Soviet Cineclubs: Baranov's Film/Media Education Model

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Abstract

In this paper we analyze a historical form of media literacy education that is still insufficiently discussed in English-language literature: Russian cineclubs. We focus on one particular cineclub that was created by a Soviet educator Oleg Baranov in the 1950s. We describe this cineclub's context and structure, and discuss its popularity among students. The content of Baranov's classes might have been shaped by ideological requirements of the time. However, we believe that the structure of his model can be used as an inspiration for a media literacy club in today's schools globally, and not only in Russia.

Keywords: *film, education, critical thinking, ideology, film clubs, Russia, Soviet, history*

According to the definition of the National Association for Media Literacy Education, "[t]he purpose of media literacy education is to help individuals of all ages develop the habits of inquiry and skills of expression that they need to be critical thinkers, effective communicators and active citizens in today's world" (Core Principle of MLE, n.d.). Many European countries, as well as Russia, use the definition of media literacy education formulated by UNESCO which states that "[i]nformation and media literacy enables people to interpret and make informed judgments as users of information and media, as well as to become skillful creators and producers of information and media messages in their own right" (Media and Information Literacy, n.d.). What these and many other definitions of media literacy education share is the focus on teaching audiences to critically engage with media messages (e.g. Fedorov, 2012; Buckingham, 2003; Hobbs, 1998; Masterman, 1985; Potter, 2004). Thus, it should not come as a surprise that many activities in media literacy classes involve interactions with media texts. Students discuss films, TV programs, commercials, music videos, magazines, and websites while the teacher provides examples and questions (Hobbs, 2011). Sometimes young people also create media texts to express their voices using the power of the media (Goodman, 2003).

We argue that the emergence of media literacy education can be traced back to the days when educators started to encourage their students to critically analyze media texts, which happened when popular media began to play increasingly important role in people's lives. The goal of these educators was often to protect audiences from negative effects of entertainment culture, which seemed to sway the masses in the beginning of the twentieth century (Ortega-y- Gasset, 1985 [1930]). For example, the U.S. film education movement in the 1930s "consisted of a series of efforts to regulate the conditions and effects of film viewing" (Jacobs, 1990, p. 29). The goal of these efforts was not to develop critical thinking skills in the way media literacy educators understand them today (Hobbs, 2011), but to protect people from the dangerous influence of entertainment media (Leavis & Thompson, 1977 [1933]; Macdonald, 1962).

Exploring the history of the field, it is important to pay attention to these first initiatives, however different they might seem from media education today (Hobbs & Jensen, 2009). In this paper, we describe a historical form of media literacy education that is still insufficiently explored in English-language literature: Soviet cineclubs.

Educational cineclubs in U.S.S.R. had much in common with the film education courses described by Jacobs (1990). In both cases, one of the main goals was to teach the appreciation of "better" films and to influence audiences' tastes (Baranov, 1968). Cineclubs were recreational and/or educational clubs where participants gathered to watch and discuss films. They were not an exclusively Russian phenomenon. The first cineclubs (ciné-clubs) appeared in France in the beginning of the twentieth century, soon after the cinema was invented. A variety of educated people who loved cinema gathered in these clubs to watch and discuss experimental films of the French avant-garde, which were unavailable in ordinary cinema theaters (Hoare, n.d.; Martineau, 1988; Pinel, 1964). Soon, similar clubs appeared in other European countries, such as Great Britain and Belgium (Geens, 2000).

In the U.S.S.R., cineclubs emerged in the 1920s. Soviet cinema theaters of the time mostly showed entertainment movies, many of them imported from European countries. The U.S. Soviet cineclubs initially offered spaces where people could watch films that were difficult or impossible to find; in this sense, they were similar to European ciné-clubs. Later, the number of their purposes expanded. They began to be used for political propaganda, entertainment, research, and education – to improve popular tastes in films (Penzin, 1987). As media literacy scholars, we are primarily interested in the educational application.

