountered and options on solving these problems.

Expert survey is a sociological survey in which respondents are experts, scholars, academics or other professional assume the role of respondents. These are competent persons with in-depth knowledge of the subject or object of research. The expert method differs from other forms of sociological survey on basis of several very important features:

- the number of respondents (always smaller than research samples used during any ordinary survey);
- the quality of respondents (their outlook, level of qualification, knowledge of a special field, in our case – media culture) is several orders of magnitude higher than that of ordinary respondents.

Even though the individual interests of the participating experts can be very subjective, this fact, as I believe, does not influence the scientific nature of the obtained results. The main purpose of the expert survey was to identify the most significant and important aspects of the given problem, to increase the reliability and validity of information, conclusions and practical recommendations through the use of knowledge and experience of experts.

In general, the main tool of expert opinion polls is a questionnaire form developed in accordance with a special programme. Application of the expert survey method requires complying with certain rules. In its organisation, a great deal of attention is usually paid to three methodological problems: the selection of experts, the procedure for their work, and the processing of opinions expressed.<sup>1</sup> In our case, the selection of experts was deliberate, based on their professional affiliation with the media sphere (all of them were either media educators and researchers or media critics and media culture public figures living and working in different countries). Based on the topic of my research, I developed a questionnaire form aimed at experts named *Schools and Universities in the Mirror of Audiovisual Media*, which posed the following key questions:

1. Which media portraying schools and universities are the most important in society? (the press, cinema, television, the Internet, others);
2. In your opinion, how accurate are media portrayals of the modern life of schools and universities? (highly accurate, generally accurate, partially accurate, completely false, other);
3. In your opinion, how true are the media images of modern schoolchildren and students? (absolutely true, generally true, partially true, completely false, other);

<sup>1</sup> DOBRENKOV, V. I., KRAVCHENKO, A. I.: *Metodologiya i metodika sotsiologicheskogo issledovaniya*. Moscow : Infra-M, 2008, p. 488–490.

4. How true, in your opinion, are the media images of modern teachers and university lecturers? (absolutely true, generally true, partially true, completely false, other);
5. What is a dominant media stereotype of a modern pupil? (individual expert opinions on the issue were recorded);
6. What is a dominant media stereotype of a modern university student? (individual expert opinions on the issue were recorded);
7. What is a dominant media stereotype of a modern teacher? (individual expert opinions on the issue were recorded);
8. Name some must-see movies about schools and/or universities (up to 3 titles). What kinds of values do they reflect? (individual expert opinions on the issue were recorded);
9. Can you think of a media text that challenges common stereotypes of school/teachers/students representation? (individual expert opinions on the issue were recorded);
10. What are the typical weaknesses/limitations of media texts about schools and/or universities? (individual expert opinions on the issue were recorded);
11. What is often missing in media texts about schools and/or universities? (individual expert opinions on the issue were recorded).

# Discussion and Results

In recent years, a quite large amount of research has been published on the ways media texts portray schools and universities.<sup>2</sup> T. Brown, for example, comes to conclusion that by the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, fairy tales about selfless teachers-magicians essentially lost their position. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, this idealised version of learning is less and less embodied in media images, as teachers began to appear not only as heroes and/or victims, but also as lazy, incompetent, deceitful, burned out, unwilling to adapt to new challenges (even substance addicts sometimes). In (late) modern media texts, teachers and university professors are increasingly under pressure from politicians, parents, cultural, religious and racial differences, funding cuts related to the background of acute social problems (unemployment, gender disparities, religious and racial conflicts, etc.).<sup>3</sup>

