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MEDIA LITERACY, MEDIA COMPETENCE AND MEDIA POLICY IN THE DIGITAL AGE

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Synopsis:

Today media literacy counts as a necessary key skill for modern society. This paper aims to discuss the concept of media literacy and media competence in the new media environment and the development process of media literacy policy.

Media Literacy, Media Competence and Media Policy in the Digital Age

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Abstract

Today media literacy counts as a necessary key skill for modern society. As new technologies and media are used more and more throughout social life, people need to develop more than just their ICT skills; they need a broad digital awareness of the wider context in which technologies and media operate to wrap around these skills in order that they can participate in this increasingly digital world. Media literacy is characterized by the concept of "media competence" and is combined with all kinds of specific media related activities. Media operate in specific cultural and institutional contexts that determining how and why they are used. Most public policy discussion of new media have centered on technologies – tools and their affordances. There is a variety in terminology for media literacy-related concepts: e.g. media literacy, media competence, information literacy, ICT literacy, digital literacy or digital competence. Many of these terms have grown in sociopolitical, cultural media pedagogical and media educational discussions. This paper aims to discuss the concept of media literacy and media competence in the new media environment. The meaning of this paper is to provide a clue for the discussion of media literacy and media competence, and further to raise the necessity of media literacy policy in the digital age.

Key words: Media literacy, Media Competence, Media education

1. Introduction

Contemporary societies are being digitalized in the widest and deepest sense, from big data connected to the personal profiles associated to digital footprints of individuals to the digital control of information. As new technologies and media are used more and more in teaching and learning, as well as in the home and throughout social life, young people need to develop more than just their ICT skills; they need a broad digital awareness of the wider context in which technologies and media operate to wrap around these skills in order that they can participate in this increasingly digital world (Hague & Williamson, 2009).

The internet offers a range of free and sophisticated tools that can be adapted by libraries for use in multiple ways, including user services, library promotion, and information literacy training. These tools, including social networking and other Web 2.0 technologies, provide effective ways for libraries and librarians to engage students and communicate with them via preferred methods of the Millennial generation (Click & Petit, 2010). In relation to the internet, children and young people are frequently seen to have adequate functional literacy skills (i.e. the skills and competencies needed to access and search the internet). Indeed, it is often suggested that their skills exceed those of their parents.

Facer et al. (2003) found that children generally did have the functional expertise to locate what they were looking for, but not the critical literacy required to interpret critique and manage that information. In these author's words, children were unable to move 'beyond information to knowledge and understanding', particularly in using the internet to support formal education.

The possess 'literacy' in traditional terms means being able to read and write in the shared language of a culture. Hague & Williamson (2009) gave description about digital literacy. Refer to their paper, Digital literacy shares some similarities. It refers to the reading and writing of digital texts, for example, being able to 'read' a websites by navigating through hyperlinks and 'writing' by uploading digital photos to a social networking site. In this sense, digital literacy means the functional skills required to operate and communicate with technology and media. It also refers to the knowledge of how technologies and media affect the world.

There is a variety in terminology for media literacy-related concepts: e.g. media literacy,

media competence, information literacy, ICT literacy, digital literacy or digital competence. Many of these terms have grown in sociopolitical, cultural media pedagogical and media educational discussions and are "related to a different understanding and different concepts (Schmidt-Hertha & Rott, 2014). There are many ways to look at the warp and weft of intellectual progenitors who have contributed the theory and practice of media literacy education. As Jacquinet (2008; Hobbs& Jensen, 2009) has explained in her review of media literacy education's European history, media literacy education (MLE) is a highly contextualized activity that takes many forms in many different cultural and learning environments. It's also possible to see its roots in the emergence of film as a tool for teaching and learning, particularly in the development of language, critical analysis, and literacy skills (Hobbs & Jensen, 2009).

A recent study points to the meaning of habitual forms of media use and media socialization for media competence development (Kommer, 2010). However, there is a strong consensus on the necessity of media competence for using digital media effectively and additionally on the potential of digital media for learning. Especially with regard to interactive internet technologies, subsumed under the keyword 'Web 2.0', new requirements arise in many occupational fields –and particularly for students in higher education (Schmidt-Hertha, & Rott, 2014). Skills and knowledge necessary for using digital media as a resource for learning can be developed in higher education, but it is an unresolved question how far these facets of media competence meet vocational needs. In modern societies, the competencies regarding the use of digital media rather than merely the accessibility are distributed unevenly between different social strata and milieu (Schmidt-Hertha, & Rott, 2014).