In this paper, we focus on one educational cineclub that was created in the end of the 1950s by Oleg Baranov in a school of Tver/Kalinin, a Russian town located between Moscow and St. Petersburg. We chose this cineclub because of the role that Baranov has played in Soviet/Russian film (later media) education (Penzin, 1987). When he started this cineclub, Baranov was a physics teacher with a passion for developing young people's aesthetic taste and moral values through cinema. Soon he became known as one the first film educators in the U.S.S.R., and the author of a successful film education model. Baranov's model (also known as the Kalinin/Tver model) was based on the spiral approach (Harden, 1999) – reiterative teaching with levels of difficulty increasing from elementary to middle to high school. Activities in this cineclub included not only viewing and discussing films, but also a variety of games, trips to film studios, correspondence with actors and film directors, media production (short films, wall newspaper), maintenance of a cinema museum, and peer-to-peer teaching (Baranov, 2008b). This model inspired Baranov's colleagues (Monastirsky, 1995; Penzin, 1987) and helped this pedagogue to maintain the popularity of his cineclub among students for almost two decades. Baranov has authored numerous books and articles where he describes his educational practices and the success of his cineclub (e.g., 1967, 1973, 1979, 2008a, 2008b).

On the following pages, we offer a detailed description of Baranov's model and explain its relevance for media literacy education today. Baranov's focus on cultivating in his students an understanding of the difference between high cinema art and mindless entertainment (Baranov & Penzin, 2014) might be not be considered media literacy education by some scholar who emphasize inquiry-based approach and independent thinking (Hobbs, 1998). We admit that the content of Baranov's classes might have been rooted in and shaped by ideological requirements of the time. However, we believe that the structure of his model can be used as an inspiration for a media literacy club in today's schools globally, and not only in Russia.

At the time when Baranov created his cineclub, films were one of the most popular kinds of media texts. Today, this is not the case. To be relevant, a modern media literacy club would need to include not only films, but also TV programs, video games, Internet websites, advertising, social networks, and other types of media. Such a club, engaging students on all stages of a school program, attracting them with exciting activities and thrilling opportunities, could offer an alternative to stand-alone media education courses (which largely remain an ideal in the rigidly-structured U.S. school system), integrated media literacy education (see Hobbs, 2007; Masterman, 1985), and short-term (often extracurricular) initiatives (e.g., Friesem, 2014; Irving, Dupen, & Berel, 1998; Scharrer, 2006).

Terms and Sources

Before moving any further, it is necessary to briefly discuss several key terms we use on the following pages. Although in this paper we talk about media literacy education, Russian scholars usually use the term

mediaobrazovanie, which is literally translated as media education. In the period from the 1950s to the 1980s, when Baranov's cineclub existed, Russian academic and education literature did not mention media education in their writings. Rather, Soviet scholars and practitioners of the time usually talked about film education (*kinoobrazovanie*), defined as education about and through the cinema. The term film education in Soviet literature was first used by Oleg Baranov, whose cineclub is in the focus of this paper (Baranov, 1967).

As far as we know, Soviet educators had little access to academic works outside of their country. Therefore, we believe that the term film education did not appear because of the Western influence. In his works, Baranov does not talk about film education efforts outside of the U.S.S.R. and it is likely that he was not aware of them. We assume that educators within and outside of the U.S.S.R. developed the idea to teach film appreciation independently from each other. As for media education, this term eventually came to the U.S.S.R. in the 1980s, when more academic literature from outside of the Soviet Union started to penetrate the Iron Curtain (Sharikov, 1990).

Many Soviet cineclub theorists initially defined themselves as film educators and their field as film education. Since the 1980s, they started to use terms media education and film education interchangeably (Baranov, 2008). As the shift in terminology occurred when cineclubs already existed, we use the term film/media education in order to reflect this change.

For this study we reviewed a number of Russian-language sources on cineclubs and film/media education in the U.S.S.R. We used works of several key film/media educators, such as Penzin (1987), Rabinovich (1969), Monastirsky (1995), and Levshina (1978). Penzin (1987) has been a prominent Russian film/media educator for over three decades. He was one of the first Soviet educators who systematized the theory of film education and cineclubs in the U.S.S.R. Rabinovich (1969) has worked in the area of film education since the 1950s, and later became one of the leading authorities of media education in the U.S.S.R. Monastirsky (1995) has studied cineclubs since the 1970s, and created his own cineclub in Tambov. Levshina (1978) is a renowned cinema critique and educator. All these authors have worked in the field of film/media education alongside Baranov, the author of the model we discuss on the following pages. They witnessed the popularity of his cineclub and described it in their works. Some of them even collaborated with Baranov. Penzin and Baranov still co-author works on theory and practice of film/media education (Baranov & Penzin, 2014).

