School children and informal online education

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Informal education can be determined as acquiring and accumulating knowledge through everyday communication[1]. Thanks to ICT modern school children receive education in situation when they can be a part of such communication all the time. Usage of online –resources for self-education by Russian school children has not yet been the topic of scientific research.

Kids aged from 12 to 17 represent 8% of Russian online users (TNS, 2013). 89% of teenagers (aged from 12-17) use internet every day or almost every day (FID)

Research objectives:

- Create a map of resources of informal education in Russian segment of Internet;

- Summarize results of domestic research of usage of new media by school children for informal education depending on different factors (digital literacy, characteristics of family, etc.);

- Analyze data of 21st wave of Russian Longitudinal Monitoring Survey (HSE, 2013) on usage of digital media for informal education by children; detect factors that affects such usage.

Methods of the research: analysis of publications on educational potential of new media, digital inequity, digital competence, influence of ICT on socialization of school kids; analysis and classification of online resources that can be used for informal education in Russian segment of Internet; statistical analysis of the Russian Longitudinal Monitoring Survey (RLMS HSE) 2013. Usage of Internet by Russian school children was assessed by their parents.

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[1] *Litvina D.A., Omelchenko E.L.* Rhetoric and everyday life of informal education of anarchists.//Journal of Educational studies, №2, 2013.

Main findings and discussion

Portrait of Russian school kids in Internet

Search for info for school is the second most important type of online activity after entertainment. It is mentioned by 84,6% of respondents (see Fig.1). Personal enrichment and improvement of cultural awareness and acquiring information materials count for informal education in our research. These activities can also be popular: 70,9% and 68,3% parents accordingly mentioned it among activities that their children participated in for the last 12 months.

Figure 1. Usage of Internet for the last 12 months, %. RLMS, 2013[2].
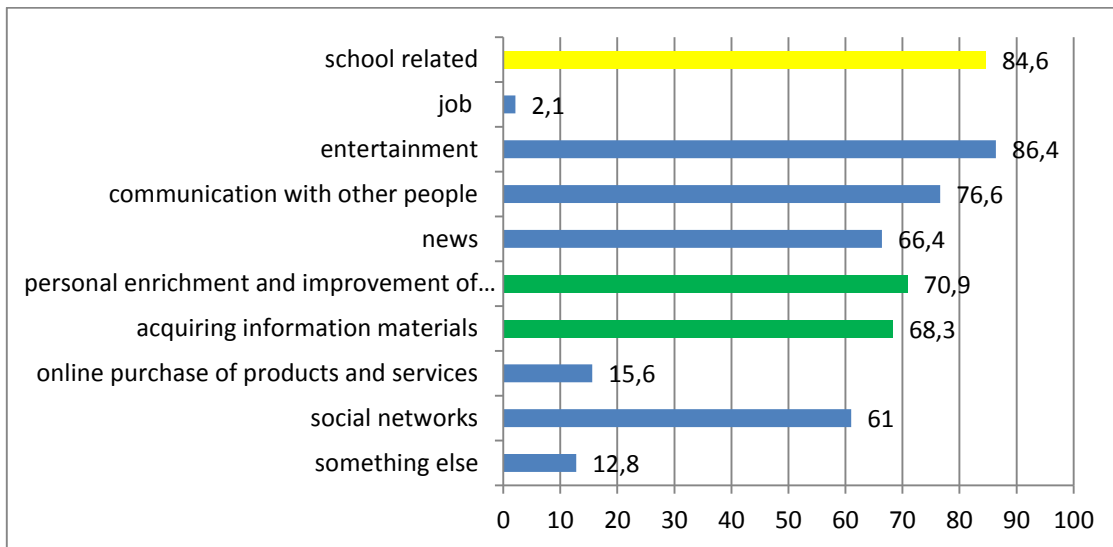
Usage of Internet to school related tasks is more widespread among girls (86,7% against 82,3% for boys – see Fig.2). Yet in case of informal education differences are not significant.

Figure 2. Usage of Internet for the last 12 months, %. Comparison between boys and girls. RLMS, 2013.


