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Media, Culture and Education: An Anthropological Perspective on the transformation of Modern Educational Practices

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Abstract

This article examines the philosophical essence of media and its multifaceted role in shaping human consciousness, cultural identity, social relations, and contemporary educational practices. Drawing on the theoretical perspectives of Marshall McLuhan, Vilém Flusser, and Friedrich Kittler, the study conceptualizes media not merely as an instrument of information transmission but as an ontological and socio-cultural environment that influences how individuals perceive, interpret, and interact with the world. Particular attention is given to the relationship between media, cultural transmission, the formation of social values, and the transformation of educational paradigms in the digital age. From an interdisciplinary perspective incorporating philosophical and anthropological approaches, the article explores how traditional and digital media contribute to the preservation, transformation, and circulation of cultural knowledge and collective meanings. It also examines the growing significance of media and information literacy in developing critical thinking, cultural awareness, and responsible engagement with digital information. With particular reference to Uzbekistan, the study considers the challenges and prospects of integrating media literacy into the education system while maintaining cultural identity and national values. The article argues that understanding media as both a technological and cultural phenomenon provides an important theoretical foundation for addressing contemporary educational and socio-cultural transformations.

Keywords: media, philosophy, media literacy, educational paradigm, information, communication, technical image, digital culture, critical thinking

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Introduction

Communication tools have always played a decisive role in the historical development of human thinking and culture. The transition from oral speech to writing, from writing to printed books, and from those to electronic and digital means each of these has fundamentally changed the human worldview, methods of acquiring knowledge, and the nature of social relations. From the second half of the 20th century, media that is, the complex of information transmission and communication tools became an object of research with special significance for philosophical thought.

In today's era of globalization and digitalization, media has deeply penetrated all spheres of human life, including the field of education. The Internet, social networks, and multimedia have become an integral part of the educational process. At the same time, threats such as information overload, fake news, manipulation, and disinformation necessitate the development of a new educational paradigm a paradigm based on the development of media literacy and critical thinking.

The Decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan dated January 28, 2022, No. PF-60 "On the Development Strategy of New Uzbekistan for 2022–2026" and the Decree dated October 8, 2019, No. PF-5847 "On Approval of the Concept of Developing the Higher Education System of the Republic of Uzbekistan until 2030" defined tasks for increasing the quality of education and forming digital literacy and media literacy skills in students (O‘zbekiston Respublikasi Prezidenti, 2022). These documents ensure the theoretical and practical relevance of this research topic.

The purpose of the article is to reveal the philosophical essence of media and to scientifically and theoretically substantiate its place in the modern educational paradigm. The following tasks are set in the research: first, to analyze the philosophical interpretations of the concept of "media"; second, to study the views of media theorists such as M. McLuhan and V. Flusser; third, to highlight the impact of media on the educational paradigm; fourth, to demonstrate the prospects for developing media literacy in the education system of Uzbekistan.

Review of the Literature and Methodology

The philosophy of media is a relatively new but rapidly developing field of research. Its roots go back to the mid-20th century, specifically the works of the Toronto

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School representatives H. Innis and M. McLuhan. McLuhan's work "Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man" (1964) is considered a classic source of media philosophy (McLuhan, 1964). Later, scholars such as V. Flusser, F. Kittler, P. Virilio, J. Baudrillard, and M. Postman conducted deep research in this field.

Issues of media philosophy and media education are also being actively studied by researchers in Uzbekistan. The "Media Literacy Textbook for Teachers of Higher Education Institutions of Uzbekistan" (Internews, 2021), published under the editorship of G. Asanbayeva, became an important source for the national education system (Asanbayeva, 2021). Likewise, the works of M. Atavullaev, A. Kholmurzaev, and other local authors highlight the pedagogical aspects of media education (Kholmurzaev et al., 2020). In research conducted by M. Yakkola, a comparative analysis of the formation of media and information literacy (MIL) models in Central Asia, including Uzbekistan, was carried out (Jaakkola, 2025).

General methods of scientific cognition analysis and synthesis, historicity, comparative analysis, hermeneutic interpretation, and the phenomenological approach were used in the research. As a philosophical approach, ontological (determining the essence of media as existence), gnoseological (studying the role of media in the process of cognition), and axiological (evaluating the impact of media on the system of values) approaches were harmonized. Content analysis and systematic analysis methods were utilized in the analysis of empirical material.

The Philosophical Essence of Media: Ontological and Epistemological Dimensions: The term “media” is derived from the Latin “medium,” meaning means, interval, or intermediary. In a narrow sense, media refers to the mass media (press, radio, television, Internet). In a broad sense, media is any intermediary environment, signal, symbol, and code system between a human and the world. It is precisely this broad understanding that forms the basis of philosophical interpretation.