Last but not least, in our analysis we used several works by Baranov himself (e.g., 1967, 1973, 1979, 2008a, 2008b). Over the five decades of working in film/media education, Baranov wrote an impressive amount of articles and books on the role of the cinema in aesthetic and moral education of youth. For this study, we were particularly interested in Baranov's works where he described the history and structure of his famous cineclub.

Historical Context and Structure of Soviet Cineclubs

The first cineclubs appeared in Russia in the 1920s. As soon as in 1925, the Soviet government recognized the value of cineclubs for the propaganda of communism and created the Society for Friends of the Soviet Cinema (SFSC), whose board of directors included such prominent Soviet cinematographers of the time as Sergei Eisenstein. SFSC started to use cineclubs for introducing ideology-laden films to Soviet audiences (Maltsev, 1925).

While in French ciné-clubs of the time audiences could see surreal films of Buñuel, Clair, Vigo, and other famous cinematographers, in Soviet cineclubs people often discussed works of Eisenstein (*Battleship Potemkin*), Kuleshov (*The Extraordinary Adventures of Mr. West in the Land of the Bolsheviks*), Dovzhenko (*Earth*) and Pudovkin (*Mother*). All these films combined cinematic innovation with explicit ideological propaganda. For example, *Battleship Potemkin* tells the story of the mutiny that occurred on the Russian battleship of the same name in 1905. The crewmembers of the ship are portrayed as noble heroes who rebel

against the Tsarist regime represented by cruel officers. The film *Mother* encourages the viewer to sympathize with the plight of a woman who is trying to help her son to fight against the unfair and ruthless Tsarist regime. Cineclubs served for promotion of these and other ideological films, which were usually less popular among the public than entertaining cinema hits of the time (Ilyichev & Nashekin, 1986).

SFSC made sure that most Soviet cineclubs of the 1920s and the beginning of the 1930s watched films approved by the government. Although during this period discussing political aspects of screened films was not explicitly prohibited, cineclub-goers understood very well that not all opinions could be openly expressed (Monastirsky, 1995). As Stalin started gaining power in the end of the 1920s, the situation got worse. Expressing dissident opinions could lead to arrest, a concentration camp, or even execution. In 1934 Stalin closed the Society for Friends of the Soviet Cinema. One can assume that discussions about the communist ideology in cineclubs led to more reflection than the government could tolerate (Zalessky, 2009).

From 1935 to the mid-1950s cineclubs virtually did not exist in Russia (Stalin died in 1953). The cineclub movement started to re-emerge only during Khrushchev's thaw – a period from the mid-1950s to the early 1960s when political repression and censorship were partially reversed and the communist regime softened. New cineclubs were in many ways similar to the pre-Stalin ones. The government was still pushing cineclub organizers to use films for communist propaganda. At the same time, the focus on aesthetic qualities remained prominent (Monastirsky, 1995). Combining these two functions, cineclubs were increasingly seen as a place of aesthetic and moral education for Soviet youth.

The sociocultural situation in Russia from the end of 1950s until the middle of the 1980s contributed to the popularity of cineclubs, especially among young people. During this period, there was no organization like SFSC that would directly control cineclubs; thus, cineclub organizers could combine ideological films with popular and art house movies. Films were still seldom shown on TV, and the number of television channels was limited (Vladimirova, 2011). Despite the effects of Khrushchev's thaw, censorship persisted, in particular in relation to the information about the "West." Audiences also felt the lack of access to films of some cult directors whose work the government did not favor (e.g., Tarkovsky and Parajanov). The screen of some cineclubs offered to Soviet cinema lovers an access to this censored and desired material.

During Khrushchev's thaw, cineclubs appeared in so-called palaces of culture (establishments for recreational activities such as cinema watching, singing, dancing, and theater), as well as in many cinema theaters, schools, and colleges. The target audience of U.S.S.R. cineclubs of the 1950s-1980s was primarily youth, especially students (Monastirsky, 1995). Films for cineclubs – including Soviet and "Western" movies – were selected according to their perceived artistic value, although ideological requirements of the time also had to be taken into consideration. Cineclub organizers had a variety of goals: to provide a venue for recreation, to promote ideological films, to give access to films that were seldom screened in commercial cinema theaters, and/or to educate people by developing their tastes (Ilyichev & Nashekin, 1986).