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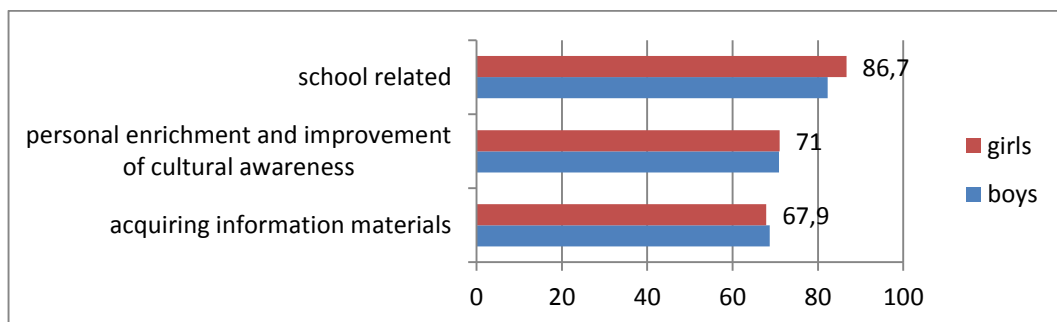
[2] Research sample: 1300 schoolchildren from all over the Russia.

School kids from rural areas surprisingly turned out to be the leaders in using Internet for school related tasks, surpassing even their peers from regional centers (see Fig.3): this type of activity was mentioned by 87,2% and 86,5% of parents accordingly.

Yet the analysis of using online resources for informal education came out to be more traditional. Children who use Internet for it more often can be found in settlements with large population. In regional centers and towns 77,9% and 72,6% of parents mentioned these online-activities for their kids. Same answers were chosen by 58,1% and 59,7% of respondents of urban-type settlement and villages accordingly.

Figure 3. Usage of Internet for the last 12 months, %. Comparison types of settlements. RLMS, 2013.
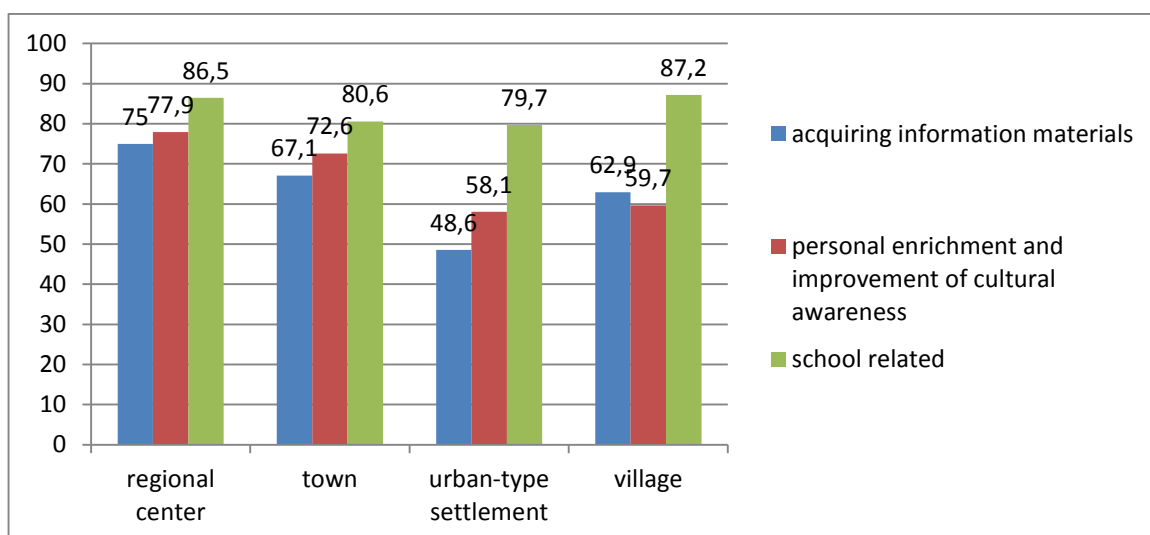
Access to new media affects the spreading of informal online education among Russian school children (see Fig. 4).