Canadian philosopher and communication theorist Marshall McLuhan (1911–1980) are considered one of the founders of media philosophy. His famous formula “The medium is the message” became the central idea of media philosophy (McLuhan & Fiore, 1967). As noted in the Britannica encyclopedia, this idea of McLuhan’s expressed the powerful influence of television, computers, and other electronic information distributors in shaping ways of thinking in sociology, art, science, or religion (Encyclopaedia Britannica, n.d.). According to McLuhan, any

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communication tool is an extension of human sensory organs and mental activity, affecting not only the content being delivered but also the entire environment surrounding the human, the structure of society, and forms of perception.

In McLuhan's work "The Gutenberg Galaxy: The Making of Typographic Man" (1962), it is substantiated that the emergence of the printed book was not only a revolution in information distribution technology but also a fundamental change in the entire structure of human consciousness. While written text formed linear, consistent, and logical thinking, electronic media radio, television, the internet gives rise to mosaic, networked, and multi-layered perception. McLuhan expressed this process through the concept of the “global village”: under the influence of electronic media, the entire world becomes a tightly interconnected unit that experiences information simultaneously and together.

Vilém Flusser (1920–1991), a philosopher born in Czechia who worked in Brazil and France, is another central figure in media philosophy. In his works "Towards a Philosophy of Photography" (1984) and "Into the Universe of Technical Images" (1985), media theory was developed at ontological and anthropological levels (Flusser, 2000). Flusser interprets the history of human culture as an alternation of periods of “text power” and “image power.” While the discovery of writing led humanity from mythological (visual-magical) consciousness to historical-logical consciousness, photography and subsequent digital technical images are moving human consciousness to a “post-historic” stage.

Flusser’s central concepts “apparatus” (tool-mechanism), “functionary” (a human who submits to the tool), “technical image” (an image created by a machine according to a program), “information,” and “post-history” are extremely relevant to the analysis of modern digital culture (Flusser, 2011). According to Flusser, in the era of digital technologies, humans are programmed by the apparatuses they have created: they seem to be making free choices, but in reality, they are choosing one of the possibilities within the apparatus’s program. This critical thinking becomes one of the central problems of media philosophy.

When analyzing media from an ontological perspective, it appears not only as a “tool” but as an “environment,” that is, a conditional form of human existence. German philosopher Friedrich Kittler (1943–2011) put forward the thesis that “there is no human without media”: a human always lives and realizes their existence

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within some media environment language, writing, printed text, screen. Therefore, media is not just an external tool, but an ontological structure that determines the human way of being.

Gnoseologically, media becomes a fundamental condition for acquiring knowledge and understanding the world. A human perceives the world not directly, but through media (language, image, symbol, model). This idea is not new in the history of philosophy Aristotle described "man as a symbol-creating creature by nature," and Ernst Cassirer defined man as "animal symbolicum" (symbolic animal). However, in the digital age, this mediation has reached an unprecedented scale. Now, in many cases, a human perceives not the event itself, but its media interpretation, its virtual reflection. This phenomenon is deeply analyzed in Jean Baudrillard's theory of "simulacra" and "hyperreality."

Axiologically, media is an important institution that forms and transmits a system of values. Along with family, school, and religion, media instills spiritual and moral values, worldviews, and lifestyles in the younger generation. However, there are positive and negative sides to this process. On one hand, media provides wide access to knowledge, culture, and art; on the other hand, it gives rise to risks such as manipulation, disinformation, low-quality examples of popular culture, and the loss of individuality.

Modern education paradigm and the role of the media

The concept of "paradigm" began to be widely used in scientific and pedagogical literature following T. Kuhn's work "The Structure of Scientific Revolutions" (1962). An educational paradigm is a complex of theoretical ideas, values, and practice methods that govern the education system in a specific historical period. In pedagogical science, paradigms are distinguished as traditional (knowledge-oriented), person-centered, and based on a competency approach (Shermuxamedova, 2022).

In the modern era the first quarter of the 21st century the educational paradigm is undergoing a fundamental change. The main reasons for these changes are as follows: first, the exponential growth of information and the acceleration of its obsolescence; second, the wide penetration of digital technologies into the educational process; third, the change in skills required in the labor market (21st-

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century skills critical thinking, creativity, communication, collaboration); fourth, the increasing role of mass media and social networks in shaping knowledge, values, and worldviews.

In these conditions, media literacy is becoming a leading component of the new educational paradigm. According to the UNESCO definition, Media and Information Literacy (MIL) is a complex of competencies related to searching for, evaluating, using, creating, and distributing information, as well as the critical and safe use of media. This competence is considered one of the primary qualities of today's digital citizen.