The image of students has been transformed similarly: until the 1960s in the Western countries and until the 1980s in the USSR, media texts used to represent them more positively, but then such features as laziness, ineptitude, cruelty, violence, careless entertainment (including forms of amusement associated with irresponsible behaviour in terms of one's sexuality and/or a compulsive, out-of-control drug use or alcohol consumption) began to dominate in their images.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>2</sup> See, for example: ARUS, L. Y.: *Priklucheniya beloy vorony: Evolutsiya "shkolnogo" filma v sovetskom kino*. Released on 2<sup>nd</sup> June 2010. [online]. [2019-02-01]. Available at: <<http://seance.ru/blog/whitecrow/>>; BEYERBACH, B.: Themes in Sixty Years of Teachers in Film: Fast Times, Dangerous Minds, Stand on Me. In *Educational Studies*, 2005, Vol. 37, No. 3, p. 267-285; BROWN, T.: Teachers on Film. In JUBAS, K., TABER, N., BROWN, T. (eds.): *Popular Culture as Pedagogy*. Boston : Sense Publishers, 2015, p. 49-66; BULMAN, R. C.: *Hollywood Goes to High School: Cinema, Schools, and American Culture*. New York : Worth Publishers, 2005; CONKLIN, J. E.: *Campus Life in the Movies: A Critical Survey from the Silent Era to the Present*. Jefferson : McFarland and Company, 2008; DALTON, M. M.: *The Hollywood Curriculum: Teachers in the Movies*. New York : Peter Lang Publishing, 2004; FEDOROV, A., LEVITSKAYA, A., GORBATKOVA, O., MIKHALEVA, G.: Professional Risk: Sex, Lies, and Violence in the Films about Teachers. In *European Journal of Contemporary Education*, 2018, Vol. 7, No. 2, p. 291-331; MARTÍNEZ-SALANOVA, E.: Educational Systems in the Heterodox History of European Cinema. In *Comunicar*, 2010, Vol. 18, No. 35, p. 53-59; MIKHAILIN, V. Y., BELYAEVA, G. A.: Pokolenie inoplanetian: O "novoy volne v "shkolnom" kino kotsa 1980-h godov. In *Neprikosnovenny zapas*, 2018, No. 3, p. 99-113; REYNOLDS, P. J.: Representing "U": Popular Culture, Media, and Higher Education. In *ASHE Higher Education Report*, 2014, Vol. 40, No. 4, p. 1-145; REYNOLDS, P. J.: The (A)Sexual Academic: University Faculty in the Movies from 1927-2014. In *SRHE Annual Research Conference. Conference Proceedings*. Celtic Manor, Newport : SRHE, 2015, p. 1-4. [online]. [2018-11-12]. Available at: <<https://www.srhe.ac.uk/conference2015/abstracts/0174.pdf>>; REYNOLDS, P. J.: The Celluloid Ceiling: Women Academics, Social Expectations, and Narrative in 1940s American Film. In *Gender and Education*, 2009, Vol. 21, No. 2, p. 209-224; RYAN, P. A.: *Image of the Teacher in the Postwar United States*. [Dissertation Thesis]. Florida : University of Florida, 2008; SOLDATKINA, Y. V.: Mediaobraz uchitelia v sovremennykh sredsakh massovoi informatsii: Osnovnye napravleniya i factory transformatsii. In *Voprosy teorii i praktiki jurnalistiki*, 2016, Vol. 5, No. 2, p. 261-277.

<sup>3</sup> See, for example: BROWN, T.: Teachers on Film. In JUBAS, K., TABER, N., BROWN, T. (eds.): *Popular Culture as Pedagogy*. Boston : Sense Publishers, 2015, p. 49-66.

<sup>4</sup> See: FEDOROV, A., LEVITSKAYA, A., GORBATKOVA, O., MIKHALEVA, G.: Professional Risk: Sex, Lies, and Violence

Of course, the content of media texts depends significantly on political regimes and the national and socio-cultural particularities of specific countries. Therefore, in the epoch of existence of the so-called socialist camp countries, communist ideology was often manifested in the media themes of schools and universities.<sup>5</sup> However, in the post-socialist years, the views of European researchers on the topic of school and university became significantly closer. In particular, the interested researchers noted a decline in the teachers' status in society and the changes of attitudes and behavioural patterns of teachers and students (they became more informal) in the media texts of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.<sup>6</sup>

A survey including 27 experts from around the world confirmed these trends. As one would expect (Table 1), the Internet came out on top (50.0%), almost twice ahead of its closest rivals – cinema and television. The press turned out to be an outsider (3.8%).