Two main activities in post-thaw cineclubs were, predictably enough, watching films and discussing them. Typically, before the screening, the head of the cineclub or one of its participants made a short introduction to tell the audience about the time the film was created, its scriptwriter, director, photographer, composer, and actors. Following the introduction, participants watched the film and discussed it for 30-40 minutes (Penzin, 1987).

In the case of educational cineclubs – at school and colleges they were often called cinema electives (Baranov, 1977) – activities included studying the history of the cinema, cinematic language, and biographies of distinguished cinema personalities. Sometimes participants also practiced media production (Baranov & Penzin, 2014). Cineclubs in cinema theaters and palaces of culture charged a fee for every session. The price was only a bit higher than that of a ticket for ordinary cinema screenings (Levshina, 1978). Cineclubs in educations settings were usually free for students.

Baranov and His Film/Media Education Model

Oleg Baranov was born in 1934. He graduated from Kalinin Pedagogical University in 1957, the same year that he started working in the Internat-school #1 (the equivalent of a foster home) as a physics teacher and founded his soon to be famous cineclub. In 1965, Baranov started combining teaching at the Kalinin State University with his work at school. In 1967, the pedagogue described the history of his cineclub and the theory behind it in his first book (Baranov, 1967). In 1968, he finished graduate studies at the All-Union State Institute of Cinematography. He was one of the first Soviet scholars to defend a dissertation in film education (Baranov, 1968). In 1971, Internat-school #1 was closed, and Baranov moved his cineclub experiments to several other schools in Kalinin. After his last school cineclub was closed in 1984, the by then renowned scholar focused on teaching in the Kalinin (Tver after 1990) State University. While there, he served for many years as chair of the Pedagogy Department. During his pedagogical career, Baranov made more than forty presentations at academic conferences and published more than eighty scholarly works. His model of film/media education (the Kalinin/Tver model) has been famous among Russian film and media educators for several decades.

The first cineclub, which Baranov started in 1957, shared a number of characteristics with similar educational cineclubs of the time. It aimed to develop students' aesthetic taste and moral values by focusing their attention on what Baranov deemed to be the best examples of cinema art. The cineclub also emphasized the importance of growing young people's knowledge base about the cinema by helping them memorize facts about films, actors, and directors using a variety of activities. Bearing in mind these similarities, here we would like to focus on characteristics that made Baranov's cineclub unique.

Baranov's model, which he started to develop through trial and error as soon as he opened his first cineclub, was characterized by several features. In his cineclub, Baranov used a spiral approach to teaching, which emphasized students' independent work, peer-to-peer learning and the combination of various activities: memory games, media production (short videos and wall newspaper), trips to famous cinema studios, communication with prominent cinema personalities (in person and through letters), staging scenes from popular films, and maintaining a cinema museum. We describe this structure and some of the activities in more detail below.

The cineclub existed in the Internat-school #1 until 1971, when Baranov moved his film education project (including the museum) to several other schools in Kalinin. This second stage of Baranov's cineclub lasted from 1972 to 1984. Starting from the middle of the 1980s, cineclubs began to lose their popularity. Television was offering more and more channels, cinemas expanded their repertoire, and increasing numbers of "Western" films were penetrating (both legally and illegally) into the Soviet market. After Baranov's last school cineclub was closed in 1984, he focused on teaching film/media education in Kalinin (later, Tver) State University.

Inside Baranov's Cineclub

Baranov's cineclub started with a school cinema theater. Such theaters were common at the time. They usually consisted of a large auditorium equipped with a 16-millimeter projector and a screen. However, Baranov added to the familiar an unusual twist; he delegated many responsibilities of maintaining the theater to his students. With Baranov's help, young people decided how to divide assignments. The students became technicians, decorators, and ticket sellers. The theater even had its own director (one of the students) and janitors (Baranov, 2008b). Young people created posters for upcoming screenings, chose the price of the ticket (no low grades during a given week), and supervised screening sessions. Those who wanted to join in had to start by doing simple tasks (e.g., cleaning); later, they could move up the career ladder, and choose responsibilities that were more entertaining.

