

MEDIA LITERACY AS A 21ST KEY COMPETENCE. A CASE STUDY OF ROMANIA.

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Abstract: This study argues the necessity of implementation of media literacy in schools by interpreting media literacy in relation to 'communication' and knowledge and information society, which are included in the key competences of European Union. In the Romanian educational system, the media literacy competence is not aimed in any educational curriculum. Few efforts have been made in the past ten years, efforts initiated by the civil society experts and not adapted to the national curriculum yet. Based on the literature review and on the content analyses of the national curriculum, this study contrived media literacy strands and standards including performance objectives and basic teaching and learning contents. By theoretically systemizing media literacy, this study is expected to promote the understandings of media literacy in schools and promote its implementations in the classrooms.

Keywords: media competence, national curriculum, media literacy, key competence

1. Introduction

The concept of *media literacy* is one of the most subtle concepts for definition. The most common engine of search *Google* shows more than 118 billion of results. This fact might be explained by the high level of interest and of its novelty, but also by the difficulty of the experts to settle a common definition.

In the Romanian educational system, the media literacy competence is not aimed in any educational curriculum. Few efforts have been realized in the past ten years, efforts that were initiated by the civil society experts and they have been not yet adapted to the national curriculum. Based on the literature review and on the content analyses of the national curriculum, this study contrived media literacy strands and standards including performance objectives and basic teaching and learning contents.

According to the European Commission, (<https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/media-literacy>) by *media literacy* it is understood a competency that:

- One can access and use media;
- One can understand and make critical observations on media content;
- One can create/ produce communication in a multitude of contexts.

By media it is meant television and film, radio and recorded music, prints, internet and digital technologies. European Commission considers media literacy competence not only a fundamental competence of the young generation, but also for adults and elderly people, teachers and professionals of the media field, too. The European Commission perspective underlines the practical aspect of the media competence on three dimensions: access, analyse and multiplication/ producing. This definition is part of the pragmatic perspective by underlying the two most important elements: competence and literacy.

From the Romanian National Curriculum, the competencies are structured assemblies of knowledge, abilities and attitudes that are trained and developed due to the learning process. They allow the identification and the solving of specific problems of any fields or of general issues for different particular contexts.

The specific competencies are trained during a school year, they are derived of general competencies and represents steps in achieving the general ones. These specific competencies are accompanied by learning activities organized by learning strategies and ways. The school level curriculum offers as examples, different types of learning activities that integrates didactic strategies together with the real student experience. The teacher has the freedom to use the examples offered by the curriculum, to add or to change them in order to achieve the educational objectives. This is the path that the official documents on national curriculum assures their contextualized application, assuring personalized educational path for each student according with their own needs of development.

2. Media literacy curriculum – research design and methodology

In this study we aim to analyse the media literacy competence within the Romanian National Curriculum, starting from the general definition of media literacy provided by the most common definitions and from the 8 key competences of education of European Union level:

Competence	Definition	Skills Set
Digital competence	1. Apply Technology Effectively: technology as a tool to research, organize, evaluate, and communicate information. 2. Use digital technologies, communication/networking tools, and social media appropriately to access, manage, integrate, evaluate, and create information to function successfully in a given environment. 3. Fundamental understanding of the ethical and legal issues surrounding the access and use of information technologies.	S1. Critical use of information technology for works S2. Basic skills in ICTS S3. Understanding the role, opportunity and risks related to ICT in everyday life. S4. Ability to use and handle technological tools and machines.

Table 1. Digital Competence

In order to achieve the research objective, we settled the content analysis method of all the national curricula, recognized by the Romanian Ministry of Education. The analysis unit was concepts as *media (mass-media)*, *media education*, *media literacy*. The following documents were analysed:

- 12 curricula (2004-2018, recognized by Ministry of Education) separated on 3 educational levels:
 - Primary school (I-IV class level);
 - Gymnasium (V to VIII class level);
 - Highschool (IX – XII/XIII class level, all types of education)
- Curricular areas:
 - Man and Society;
 - Counselling and orientation;
 - Technologies

- Types of official documents:
 - curricula provided by Ministry of Education;
 - School's Decision Curriculum

In order to determine the level of competence, we elaborated a 2-level scale that allowed us to explain how exactly the media competence is used, trained or mentioned as educational objectives or activities.

Our classification included:

- a. Active production – media is used as an educational strategy, as a creative instrument for students to use and critically understand;

Examples:

VII th grade. Education for democratic citizenship

1. recognizing the principles and values of the democratic society starting from given images, films and mass-media

2. presentation and discussion of certain study cases presented in media on delinquencies, especial on juvenile delinquencies (...)

VIII th grade Financial and economic education

1. evaluation of the information presented in mass-media about a certain product or economic-financial facts

- b. Soft source – media is simply mentioned as a possible, alternative source of information

Examples:

IIIrd and IV th grade. Civic Education

1. identification in small groups, of the moral values in imaginary or real situations (for example, farytales, mass-media stories, life experiences)

Level	Mentions	Description	Curriculum	Type of mention
Primary	1	Identifying in media	Civic Education (IV th grade)	Source - soft
Gymnasium	9	Formulating questions Identifying sources Play role of journalist Realizing different types of media	Critical thinking and child's rights (V th grade)	Active - production
	1	Identifying in media	Intercultural education (VI th grade)	Source - soft
	3	Identifying sources in media Analysis of the media content	Education for democracy and citizenship (VII th grade)	Source - soft
	1	Evaluating the information provided by media	Financial education (VIIIth grade)	Source - soft
	1	Mass media and public opinion	Educational project (VIIth grade) - proposal	
High School	1	Formulating a personal point of view starting from a media content	Philosophy (12 th grade)	Active - production
	1	Evaluating ones performances by internet research	Counselling and professional orientation (XI-XIII grade)	Active - production
	2	Enumeration as factors of socialization	Sociology (IX th grade)	Source - soft
	1	Enumeration	New education (IX th grade) – vocational	Source - soft

Table 2. Media literacy competence within Romanian National Curriculum

3. Conclusions and further discussions

Apart from the situation in South Korea, the subject of media education/ media literacy encounters a very low level of understanding and it is insufficient operationalized from the Romanian Formal Curricula (competencies, scientific content, educational resource or didactic strategy). The media education training programs are needed as the key role is played by teacher/ school in order for the students spend quality time during educational activities and on their spare time.

Recent Romanian national representative studies (Study on children use of the internet, 2019; Velicu, Balea, Barbovschi, 2019), underlined the increasing of media consume (internet) and the decreasing of the children age in internet use; A gap and inconsistencies between EU level (policies, regulations and strategies) and the national level (e.g. digital agenda, human rights, education etc.) is evidently underline by this type of research and the social and educational reality shows a stringent need for correlations.

As it was pointed out in the framework programme *Partnership for 21st Century Skills* (2003), “*Students will spend their adult lives in a multi-tasking, multifaceted, technology-driven, diverse, vibrant world — and they must arrive equipped to do so.*” From the pedagogical perspective also, especially the one process-oriented, media literacy is not a discipline to teach, but a new way of teaching, or even more, a *new way of learning*.

References

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