Table 1: The most important media to reflect the modern life of schools and universities

The most important medium to reflect the modern life of schools and universities is...	Number of respondents (%)
The Internet	50.0
Cinema	26.9
Television	19.2
The Press	3.8

Source: own processing

As we can see, the experts are generally convinced that the Internet is nowadays the most influential source of information from which the audience primarily gets knowledge of modern schools and universities. And it should be noted that in this they coincide with the opinions of the mass audience, where the influence of the Internet on all thematic fields is regarded as a priority today; people are increasingly watching films on the Internet, using, for example, mobile phones or tablets.<sup>7</sup>

The second question asked the experts to answer how adequately the media reflect the modern life of schools and universities. As a result (see Table 2), the overwhelming majority of experts (70.4%) believe that this topic is not always adequately reflected in media texts.

Table 2: The degree of adequacy with which, according to the participating experts, the media reflect the modern life of schools and universities

The ways media reflect modern school and university life are...	Number of respondents (%)
partially accurate	70.4
generally accurate	18.5
completely false	7.4
highly accurate	3.7

Source: own processing

in the Films about Teachers. In *European Journal of Contemporary Education*, 2018, Vol. 7, No. 2, p. 291-331.

<sup>5</sup> See: PARAMONOVA, K. K.: *Film dlja detei, ego specifika i vospitatelnie funkcii*. Moscow : VGIK, 1975, p. 21; RABINOVICH, Y. M.: *Kino, literature i vsia moja gžn*. Kurgan : Periodika, 1991, p. 86.

<sup>6</sup> See also: ARUS, L. Y.: *Priklucheniya beloy vorony: Evolutsiaja "shkolnogo" filma v sovetskom kino*. Released on 2<sup>nd</sup> June 2010. [online]. [2019-02-01]. Available at: <<http://seance.ru/blog/whitecrow/>>; BEYERBACH, B.: Themes in Sixty Years of Teachers in Film: Fast Times, Dangerous Minds, Stand on Me. In *Educational Studies*, 2005, Vol. 37, No. 3, p. 267-285; BROWN, T.: Teachers on Film. In JUBAS, K., TABER, N., BROWN, T. (eds.): *Popular Culture as Pedagogy*. Boston : Sense Publishers, 2015, p. 49-66; DALTON, M. M.: *The Hollywood Curriculum: Teachers in the Movies*. New York : Peter Lang Publishing, 2004; SHIPULINA, N. B.: Obraz uchitelja v sovetskom i sovremennom rossijskom kinematografe. In *Izvestia VGPU*, 2010, Vol. 52, No. 8, p. 4-16; MACHENIN, A.: Sobiratelny obraz skolnogo uchitelja v otrazhenii tele/kino/internet mediaprostranstva. In *Mediaobrazovanie*, 2016, Vol. 50, No. 3, p. 23-48.

<sup>7</sup> RODRIGUEZ, A.: *The Internet Is Finally Going to be Bigger than TV Worldwide*. Released on 12<sup>th</sup> June 2018. [online]. [2018-12-06]. Available at: <<https://qz.com/1303375/internet-usage-will-finally-surpass-tv-in-2019-zenith-predicts/>>.

These expert opinions are confirmed by many studies,<sup>8</sup> which state that the life related to the school and university environment is reflected in the media only with a partial degree of credibility, often focusing only on isolated (but sensational, scandalous) phenomena of the educational process (e.g. cases of school violence, sexual relations between teachers and students, etc.).

Next, I focused on the experts' opinions on the degree of fairness of the media portrayals of modern schoolchildren and students. As a result, in the first place (Table 3); fully correlating with the data in Table 2, it appears that the images of students in media texts are only partially true (63.0% of all recorded answers).