The philosophical basis of media literacy is the critical approach derived from the ideas of McLuhan and Flusser. A student (or learner) should learn not just to read and remember information, but to understand through which media and in what "packaged" form it is being presented. This means to use Flusser's terminology perceiving the logic of the "apparatus," that is, analyzing the programming, interests, and manipulation techniques standing behind the flow of technical images and news.

In Uzbekistan, the introduction of media literacy into the higher education system is being implemented consistently. In the textbook "Media Literacy and Information Culture" published in 2024, the goal of the subject is defined as forming the skills to sort information and accept what is necessary while understanding the priorities and disadvantages of each medium, and its main task is defined as distancing oneself from any consumed information while realizing its manipulative power (Mediasavodxonlik va axborot madaniyati, 2024). This approach shows that media literacy is not just a technical skill, but a philosophical and ethical conviction.

In pedagogical analysis, the role of media in the modern educational paradigm can be divided into the following directions. First, media as a source of educational content online courses, digital libraries, open educational resources (OER), and MOOC platforms (Coursera, edX, Khan Academy) are providing students with access to world-class knowledge. Second, media as an educational method multimedia, interactive simulations, and virtual and augmented reality (VR/AR) technologies are significantly activating the educational process. Third, media as an object of education students are learning to critically analyze media and study its philosophical, social, and ethical dimensions. Fourth, media as an educational

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environment interaction between students and teachers, scientific collaborations, and assessment systems are being carried out through digital platforms.

At the same time, several philosophical-pedagogical problems of digital education are being raised. Modern authors such as J. Flieger, B. Stiegler, and G. Agamben are discussing issues such as the "post-historic" nature of education in the era of digital technologies, preserving the subjectivity of the student, and the possibility of thinking through a screen (Vlieghe, 2014). The university's transition from a textual (book) culture to a digital culture is not just a change of tools, but a fundamental transformation of the way of acquiring knowledge and thinking.

Developing Media Literacy: The Experience and Prospects of Uzbekistan

In the Republic of Uzbekistan, work on media literacy has been developing systematically in recent years. Starting from the 2020s, in cooperation with Internews, UNESCO, and other international organizations, textbooks for higher education institutions were prepared, and teachers underwent training courses. The number of higher education institutions where media literacy is taught as a subject is increasing.

M. Yakkola's research shows that media and information literacy models in Central Asian countries, including Uzbekistan, have specific differences from Western models (Jaakkola, 2025). In the local context, media literacy is being developed in inseparable connection with national identity, the preservation of spiritual values, and information security issues. This is a model based on a philosophical-cultural approach, as opposed to a purely technical approach.

To further implement media literacy in the education system of Uzbekistan, it is advisable to work in the following directions. First, integrating elements of media and information literacy within various subjects (informatics, mother tongue, history, sociology) starting from the general secondary education stage. Second, introducing independent subjects such as "Philosophy of Media," "Media Literacy," and "Information Ethics" in higher education institutions. Third, implementing special modules on media philosophy and media literacy in the system of training and advanced training of pedagogical personnel. Fourth, conducting scientific research, summarizing national and international experiences, and developing a unique Uzbekistan model.

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It should be noted that media literacy is not only a set of technical skills but also a philosophical-worldview culture. It should form a critical, responsible, and creative attitude in a person toward the world, information, and other people. It is precisely from this point of view that the role of media philosophy in the educational paradigm is of decisive importance: it provides the deep theoretical foundation for modern media literacy.

Anthropological Dimensions of Media: Culture, Identity and Everyday Practices

An anthropological approach broadens the analysis of media by examining it not only as a technology or channel of communication, but also as a cultural practice embedded in everyday life. From an anthropological perspective, culture can be understood as a historically transmitted system of meanings embodied in symbols, through which individuals interpret their experiences and make sense of the social world (Geertz, 1973). People use media within particular social relationships, languages, institutions, and systems of meaning. The same message or platform may therefore be interpreted differently across generations and communities. Media practices are shaped by locally meaningful values and conventions, while at the same time they can contribute to the reworking of those values.

From this perspective, media participates in the production and circulation of culture. Narratives, photographs, films, news, and digital posts select and represent aspects of social life; they may reinforce familiar understandings or make alternative interpretations visible. This process is relevant to the anthropological study of representation and meaning: media does not simply reflect a pre-existing social world, but helps people describe, interpret, contest, and remember that world. The analysis of media should consequently attend to who creates a representation, whose experiences are made visible, which voices are marginalised, and how audiences interpret the material in their own contexts (Hall, 1997).

Media also functions as a means of cultural transmission. Knowledge, memories, values, and forms of expression that were previously communicated mainly through face-to-face interaction can now circulate through recorded sound, video, websites, and social networks. These formats may support the preservation and renewed circulation of cultural knowledge, but they can also detach expressions from the social settings in which they acquired their meaning. An anthropological analysis

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therefore considers both the content being transmitted and the relationships, occasions, and practices through which it is produced and received.