Media literacy experts pointed out that media such as TV, film, adverts and computers have played an increasing part in people's lives over the past half century. The ways that these sorts of media work are not always transparent and both children and adults may find it challenging, for example, to work out who owns and produces media and technology, and what corporate interests are being represented by them. Studies also emphasize that media literacy is not something which just exists in the head of individual children. Media literacy arises from the interface and interaction between media and user. It is a social practice involving interpretation and production of shared meanings rather than an individual skill set. Media literacy is therefore defined as the ability to access, analyze, evaluate and create messages across a variety of contexts (Hague & Williamson, 2009).

2. Core of Media Literacy

Media literacy educators have long been responsive to changes in media and technology systems. Media literacy education was understood as a 'cognitive defense' against the most overt and disturbing forms of sensationalism and propaganda pouring out of rapidly growing culture industries. Reviewing recent research on "media literacy," a field that concentrates primarily on broadcasting and audiovisual media forms, and that draws on both humanities and social science.

The recent transition in the dissemination and management of information sources has positioned "information literacy" as a vital skill in the competitive global market place. The field concentrates on computing, telecommunications, and information technologies, and draws on the study of information processing, computer science, and library studies to theorize especially multiple levels of access competences, to identify a range of barriers and enablers to access, and establish initiatives for training or redistributing otherwise-unequal skills across the population . For, as Mark Warschauer puts it, "the ability to access, adapt, and create new knowledge using new information and communication technology is critical to social inclusion in today's era " (Livingstone, 2008).

Media literacy competes with related concepts like ICT literacy, critical literacy, media management, and information literacy (Hobbs, 2008); now 'digital citizenship' and 'new media literacies' emphasize the skills and knowledge needed to be effective in the increasingly social media environment, where the distinctions between producer and consumer have evaporated and the blurring between public and private worlds create new ethical challenges and opportunities for children, young people, and adults (Hobbs& Jensen, 2009).

Digital literacy means knowing how technology and media affect the ways in which we go about finding things out, communicating with one another, and gaining knowledge and understanding. And it also means understanding how technologies and media can shape and influence the ways in which school subjects can be taught and learnt. In a dense landscape of information sources, communication opportunities, and tools for creating new digital objects, teaching and learning cannot be confined to pen and paper activities. This means that learners and teachers need to make sense of how technologies can be used within subjects and to understand how such technologies affect what we know about those subjects (Hague & Williamson, 2009).

Hague & Williamson (2009) suggests that digital literacy is an amalgamation :

- Knowledge of digital tools: hardware/software awareness and competence
- Critical skills: evaluation and contextualization
- Social awareness: understanding your identity, collaborating, and communicating to audiences in context

Digital literacy can therefore be thought of as a combination of social awareness, critical thinking, knowledge of digital tools. These three components should also be supplemented with the idea that digital literacy also involves the ability to participate in the active and collaborative creation and communication of meaning (Hague & Williamson, 2009).

3. What is the role of media literacy in education?

In the media educational discourse, media literacy combined with communicative competence is seen as the ability to question media reporting in a way that is critical of media and society, and to use media for communicating own positions. The participation of citizens in Web-based opinion making and decision processes is a target of modern Web policy. „Media education is a core component of comprehensive citizen education, starting from very young ages, to help democratize society and educational opportunities“ (Unesco, 2013).

Livingstone (2008) identified three broad purposes to which media and information literacies contribute. First, democracy, participation and active citizenship: in a democratic society, a media and information-literate individual is more able to gain an informed opinion on matters of the day, and to be able to express their opinion individually and collectively in public, civic, and political domains, while a media and information-literate society supports a critical and inclusive public sphere. Second, knowledge economy, competitiveness, and choice: in a market economy increasingly based on information, often in a complex and mediated form, a media and information-literate individual is likely to have more to offer, and therefore achieve at a higher level in the workplace, and a media and information-literate society is innovative and sustaining a rich array of choices for the consumer. Third, lifelong learning, cultural expression, and personal fulfillment: since our highly reflexive, heavily mediated symbolic environment informs and

frames the choices, values, and knowledge that give significance to everyday life, media and information literacy contribute to the critical and expressive skills that support a full and meaningful life, and to an informed, creative, and ethical society. These frames purposes are deliberately framed to capture both the individual competence and institutional structures that, together, underpin literacy (Livingstone, 2008).

Jenkins (2006) suggested that one important goal of media education should be to encourage young people to become more reflective about the ethical choices they make as participants and communicators and the impact they have on others. According to Jenkins (2006), a participatory culture is a culture with relatively low barriers to artistic expression and civic engagement, strong support for creating and sharing one's creations, and some type of informal mentorship whereby what is known by the most experienced is passed along to novices. A participatory culture is also one in which members believe their contributions matter, and feel some degree of social connection with one another (at the least they care what other people think about what they have created). Forms of participatory culture include (Jenkins, 2006):

The Participation Gap – The unequal access to the opportunities, experiences, skills, and knowledge that will prepare youth for full participation in the world of tomorrow.