Table 3: The degree of truthfulness with which, according to the experts, the media depict the images of modern schoolchildren and students

How true are the media images of modern schoolchildren and students?	Number of respondents (%)
partially true	63.0
generally true	25.9
completely false	7.4
absolutely true	3.7

Source: own processing

It can also be noted here that the participating researchers mostly claim that partially adequate media coverage of the images of schoolchildren and students is related to the intrusive stereotyping of characters, which often makes them too unambiguous.<sup>9</sup>

The fourth question addressed to the experts aimed to find out how accurate or true the media images of modern teachers and university professors are. As previously with the media depictions of students, most experts (69.2%) consider that the images of teachers in media texts are only partially true (Table 4).

Table 4: How true are the media images of modern teachers and university lecturers?

How true are the media images of modern teachers and university lecturers?	Number of respondents (%)
partially true	69.2
generally true	19.2
completely false	7.7
absolutely true	3.8

Source: own processing

Here, other researches on the topic note a similar trend: educators' images are often devoid of depth and are reduced to one or two distinct positive or negative features.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Compare to: BAUER, D. M.: Indecent Proposals: Teachers in the Movies. In *College English*, 1998, Vol. 60, No. 3, p. 301-317; BULMAN, R. C.: *Hollywood Goes to High School: Cinema, Schools, and American Culture*. New York : Worth Publishers, 2005; DALTON, M. M.: *The Hollywood Curriculum: Teachers in the Movies*. New York : Peter Lang Publishing, 2004; MAYERLE, J., RARICK, D.: The Image of Education in Primetime Network Television Series 1948 – 1988. In *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, 1989, Vol. 33, No. 2, p. 139-157; REYNOLDS, P. J.: Representing "U": Popular Culture, Media, and Higher Education. In *ASHE Higher Education Report*, 2014, Vol. 40, No. 4, p. 1-145; TRIER, J. D.: The Cinematic Representation of the Personal and Professional Lives of Teachers. In *Teacher Education Quarterly*, 2001, Vol. 28, No. 3, p. 127-142.

<sup>9</sup> See: ATKINSON, A. et al.: *Young People, Alcohol and the Media*. York : Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 2011; BACHEN, C. M., ILLOUZ, E.: Imagining Romance: Young People's Cultural Models of Romance and Love. In *Critical Studies in Mass Communication*, 1996, Vol. 13, No. 4, p. 279-308; BLEAKLEY, A. et al.: It Works Both Ways: The Relationship between Exposure to Sexual Content in the Media and Adolescent Sexual Behavior. In *Media Psychology*, 2008, Vol. 11, No. 4, p. 443-461.

<sup>10</sup> Compare to: DALTON, M. M.: *The Hollywood Curriculum: Teachers in the Movies*. New York : Peter Lang Publishing, 2004; MAYERLE, J., RARICK, D.: The Image of Education in Primetime Network Television Series 1948 – 1988. In *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, 1989, Vol. 33, No. 2, p. 139-157; REYNOLDS, P. J.: Representing "U": Popular Culture, Media, and Higher Education. In *ASHE Higher Education Report*, 2014, Vol. 40, No. 4, p. 1-145.

The fifth question clarifies which stereotypes bound to schoolchildren's media images dominate the media. As a result (within a wide range of opinions), the experts identified the following stereotypes of schoolchildren's media image.

#### Negative stereotypes of schoolchildren's media images are:

- a playful slacker trying to avoid study and work;
- an absent-minded individual;
- pupils who are very dissolute and use drugs;
- self-centred young people, dependent on social media and devices; school is an undesired interruption in their social life and personal pursuits;
- a servant to new technologies who lacks interpersonal contact and communication skills;

#### Positive stereotypes of schoolchildren's media images are:

- good kids who dream of a happy and successful future;
- 'nerds' or digital natives who eventually become group leaders;
- schoolchildren from families of middle or low income, often from vulnerable social groups, who, despite a number of challenges they face, and with the help of good teachers, develop their social and communication skills.

Comparing these findings with outcomes of other research inquiries,<sup>11</sup> I found out that both the experts who responded to the questionnaire and other researchers specialising in schools and pupils' media image believe that media stereotypes of schoolchildren as positive characters can be divided into the following main groups: positive leaders, 'botanists' ('blue stockings') and 'average' pupils. As for the stereotypes of schoolchildren as negative characters, they are represented in the media texts by the following groups: offenders and criminals, weak-minded or mentally inferior young people and 'majors' (the rich 'golden youth').