This point is especially important for education. A classroom is not culturally neutral: learners bring different linguistic resources, family experiences, community knowledge, and habits of media use into educational settings. Digital educational materials become meaningful through interaction with these backgrounds. Teachers and learners do not merely receive information; they interpret it, relate it to prior knowledge, and sometimes negotiate competing values and explanations. Media literacy can thus be understood as a socially situated competence that includes the ability to interpret representations, recognise context, and communicate responsibly across cultural differences.

Media, Cultural Identity and the Uzbek Educational Context

The Uzbek context provides a relevant setting for considering the relationship between media, cultural identity, and education. The article has already noted the importance of national identity, spiritual values, and information security in discussions of media and information literacy in Uzbekistan. An anthropological reading adds that these concerns are connected to the ways cultural meanings are maintained and discussed in families, educational institutions, local communities, and digital spaces. Media content may bring local and global references into contact, creating opportunities for dialogue as well as tensions over language, representation, authority, and changing social expectations.

In educational practice, this means that media literacy should not be reduced to the technical ability to operate devices or locate information. It should also help learners ask how a particular account represents Uzbek society, whose perspectives it includes, what cultural assumptions it carries, and how it compares with knowledge transmitted through family, community, historical memory, and formal education. Such questions connect critical media education with the anthropological study of cultural meaning and social relations.

The discussion here is conceptual and interpretive rather than the presentation of new fieldwork. It does not claim to report interviews, classroom observations, or measured outcomes from particular communities. Instead, it identifies anthropological questions that follow from the article's analysis of media theory and

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the stated Uzbek educational context. Future empirical research could examine how students, teachers, and families interpret specific media materials, how language and generation shape those interpretations, and how digital platforms affect the transmission of local knowledge.

Anthropological Implications for Media Literacy and Education

The preceding discussion suggests three complementary dimensions for an anthropologically informed approach to media literacy. The first is interpretive: learners examine how images, narratives, and categories construct meanings rather than treating media messages as transparent descriptions of reality. The second is relational: learners consider the social position of producers and audiences, the institutions through which information circulates, and the unequal access to communication and representation. The third is cultural-historical: learners situate media materials in the languages, memories, values, and historical experiences that give them significance. These dimensions extend the article's existing emphasis on critical thinking and ethical responsibility.

This approach also encourages educators to treat students' cultural knowledge as a resource for learning. Comparing media representations with oral accounts, local histories, community practices, and scholarly sources can help learners recognise differences in perspective and assess evidence carefully. Such comparison does not mean accepting every account as equally reliable; rather, it develops the ability to ask how knowledge is produced, transmitted, authorised, and evaluated. In this way, media literacy can contribute to both critical inquiry and a more context-sensitive understanding of culture.

The anthropological perspective therefore complements, rather than replaces, the philosophical and pedagogical arguments developed above. McLuhan's account of media environments and Flusser's analysis of technical images help explain how media conditions perception, while anthropological analysis draws attention to the culturally specific practices through which people use and interpret those media. Bringing these perspectives together makes it possible to examine media as a technological environment, a system of representation, and a dimension of lived social experience.

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Conclusion

As a result of the analysis conducted, the following conclusions can be drawn. First, media is not merely a means of transmitting information, but one of the ontological conditions of human existence an environment that shapes human consciousness, thinking, and culture. The ideas of thinkers such as McLuhan, Flusser, and Kittler serve to deeply reveal the philosophical essence of media.

Second, the modern educational paradigm is undergoing a fundamental change under the influence of digital media. The traditional knowledge-oriented paradigm is being replaced by a new paradigm that is competency-based, person-centered, and recognizes media literacy as one of the core skills. This process embodies both opportunities and challenges.

Third, media literacy as a leading concept of this new paradigm is not a technical skill, but rather critical thinking, ethical responsibility, and philosophical culture. Its philosophical foundations were formed in the works of McLuhan and Flusser, but every national education system must reinterpret these ideas within its own cultural and historical context.

Fourth, significant work is being carried out to develop media literacy in Uzbekistan, but it is necessary to fully integrate it into all stages of the education system, develop a national conceptual model, and further deepen the work on training pedagogical personnel. Media literacy based on a philosophical-pedagogical approach is an essential condition for the formation of the younger generation as resilient, independent, and responsible individuals in the digital age.

In conclusion, understanding the philosophical essence of media and organically incorporating it into the modern educational paradigm is a task of not only academic but also existential significance for a person living in today's globalized, digitalized world. It is advisable for philosophical and pedagogical research in this direction to continue and expand in the future.

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