Interestingly, all cineclub participants were volunteers. Baranov advertised his club by going to different classes of the school (Baranov, 1979). What made students come to Baranov's cineclub and become its members? We believe that Baranov's secret might have been his ability to offer young people a variety of engaging activities together with an opportunity to play a major role in organizing the cineclub's work (Baranov & Penzin, 2014).

The popularity of the cineclub among students continued to grow. Initially, only older students could join, but soon the cineclub spanned across elementary, middle, and high schools. Baranov decided to structure his program in a way that allowed students to return to the same topics, terms, and texts repeatedly on different stages (spiral approach), gradually adding new materials and making the analysis more and more sophisticated. The model was built so that students could join the cineclub starting from the first grade and participate in it until they graduated. Soon after establishing the cineclub, Baranov decided that young people should study the history of the cinema; in his understanding, this would enable them to discuss cinematic masterpieces and help further develop their aesthetic taste. Beginning with entertaining and easy-to-remember facts about films, the pedagogue gradually offered his students materials that were more complex. In the final year, young people summarized everything they had learned so far. This cumulative approach based on reiteration and the growing complexity of class materials is similar to the structure of many standard school classes. However, in the case of the cineclub, the spiral approach was combined with many additional features. Although film screenings and discussions remained the foundation of Baranov's project until the end, soon after transforming the school cinema into the cineclub Baranov started to experiment by adding new activities.

In order to help students of all ages memorize large amounts of information about the history of the cinema, Baranov used a variety of memory games. These games included all sorts of competitions, word puzzles, charades, and crosswords about cinema. To play these games, students used film excerpts, audio recordings, snapshots, photos of actors, cards with questions, and quotes from books and articles discussed in class. For example, for the game "Do you know cinema?" students created 100 cards with images on one side and questions for the audience on the other side, such as: "What is this film?," "What other works of this director do you know?," "Who is in the frame?," etc. (Baranov, 1979). To play the game called "Cinema mystification" one of the participants read a text (e.g., about a certain period in the history of the cinema) out loud. The text contained mistakes in dates, surnames, and other facts. The audience had to find mistakes and correct them (Baranov, 1979).

To foster students' independence, Baranov relied on peer-to-peer teaching approach. In one of his books, he described how "acquiring vast knowledge, kids simultaneously learn to 'give back': they offer themed evenings, deliver lectures, organize exhibitions and festivals, create clubs for cinema enthusiasts in younger classes and outside of the school, passionately promote cinema art" (Baranov, 1979, p. 8). Baranov believed that, by teaching others, students become more responsible and can better articulate things they had studied. Peer-to-peer activities also helped the cineclub to attract new participants and spread Baranov's message about aesthetic and moral values of the authentic cinema art.

Apart from watching films, Baranov's students also practiced media production. They made short films about their lives, the school, and the cineclub. Baranov believed that making their own films, however amateur they would be, prepared young people to better understand masterpieces that they watched in the cineclub (Baranov, 2008b). Another form of media production was a wall newspaper, which students periodically issued to tell the school about their accomplishments. Yet another creative activity that cineclub participants engaged in was staging scenes from some of their favorite movies.

One the major projects that Baranov used to foster young people's independence and their love for the cinema art was a cinema museum. Believing in students' ability to accomplish important projects independently, Baranov encouraged young people to create the museum by themselves. This project later became the hallmark of Baranov's cineclub and one of the biggest school cinema museums in the U.S.S.R. Collecting artifacts for the museum, young people maintained a busy correspondence with film directors, actors, and cinema critics. They also sent letters to the All-Union State Institute of Cinematography and famous film

studios of the time, such as "Moscow" and "Lenfilm." In response, young people regularly received film scripts, drafts, sketches, set props, and autobiographies. All these artifacts became museum exhibits. Occasionally, young people made trips to visit major centers of cinema art. They were able to talk to many famous cinema personalities face-to-face, see how new films were made, and sometimes even participate in the first screenings closed to the public (Baranov & Penzin, 2014). When young people were not traveling, some media celebrities of the time visited the cineclub to give lectures about cinema.