In general, the analysis of stereotypes set by schoolchildren's images in media texts on the topic of school or university education showed that, despite the presence of various national, socio-cultural and ideological characteristics, the stereotypes of these images possess more similarities than differences.<sup>12</sup>

The sixth question concerned the dominant stereotypes of media images of modern university students. The range of the expert answers included both negative and positive stereotypes.

#### Negative stereotypes of university students' media images include:

- a "party animal";
- a student involved with a lot of sexual partners;
- a 'social butterfly' looking for easy courses and marks;
- a nerd with no social skills;
- a thin and beautiful student who succeeds, but not always by using the most ethical strategies;
- an inexperienced person without strong work ethics;

11 Compare to: ATKINSON, A. et al.: *Young People, Alcohol and the Media*. York : Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 2011; BACHEN, C. M., ILLOUZ, E.: *Imagining Romance: Young People's Cultural Models of Romance and Love*. In *Critical Studies in Mass Communication*, 1996, Vol. 13, No. 4, p. 279-308; BLEAKLEY, A. et al.: *It Works Both Ways: The Relationship between Exposure to Sexual Content in the Media and Adolescent Sexual Behavior*. In *Media Psychology*, 2008, Vol. 11, No. 4, p. 443-461.

12 See: BULMAN, R. C.: *Hollywood Goes to High School: Cinema, Schools, and American Culture*. New York : Worth Publishers, 2005; DALTON, M. M.: *The Hollywood Curriculum: Teachers in the Movies*. New York : Peter Lang Publishing, 2004; MAYERLE, J., RARICK, D.: The Image of Education in Primetime Network Television Series 1948 – 1988. In *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, 1989, Vol. 33, No. 2, p. 139-157; REYNOLDS, P. J.: Representing "U": Popular Culture, Media, and Higher Education. In *ASHE Higher Education Report*, 2014, Vol. 40, No. 4, p. 1-145.

- dangerously inept young people;
- drinking, disorganised, irresponsible, frivolous students living on their parents' dime.

#### Positive media stereotypes of university students include:

- a 'happy ticket holder' who seeks to get an exemplary education and make a successful career;
- a university student who is career-oriented and ready to fight against the imperfect system of higher education and defend their rights;
- a servant to new digital technologies and social media,
- a nerd who becomes cool or attractive;
- a serious, head-down studious type.

One expert fairly notes that such stereotypical representation gives "little reference to most students having to juggle employment with study or issues in finding working after graduation". As can be seen from the experts' answers, they believe that the images of pupils and students have more similarities than differences, although, of course, the media texts on students touch upon the topics of sex, drugs and professional career orientation to a much greater extent, which is quite understandable given the fact that these students are teenagers or young adults.

The seventh question concerns the dominant media stereotypes of modern teachers. Here, the experts propose the following list of stereotypes.

#### Teachers' negative media stereotypes:

- always tired, exhausted people (besides, lacking digital competence) – victims of professional burnout;
- representatives of 'the old school', focused on knowledge on their subject, disliking the new generation of adolescents, not trying to understand their interests and demands;
- clowns and lazy people who are indifferent to their profession and who do not have any deeper knowledge of the subject(s) they teach;
- evil, aggressive and authoritarian students' enemies.

#### Positive stereotypes of media images of teachers include:

- honest, smart professionals who maintain good relationship with their students; they cooperate with parents, they are supportive and inspiring;
- a modern, open-minded teacher who is dynamic, IT literate, focused on developing students' critical thinking; this teacher is genuinely devoted to their profession;

These opinions of the experts are confirmed by several researches conducted in recent decades, which assert that the media image of a school teacher and university professor is generally reduced to the following stereotypical typology:

- a negative image of the educator as a bureaucrat-administrator;<sup>13</sup>
- a negative image of the educator as a loser/jester, an outsider, burdened with their work;<sup>14</sup>

13 See also: RYAN, P. A.: *Image of the Teacher in the Postwar United States*. [Dissertation Thesis]. Florida : University of Florida, 2008; TRIER, J. D.: The Cinematic Representation of the Personal and Professional Lives of Teachers. In *Teacher Education Quarterly*, 2001, Vol. 28, No. 3, p. 127-142.