Figure 4. Usage of Internet for informal education by school children with different access to new media, RLMS, 2013.
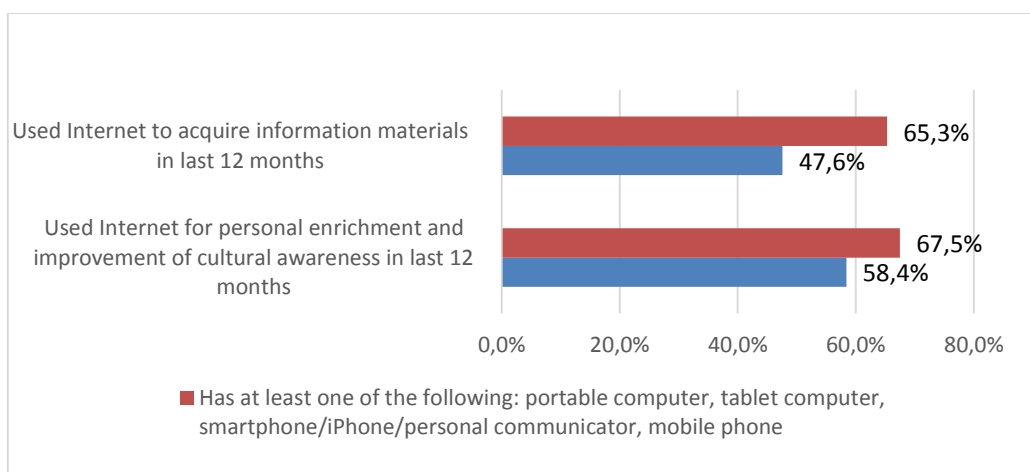
Role of the family in introducing children to new educational technologies

New media became a "digital child nurse": 65% of parents report that they used Internet and gadgets to occupy their child during work, using public transportation, visiting medical facilities, etc. (Digital Parenting Russia, 2013[3]).

Overall Russian parents have high regard of educational potential of new media (See Fig.5).

Figure 5. Usefulness of different media (according to parents), %. Digital Parenting Russia, 2013.
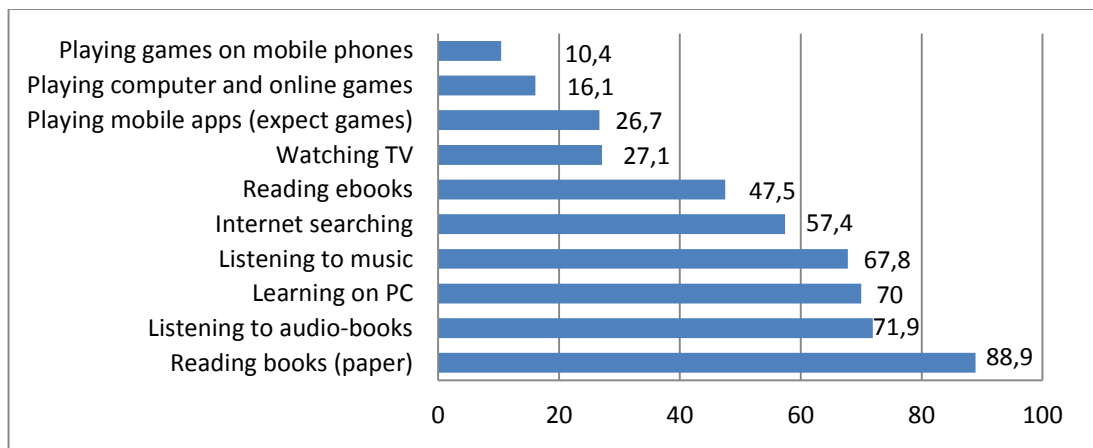
Russian fathers tend more to use digital media to interact with their children while mother prefer more traditional channels of information (TV, paper books, audi-books, music, etc. – see Fig.6).