Selection of Films

Although initially young people preferred to choose light entertainment films for the cineclub repertoire, Baranov encouraged them to put more emphasis on what he considered cinema art. After all, developing students' taste for so-called good films was one of Baranov's main goals. Baranov also used cinema as a vehicle for moral education. In his opinion, the conflict between protagonists and antagonists on the screen could illustrate for young people the battle between good and evil, and teach them to make the right choices in their own lives (Baranov, 2008b).

What films did Baranov select for his cineclub? The pedagogue favored such classics of the Soviet cinema as *Battleship Potemkin* (1925) and *Ivan the Terrible, Part I* (1944) by Eisenstein, *Earth* (1930) by Dovzhenko, and *The Extraordinary Adventures of Mr. West in the Land of the Bolsheviks* (1924) and *Fragment of an Empire* (1929) by Ermler. While *Battleship Potemkin* portrays the mutiny against Tsarist officers as an epic moral battle, *Ivan the Terrible, Part I* shows the powerful leader who fights his enemies in order to strengthen Russia. *Earth* glorifies the fight against rich landowners who opposed the process of collectivization (replacement of individual peasant farms by collective ones) in Ukraine. *The Extraordinary Adventures of Mr. West in the Land of the Bolsheviks* satirizes stereotypes that U.S. people allegedly had about the Soviet Russia in the 1920s. It shows caricatured representations of Americans and the greatness of the Soviet regime, which is so impressive that the main character Mr. West ends up putting a portrait of Lenin in his study. Fragment of an empire portrays the Soviet regime as the positive force, which helps people finally become free and equal.

Baranov has never been a big fan of contemporary films, preferring good old Soviet classics (Baranov & Penzin, 2014). According to the pedagogue, his priorities were shaped not by the ideological requirements or the time but by the aesthetic qualities of the films (Baranov, 1979). However, we can see that at least some of them were in alignment with the ideology of the communist regime and contained elements of political propaganda. Occasionally Baranov's cineclub screened explicitly ideological films, such as *Lenin in 1918*, created in 1939 by Romm.

In order to engage young people, Baranov allowed them to watch popular comedies, detectives, and melodramas. Among popular contemporary films that students discussed in Baranov's cineclub was a satirical comedy by Klimov about pioneer camps, *Welcome,* or *No Trespassing*, released in 1964. This film mocks a pioneer camp director who tries to control children by imposing strict rules. Another example of a light film that Baranov let young people watch was the science fiction movie Amphibian Man made in 1962 by Chebotaryov and Kazansky. It tells a dramatic love story of a pearl-fisher's daughter and a man whose father had to implant him with gills in order to save his life.

Although Baranov let his students watch these popular movies, he saw it as a necessary stage of the educational process that would let him introduce authentic cinema art. Baranov believed that to explain concepts and ideas he wanted his students to understand, he had to start with entertainment media. An opportunity to watch entertainment movies made students more engaged and attracted new members to the cineclub. However, Baranov made sure to stress the idea that all the "light" films were inferior to timeless classics created by such cinema personalities as Eisenstein and Dovzhenko.

A talented pedagogue, Baranov used his passion for the cinema, and his strong belief in the importance of shared aesthetic and moral values to create the unique cineclub. By offering young people independence, responsibility and the wide variety of activities, he kept the project going for many years.

From Baranov's Cineclub to Media Literacy Club

Today, cinema is but one form of popular media, competing with television, the Internet, video games, and social networks. Although a few cineclubs still exist, the popularity of the phenomenon is unlikely to come back. Does it mean that Baranov's model has become obsolete? And if not, can educators in other countries use Baranov's successful experience in Soviet schools as an example? We argue that Baranov's model of media education can be applied outside of Russia – if adjusted to the different time and place requirements. Whether or not you share Baranov's goal to teach young people about moral values and develop their aesthetic taste, you can select some elements of his cineclub's structure to create a media literacy club in your school.

Introducing and maintaining stand-alone media education courses within the U.S. public school system is problematic due to the system's rigidity. A more realistic model involves integrating media literacy activities into existing courses, such as English (Hobbs, 2007), History, or Geography (Masterman, 1985). This approach requires some creativity and flexibility, but does not necessitate significant bending of the existing school program. Finally, young people can learn about media literacy through workshops and various extracurricular programs (Friesem, 2014). Such initiatives are usually short-term, although they can be regularly repeated (e.g., Scharrer, 2006).