14 See: BULMAN, R. C.: *Hollywood Goes to High School: Cinema, Schools, and American Culture*. New York : Worth Publishers, 2005; RYAN, P. A.: *Image of the Teacher in the Postwar United States*. [Dissertation Thesis]. Florida : University of Florida, 2008; TRIER, J. D.: The Cinematic Representation of the Personal and Professional Lives of Teachers. In *Teacher Education Quarterly*, 2001, Vol. 28, No. 3, p. 127-142.

- a negative image of a teacher hating students (sometimes even a killer robot or alien creature);<sup>15</sup>
- a positive image of the educator as a (super)hero (often a male character who has recently arrived at school) who re-educates an aggressive and disobedient class.<sup>16</sup>

At the same time, the image of the educator has undergone a significant transformation in time: media (self)censorship, which existed almost until the early 1960s, prevented the authors of media texts from addressing the radical aspects of violence and sex, obscene language or racial and religious problems in the school and university environment. However, after the abolition of the Hayes Code, the onset of the so-called sexual revolution of the 1970s, the media began to consistently exploit previously tabooed topics, creating shocking new plot turns year after year. On the other hand, in some media texts there is still a tendency for serious reflection on the pedagogical mission and real professional challenges associated with it.

The eighth question was aimed at finding out the experts' opinions on the most significant films about schools and/or universities (and values that they reflect). The participating experts offered here an extensive list of titles, including, for example, famous films such as *Dangerous Minds* (1995), *The Emperor's Club* (2002), *The Breakfast Club* (1985), *Dead Poets Society* (1989), *Entre les murs* (2008), *We Will Live until Monday* (1968), *Scarecrow* (1983), etc. Furthermore, the experts noted that these and other similar media texts articulate such affirmative values as individual, public, social, political and economic value of high-quality and accessible education for every citizen of any background. They also reflect on values of self-confidence, friendship and kindness.

The ninth question clarifies which media texts challenge the common stereotypes related to schools/teachers/students and their representations. Here, the films *Elephant* (2003) and *The Geographer Drank His Globe Away* (2013) were mentioned most often, although the range of opinions was wide. As we can see, the eighth and ninth questions presuppose a high degree of subjectivity in the experts' answers; however, the list of the most important films as a whole included audiovisual works of high professional quality, marked by the attention of the mass audience, media critics and film festivals.

The tenth question relates to typical weaknesses/limitations of the media texts about schools and/or universities. Experts pointed out the following ones:

- one-sided and stereotypical characters, deprived of psychological depth;
- large amount of media texts containing scenes of violence and cruelty;
- commercially explainable simplicity of the used narration (a killer at university campus, wild student parties, etc.);
- lack of the linkage between school and society (school is shown as an autonomous community).

These expert responses are fully supported by recent research on media images of schools and universities, which shows similar weaknesses and shortcomings.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>15</sup> Compare to: RYAN, P. A.: *Image of the Teacher in the Postwar United States*. [Dissertation Thesis]. Florida : University of Florida, 2008; TRIER, J. D.: The Cinematic Representation of the Personal and Professional Lives of Teachers. In *Teacher Education Quarterly*, 2001, Vol. 28, No. 3, p. 127-142.

<sup>16</sup> See also: BEYERBACH, B.: Themes in Sixty Years of Teachers in Film: Fast Times, Dangerous Minds, Stand on Me. In *Educational Studies*, 2005, Vol. 37, No. 3, p. 267-285; DALTON, M. M.: *The Hollywood Curriculum: Teachers in the Movies*. New York : Peter Lang Publishing, 2004; RYAN, P. A.: *Image of the Teacher in the Postwar United States*. [Dissertation Thesis]. Florida : University of Florida, 2008; TRIER, J. D.: The Cinematic Representation of the Personal and Professional Lives of Teachers. In *Teacher Education Quarterly*, 2001, Vol. 28, No. 3, p. 127-142.