The Transparency Problem – The challenges young people face in learning to see clearly the ways that media shape perception of the world.

The Ethics Challenge — The breakdown of traditional forms of professional training and socialization that might prepare young people for their increasingly public roles as media makers and community participants (Jenkins, 2006).

These three challenges demonstrate that digital participation cannot be assumed to develop automatically from young people's engagement in digital media cultures, even where this engagement is of a very high level and involves extremely sophisticated types of activities, association and affiliations. Instead, supporting the development of learner's literacy and requires the direct support of education professionals and which needs to be written into curricular aims. Schools have a responsibility to enable and empower their students to participate in online and offline worlds.

Some researchers suggest that when referring to the critical and creative participatory aspects, the term 'critical digital literacy' should be used to illustrate a concern with

critical thinking skills, not just the skills of writing as applied to digital media. Jenkins (2006) suggested that Participatory culture shifts the focus of literacy from one of individual expression to community involvement. The new literacies almost all involve social skills developed through collaboration and networking. These skills build on the foundation of traditional literacy; research skills, technical skills, and critical analysis skills taught in the class room. Jenkins (2006) added that fostering such social skills and cultural competencies requires more systemic approach to media education.

Table 1 Media Skills (Jenkins, 2006)

Play	the capacity to experiment with one's surroundings as a form of problem-solving
Performance	the ability to adopt alternative identities for the purpose of improvisation and discovery
Simulation	the ability to interpret and construct dynamic models of real-world processes.
Appropriation	the ability to meaningfully sample and remix media content
Multitasking	the ability to scan one's environment and shift focus as needed to salient details.
Distributed Cognition	the ability to interact meaningfully with tools that expand mental capacities.
Collective intelligence	the ability to pool knowledge and compare notes with others toward a common goal.
Judgment	the ability to evaluate the reliability and credibility of different information sources
Transmedia Navigation	the ability to follow the flow of stories and information across multiple modalities
Networking	the ability to search for, synthesize, and disseminate information
Negotiation	the ability to travel across diverse communities, discerning, and respecting multiple perspectives, and grasping and following alternative norms.

Source: Jenkins (2006).

Media competence is the mostly discussed and used term in scientific, political and public discussion. As defined by UNESCO, "Media and information literacy is a set of competencies that empowers citizens to access, retrieve, understand, evaluate and use,

create as well as share information and media content in all formats, using various tools, in a critical, ethical, and effective way, in order to participate and engage in personal, professional, and societal activities” (UNESCO, 2013).

Media competence is often understood as a section of communication competence which enables a person to orientate oneself in a mediatized world and to get to know the world actively with the assistance of media (Baacke 1996). Baacke (1997) subdivides media competence into four sections: media criticism with an analytical, a reflective and an ethical dimension, media studies, which include informational and instrumental-skill knowledge, media use refers to the use as a recipient and in an interactive way, and media composition, which should be innovative, creative and aesthetic (Schmidt-Hertha & Rott, 2014).

Media education contributes to a person’s personality development. The development of a personality in its relation to the social world, to nature and technology, and to oneself contains aspects of media education. Especially for adolescents, media provide space for experiencing and testing different life scripts and self-design. Positions of their own can be expressed and put up for discussion. If media and data protection are in place, media can be used productively for identity development. School contributes to education not only by helping pupils to appropriate canonized contents and skills, but by practically supporting their personality formation – which, however, mostly takes the form of acquiring knowledge and awareness. Within a society influenced by digital media, new forms of cultural and creative activities develop as well as digital cultural assets.

There is a need for skills progression in MIL for today’s students as part of lifelong learning to contribute meaningfully to personal, professional, and societal development. This set of competencies must be reflected in national education policies to guide curriculum development and promote it as a framework in crafting institutional and program outcomes among educational institutions. The Explore, Engage and Empower Model provide a general process framework for understanding and practicing media and information literacy. They produce media materials and messages for different media platforms within the bounds of legal and moral orders to aid decision-making for most of life’s concerns (Alagaran, 2015). This encapsulates all the relevant competencies that students in the digital age must be able to acquire in a more concise and straightforward fashion. Likewise, this highlights empowerment as the ultimate level of practicing MIL skillfully and applying it in our everyday lives, especially in the exercise of

our universal rights and fundamental freedoms.

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