A media literacy club based on Baranov's model could be a variation of this third strategy. Here are some features that such a club could have: (1) its own space, and its doors could be open for students every day of the school year; (2) it could be run by several teachers interested in media literacy education and by volunteer student peer mentors; (3) the club could attract participants by a variety of engaging activities. Its members could discuss and create videos, photos, ads, websites, and video games. Young people could search for information on topics they are interested in online and learn to evaluate Internet sources. Participants could also contact media personalities or even invite them to visit their school; (4) teachers running the club could choose several key ideas that they would like their students to learn and/or questions they want young people to ask of media texts. Teachers could then structure the materials using the spiral approach, to make sure that the key ideas are addressed on every learning stage. In addition, (5) students could participate in the club over the period of several years. In this case activities and materials would vary, but the key principles taught at the club would remain the same year after year. Thus, students could gradually hone their media literacy skills even if they visit the club only once in a while. This approach could solve a problem that many media literacy initiatives currently have – short time spans. Furthermore, (6) the club could foster peer-to-peer learning and collaboration between students of different ages. Older students could pass on media literacy knowledge and skills to younger students. Finally, (7) the club could rely on students' enthusiasm and independent work. First, this could help the club to attract participants. Second, this could make the club easier to handle, as teachers who run it would delegate some of their responsibilities to young people (peer mentors).

Attracting participants to such a club might seem challenging on the initial stage. However, if it is endorsed by school administration, and if its activities are engaging and appealing, some students might be willing to give it a try. Once the club exists for a while and becomes known in the school, more and more students might start seeking an opportunity to participate.

Conclusion

Media literacy education has come a long way from the time educators first started to develop students' critical thinking skills and consider different strategies of helping them understand the role of the media in their

lives (Hobbs & Jensen, 2009). Influenced by different cultural contexts, both in terms of time and place, media literacy education evolved into a variety of forms (Buckingham, 2003; Hobbs, 1998; Potter, 2004).

Because of the significant changes of the media over the past decades, it may seem that many historical forms of media literacy education are nowadays irrelevant. By the same token, Soviet cineclubs, which were popular in the U.S.S.R. until the 1980s, might appear outdated and obsolete. After all, they were specifically created to discuss films, while now movies are just one kind of popular media texts. By ignoring magazines, TV programs, websites, and social networks, media literacy educators would seriously limit the effectiveness of their efforts. In addition, Soviet cineclubs were often used to develop students' aesthetic taste and moral values; critical thinking was not a priority for Soviet cinema educators, although they talked about it in their writings (Baranov, 1977). Taking into consideration these limitations, we argue that modern media literacy practitioners do have something to learn from cineclubs of the past. Even if we do not entirely agree with what students learned in Baranov's classes, it can be useful to consider how they learned it.

Baranov's model of film/media education provides an example of a long-term media literacy education program that maintained its popularity by being engaging and by relying on students' natural curiosity. Even an educator who does not think that developing students' aesthetic taste equates raising their levels of media literacy might use this cineclub's structure as a basis for media education initiative in their school.

The structure of Baranov's model has several key elements that educators might want to borrow. First, Baranov's cineclub attracted students by offering a variety of entertaining activities. Young people were not forced to participate; they came to the club because they were attracted by the opportunities it offered. Second, assignments that fostered independent work helped students to develop the feeling of ownership for the club. Third, because Baranov used the spiral approach, students learned the key ideas he wanted them to retain by repeatedly returning to the club. Fourth, a peer-to-peer approach helped Baranov's students better memorize information and practice skills they learned in the club. Active peer-to-peer mentors were able to constantly attract new participants, which contributed to the cineclub's popularity. And, fifth, by having the club's doors open all year long for many years, Baranov was able to turn this project into a long-term media literacy initiative.

Learning from the past is an important enterprise. It helps us better understand how we got to where we are now. It also allows us to learn from mistakes that our predecessors made and cherry-pick some of their practices. Learning from the past teaches us to be flexible, curious, and humble, and it encourages us to think about the future. We must remember that those who will come after us might be critical of our biases and choices as we are critical of our media education "grandparents." We do not know which of our strategies those who come after us will use and which they will discard. In this paper, we wanted to give the reader a glimpse of the journey that media literacy education has travelled in Russia. Most importantly, we wanted to reflect on how our past can enrich our present and future.

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