<sup>17</sup> For example: BAUER, D. M.: Indecent Proposals: Teachers in the Movies. In *College English*, 1998, Vol. 60, No. 3, p. 301-317; BULMAN, R. C.: *Hollywood Goes to High School: Cinema, Schools, and American Culture*. New York : Worth Publishers, 2005; DALTON, M. M.: *The Hollywood Curriculum: Teachers in the Movies*. New York : Peter Lang Publishing, 2004; MAYERLE, J., RARICK, D.: The Image of Education in Primetime Network Television Series 1948 – 1988. In *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, 1989, Vol. 33, No. 2, p. 139-157; REYNOLDS, P. J.: Representing “U”: Popular Culture, Media, and Higher Education. In *ASHE Higher Education Report*, 2014, Vol. 40, No. 4, p. 1-145; TRIER, J. D.: The Cinematic Representation of the Personal and Professional Lives of

The final question included in the questionnaire inquired into what is often missing in media texts depicting schools and/or universities. The experts underline the notable lack of profound, artistic media texts about:

- the real educational process (with meaningful discussions during classes), the positive development of students and their competence;
- schools for students with special educational needs;
- talented teachers and administrators;
- the problems real teachers have to face (professional burnout, administrative pressure, etc.);
- the issues of racism, harassment, etc.

The opinions expressed by the experts generally coincide with the conclusions reached by researchers in recent years.<sup>18</sup> Given the previous analysis of the survey's results and other researches on the topic of media images of schools and universities, I was able to create a theoretical model of stereotyped portrayals of schools and universities in the media sphere. This model includes such structural components as the historical period of the events depicted in these media texts; the presented environment; included household items; the methods of depicting reality; the traits of the main characters – teachers and students (their values, ideas, etc.); significant changes in the lives of the characters; the problems encountered and options for solving these problems.

## Theoretical Model of Stereotypes Related to School and University Images in the Media Sphere

**The historical period of the events depicted in such media texts:** any, but mainly the period when the given media text was created.

**The country of action, the environment, household items:** as a rule, the action takes place in the country where the media text is created; the environment includes items (of different quality) such as school classes, university classrooms, corridors, homes of students and teachers.

**Depicting reality:** generally speaking, these media texts are rather realistic, without grotesque (in cases of TV programmes, dramas, melodramas, detective stories and thrillers). However, some of them may be grotesque (comedies, the genres of fiction, especially horror).

**Positive characters, their values, ideas, etc.:** teachers and students with humanistic values, carefully dressed, with a pleasant appearance, artistry of facial expressions and gestures, possessing rich vocabulary.

**Negative characters, their values, ideas, etc.:** teachers and students with inhumane tendencies; their clothing, appearance and vocabulary vary, although coarse vocabulary prevails (especially amongst students).

Teachers. In *Teacher Education Quarterly*, 2001, Vol. 28, No. 3, p. 127-142.