Figure 6. Difference in rating of educational practices of Russian mothers and father. Digital Parenting Russia, 2013.
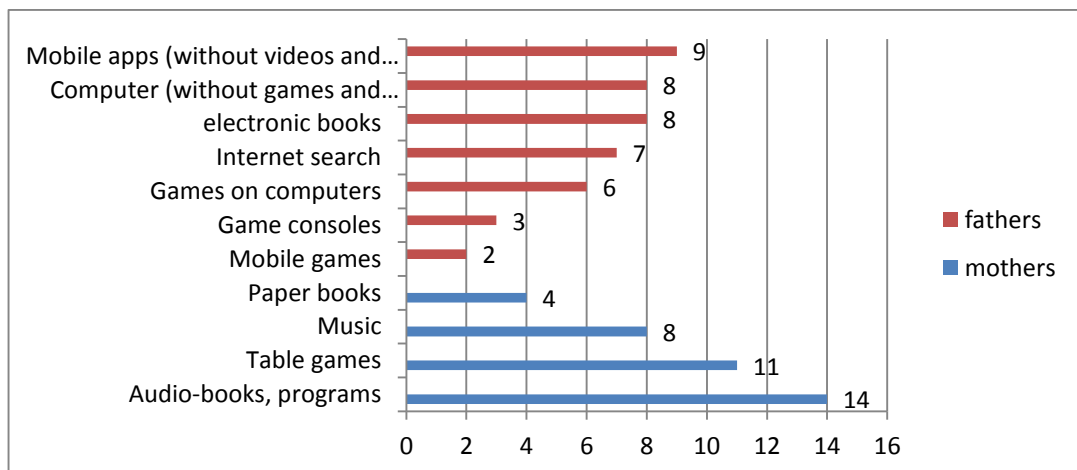
Informal education in Russian Internet

Mobile apps.

- Quickly developing segment

- More than 155 000 educational apps in App Store.

- 47% of these apps are devoted to early development (iLearn II, 2012).

- 48% of Russian children under 18 y.o. use different apps (Digital Parenting Russia, 2012).

MOOCs have been recently introduced to the Russian market.

- Domestic projects: Universarium , LinguaLeo.

- They offer courses for high school students

Online tutoring is developing market.

- Traditional tutoring attracted 26.2 billion rubles in 2012 (InFOLIOgroup, 2012).

- Yet full-scale tutoring services (sms-help, 24/7 tutoring) are not present or at the stage of start-ups.

- Domestic projects (http://dist-tutor.info, http://repetitorov.net) may have tenths of thousands of users, but only small percentage are active users.

Educational TV online.

- There are 24 children TV channels registered in Russia

- Only 5 of them are domestic channels: "Znanie", "Karusel", "Detskii", "Detskii mir", "Mat' and Ditya".

- Separate TV projects have vast online audience (i.e. "Masha i Medved" show has over 1.4 million subscribers on Youtube).

- Yet overall domestic TV channels are satisfied with TV-audience and lose battle for online viewers to international educational projects (Discovery, National Geography, etc.).

Collections of video lessons

- Well-developed segment with large variety of topics (business, sport, hobbies, etc.) i.e.

- Khan's Academy channel on Youtube has over 1.68 million subscribers, yet its Russian-speaking clone – only 8 867 subscribers

- Youtube channel VideoUroki with 98 000 subscribers. Distinct sector for school kids (http://interneturok.ru/ru,http://videouroki.net/index.php).

Educative communities in social networks.

- Domestic networks (Vkontakte, Odnoklassniki) overall dominate over Facebook, because later is considered more suited for grown-up discourse.

- Most popular communities focuses on practices that increase social capital ("beauty lessons", "cooking lessons") and on developing individual skills (drawing, playing a musical instrument).
- The total audience of such communities is about 2 million users
- Education related communities may be less popular ("Education 2.0" – over 400 000 subscribers), but still surpass Russian-speaking educational communities on Facebook (community of MOOC LinguaLeo – 65 000 subscribers).

eBooks.
- Popular and developed segment.
- 48% of kids aged from 7 to 15 read ebooks
- 67% of them download it from the Internet , 76% of children use ebooks in preparation of homework (Digital Parenting Russia, 2013).

Web-resources for preschoolers and schoolchildren.
- Yet this segment can be described as undeveloped with few exceptions of well-funded projects (website of TV-program smeshariki.ru – 33000 visits daily, tvidi.ru – Russian-Isralien educational and recreational resource).
- Educational networks for children: GlobalLab, IEARN.

Educational radio online.
- There is only one radio station for children in Russia – "Detskoe radio" (Kida Radio) and only few programs for kids on other stations.
- This segment has very traditional content and overall doesn't promote its brand or content online.

Key findings:

Russian segment of informal online education is underdeveloped, but the dynamics of change are encouraging. Russian-speaking Internet already contains a wide range of educational possibilities from radio to developmental games. Nevertheless the majority of potential users are not familiar with them. Technologically-sophisticated fathers play the key role in introducing new media to children. The demand for informal online education is affected by socio-economic factors such place of inhabitance, access to new media, family cultural capital.