

The Development of Innovative Media Education in China



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With the rapid development of mass media in China, its influence on Children is becoming bigger and bigger. More and more students indulge in the virtual world of media, for example, on-line game, on-line chat, etc. It means that the educational environment is undergoing a great revolution process. The researchers in the field of education find many problems could not be resolved only with their power within this realm.

Under this background, one new interdisciplinary research topic, media literacy education, began to appear in China in 1997. To today, the history of media education is only about 10 years long. Many universities have established relevant majors or relevant research institutes. But most of such institutes were founded by school of journalism and communication. In other words, the academics come mainly from media areas. They focus on the effects of mass media on children and students from the viewpoint of audience study. However, the most significant problem about how to improve children and students' media literacy couldn't be paid great attention.

In order to carry out studies from educational perspective, School of Education, Beijing Normal University, as the top leader in education research field decided to further the innovation. In 2007, the former director of education department, Prof. Liu Fuxing and Assistant Prof. Zhang Lili applied to establish one new major media education, whose position was the same as another major studies of education in this department. Soon the application was approved.

The main tasks of the new major are

- 1) to educate the graduate students who will continue their further studies in this field;
- 2) to investigate the effects of mass media on people, especially on the affective and behavior development of children and youth;
- 3) to study the methods and ways of raising the literacy capacity of reading media, thinking media and using media;
- 4) to examine the government's regulatory rules about mass media management to protect children and youth from the negative effects.

Now there are 4 official research fellows for this major:

Prof. Dr. Liu Fuxing, head of the office of social science administration, BNU. His research focuses on educational law and policy, especially the government's regulatory laws how to protect children and youth from the negative effects of mass media. He is one very famous professor in this field.

Dr. Zhang Lili, Associate Professor and head of the media education program. Her research interests are media and children, gender and education, etc.

Dr. Li Degang, Lecturer, teacher at the education department. Media law and policy, media management, and media literacy education are his research interests.

Dr. Cai Xiaofang, Lecturer at the the education department. Her research focuses on the mass media's effects on children and youth and media sociology.

The recent studies carried out by the team members include the following topics: the TV viewing experiences of primary school students, the effects of TV viewing on the moral development of students in secondary school, perceptions of students about TV public service advertisement, parents, communication between parents and children in TV viewing experiences.

Currently we are working on the role of media played in the Wenchuan earthquake and we are planning to do a study to examine the tragedy reports with the children' rights as a particular perspective.

The courses of the program have been developed with the following structure: Media Literacy Education, Media Sociology, Mass Communication Theory, and Journalism, etc.

With their great efforts, the major has had very high name in China in this field. In September 2008 the pioneer batch of graduate students will join in the research team. And then one new research center, that is, the Center for Media and Education will be founded.

Dr. Zhang Lili is Associate Professor and head of the media education program. Dr. Li Degang works as lecturer for media law and policy, media management, and media literacy education at the education department at the School of Education at Beijing Normal University (China).

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