<sup>18</sup> See: BEYERBACH, B.: Themes in Sixty Years of Teachers in Film: Fast Times, Dangerous Minds, Stand on Me. In *Educational Studies*, 2005, Vol. 37, No. 3, p. 267-285; BROWN, T.: Teachers on Film. In JUBAS, K., TABER, N., BROWN, T. (eds.): *Popular Culture as Pedagogy*. Boston : Sense Publishers, 2015, p. 49-66; BULMAN, R. C.: *Hollywood Goes to High School: Cinema, Schools, and American Culture*. New York : Worth Publishers, 2005; CONKLIN, J. E.: *Campus Life in the Movies: A Critical Survey from the Silent Era to the Present*. Jefferson : McFarland and Company, 2008; DALTON, M. M.: *The Hollywood Curriculum: Teachers in the Movies*. New York : Peter Lang Publishing, 2004; FEDOROV, A., LEVITSKAYA, A., GORBATKOVA, O., MIKHALEVA, G.: Professional Risk: Sex, Lies, and Violence in the Films about Teachers. In *European Journal of Contemporary Education*, 2018, Vol. 7, No. 2, p. 291-331; MARTÍNEZ-SALANOVA, E.: Educational Systems in the Heterodox History of European Cinema. In *Comunicar*, 2010, Vol. 18, No. 35, p. 53-59; REYNOLDS, P. J.: Representing “U”: Popular Culture, Media, and Higher Education. In *ASHE Higher Education Report*, 2014, Vol. 40, No. 4, p. 1-145; REYNOLDS, P. J.: The Celluloid Ceiling: Women Academics, Social Expectations, and Narrative in 1940s American Film. In *Gender and Education*, 2009, Vol. 21, No. 2, p. 209-224; RYAN, P. A.: *Image of the Teacher in the Postwar United States*. [Dissertation Thesis]. Florida : University of Florida, 2008.

### Significant changes in the life of the characters include the situations, when:

1. an unexpected event occurs in the familiar learning environment (authoritarian domination, extraordinary behaviour, act of violence, aggression, deception, suicide, blackmail, sexual harassment, etc.);
2. a new teacher/student comes to a school/university and encounters unconventionality, confrontation (including physical confrontation) on the part of the class/group of students, parents of students, other teachers; lies, blackmail, aggression, authoritarian domination may occur;
3. a teacher has an affair with their pupil(s)/student(s); inappropriate love relations are established with the pupil(s);
4. a problem has arisen: the reputation, health (and sometimes life) of an educator/student is threatened; a pupil/student becomes an outcast in the classroom/group, falls into a situation of alienation; characters are uncomfortable with certain features of lovemaking.

### Searching for a solution to a problem may take the following courses of action:

- a struggle of a teacher/student (often assisted by their colleagues and friends) with the unconventionality of behaviour; confrontation (including physical) originating from the side of the students, class/group of students, parents of students, other teachers; fighting against lies, blackmail, aggression, authoritarian domination;
- an attempt of a teacher/student to establish good relations with other people participating in the educational process and parents;
- an attempt made by an educator/student to hide their romantic feelings from outsiders (in the case of a school), or an attempt to adapt to each other (in the case of a university).

### Found solutions to the problems:

- educators/students (often with the help of their colleagues and friends) benefit from their struggle (including physical struggles) with negative attitudes of students, class/group of students, parents of students, other teachers (in relatively rare cases positively depicted educators/students lose in this struggle);
- educators/students (often with the help of their colleagues and friends) expose lies, blackmail, harassment of a student, class/group of students, parents, other educators;
- educators/students are finally able to build good relationships with other stakeholders and parents, contributing to improved learning outcomes;
- a teacher/student's love relationship is usually broken; however, in some cases a teacher/student's love relationship can become harmonious, as well as a love relationship established between two students.<sup>19</sup>

## Conclusions

The analysis of the responses of 27 experts from 11 countries (Australia, Bulgaria, Canada, Finland, India, Latvia, Netherlands, Pakistan, Russia, Ukraine, and USA) attests that the majority of them believe that:

- today, the Internet is the most significant platform to reflect the topic of school and university environment, as it has long ago absorbed not only the traditional print texts, but also films, TV shows and sound recordings, and is now truly synthetic media with a growing (especially young) audience;

- the fairness of representation of schools and universities, schoolchildren, students and teachers in such media texts can only be considered as partial, mainly due to excessive stereotyping and simplification of their images.

As far as the main shortcomings of media texts about schools and universities are concerned, the experts note one-sided and stereotyped characters, deprived of psychological depth. The marginalising narrative of these stories is caused by commercial imperatives (resulting in themes such brutal violence and murders at schools/universities, wild parties and sex adventures of students, etc.). The connection between a depicted school and the society is quite weak. The recorded expert opinions also express belief that media culture should pay more attention to the real details of the educational process (including the everyday problems that teachers face) and the positive development of students' personalities and their competence.

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