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КАТЕДРА „ПРЕДУЧИЛИЩНА И МЕДИЙНА ПЕДАГОГИКА"
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SUMMARY OF THE DISSERTATION,
ENTITLED "MEDIA LITERACY: GENESIS, RE-CONSIDERING EXPERIENCE, CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

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INTRODUCTION

Media literacy is most often associated with the development of competencies in new technologies and involves the ability to properly understand the media in terms of their environment, tools and content. This defined complex certainly includes also media management - information and communication technology skills, media usage skills for a variety of purposes and in a wide variety of contexts, information seeking, verification and dissemination skills. It also includes the competences resulting from digital education and digital citizenship, terms often used as equivalent, albeit with many differences. Based on the complexity of the issues discussed, developing media literacy covers learning and teaching - at different stages and ages. Therefore, this dissertation includes the basic definitions that underpin the media literacy related competences, traced along the path of their natural evolution. In addition, the theoretical part of the work presents numerous good practices from different countries, gathering and analyzing the rich experience that underlies our practical research - designing a sustainable model boosting media literacy development in Bulgaria and a program for media literacy education that is able to support it.

This program takes into account the requirements of the European Union in the field of digital education and citizenship, as key factors for upward individual development and, at the same time, a pledge for effective growth for all member-states.

The emphasis on the importance of media literacy and the resulting competencies and skills is mainly due to the lack of sufficient clarity on its very nature and capabilities, which goes hand in hand with the ever-increasing

number of political documents - international and national-requiring its inclusion not only at all levels of education, but also as a substantial part of the job descriptions, characterizing a huge number of professions. And while it is undisputed that the use of information and communication technologies on a global scale is constantly expanding in both their direction and depth, it is still not visible enough in many places around the world, Bulgaria included, how application of new technologies that help people to communicate better and more humanely, can be regarded as means rather than an end goal. The wealth of information available through the media and technology does not guarantee higher public awareness. This paradox, at first glance, poses a serious threat to democracy - not from violent attacks, but from apathy, passivity and the habit of spreading and exposing false information. In other words, technological advances, the entry of the media into more and more aspects of life, make their users more vulnerable. Citizens should therefore have the capacity to use and benefit from the media and not be trapped in fake news, manipulation and deception.

In addition to information and communication technologies, media literacy also focuses on the development of critical thinking and participation in public life through the media. In order to use the media appropriately, people need not only different technical skills (how to handle various media platforms), but rather abilities that allow them to evaluate and analyze multiple sources of information at the same time.

And as media literacy is more and more receiving implementation through digital technology, the term digital media literacy is also in use. In this sense, digitally literate are considered those people, who, in addition to being technologically literate, can use these skills to engage and participate in every

level of public life, from the consumption of social networks to the use of e-government. The development of digital-media literacy in the socio-economic, cultural and technological spheres certainly brings higher strategic value from a cultural, democratic and economic point of view, because it plays a key role in enhancing the collective intelligence of society by creating cultural and educational participation, which allows for not only social development but also for economic progress and competitiveness.

This dissertation analyzes the need for a clearer understanding of the essence of media literacy as an overall concept and as an educational strategy.It is the result of nearly ten years of systematic work involving project-based research; teaching experience, both in the field of academic and vocational training; active cooperation with NGO sector in the field of applied research; participation in many different initiatives in Bulgaria and abroad (in more than 20 countries from four continents), promoting the role and importance of media literacy. The project-based work involves participation in five separate projects: "Developing and implementing innovative techniques and models in media and information literacy in the context of civic education" (2009-2017), "Digital media literacy - part of the education for all" (2018), "Improving Media Literacy in Bulgaria", 2018-2019, Media Coach European Initiative, 2018-2020, and the "Doctoral School Project of Sofia University" (2017-2018).

As a result of our active teaching in the field of academic and vocational education related to both theory and practice of media literacy, we have developed many different specialized courses: "Media and Information Literacy", taught to BA students in Communication Management at the Faculty of Journalism and Mass Communication), "Use of Media and Technology in Inclusive Education", aimed at MA students in Foreign Language Teaching

Methodology, Favulty of Classical and Modern Philology, and "Psychological and Pedagogical Perspectives and Problems of Working in Digital Environment", aimed at the MA studens at the Faculty of Educational Studies and the Arts, offered for the first time in Bulgaria.

Within the framework of vocational education and training, we have developed a number of courses aimed at teachers from all levels of education: Digital Lesson Planning, Application of Digital Technologies in Foreign Language Learning and Media Literacy for Teachers (RAABE Academy) and " Planning the Language Class" and "Using Media Technologies in Learning "(Prosveta Publishers). Our numerous studies with children and students, conducted jointly with the ARC Foundation, the Bulgarian branch of the SAFE INTERNET and with Cassa dei Bambini Kindergarten, Sofia, played an important role in the development of these courses. Same goes valid for our research work with undergraduate and doctoral students in the fields of Media Pedagogy and Art Communication and Intercultural Education; Culture, Language, Literature, and Communication, and Communication Management. By the same token, we consider of high importance the participation in roundtables and conferences, such as: "Development of Digital Media Literacy in Bulgaria" (ARC, June, 2017), "Children and the Media" (Sofia University, November, 2017), Media Coach Project Meeting, (2018), "Creativity in Education" (October 2018), etc.

This experience has helped us to understand that media literacy is not a subject that should be just another discipline, taught at the different stages of education. Our understanding of media literacy means to view it as a holistic educational approach that needs to be applied in all subjects; as a means of using media and digital technology as a tool for critical thinking.

In other words - as a methodology for understanding, absorbing and managing the world of knowledge, in which the media is our guide, a methodology for learning and teaching, and also for upward personal and professional development.

Such definition and understanding of media literacy has helped us to feel more confident in our activities related to the research, aimed at analysing in this dissertation in general, and in specific, to the setting of the specific goals, to the selectiion of sources to consult, and for choosing the assessment criteria for analyzing the degree of achievement of the goals and results obtained.

1. METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

The research field of our work is media literacy as a whole concept, and the object - the creation of a sustainable model for its formation in Bulgaria. And more specifically, the development of a comprehensive media literacy training program. This program uses the tools of different professional fields - pedagogy, psychology, methodology, media science, ethics, IT.

In our view, achieving this goal requires:

1. Creating a flexible system of media literacy qualification and retraining for existing teachers who are able to integrate the approach in the disciplines they teach, and thus directly support learners of different ages in the development of media literacy;

2. Incorporating the various aspects of media literacy - pedagogical, psychological, journalistic, legal and ethical - into University students' education (especially of future teachers) - revealing the essence of the approach as an alternative to traditional learning and teaching;

3. Active awareness-raising to promote the nature and role of media literacy as a core competency of the 21st century.

The hypothesis that served as a starting point for this study was that developing an effective media literacy program should be based on:

(a) an in-depth analysis of the overall evolution of the concept itself on a global scale, as a synthesis of critical thinking and media, and media technologies;

(b) a thorough review of key initiatives and practices that have led to both a change in the direction of media literacy development, and have produced sustainable results; and c) understanding of the specificics of the context of

media literacy application, including social, economic, political, educational, and other parameters.

The tasks we set ourselves in this study included:

- Analysis of the essence of media literacy as a concept and educational approach: genesis of the idea, directions in development, requirements of the European Union;

- Identification of the main factors that enabled the successful implementation of media literacy in different national contexts; Critical review of the various aspects of media literacy that build the dynamics of media communication;

- Analysis of the relation- knowledge acquisition - communication - media literacy formation;

- Analysis of the implementation of the requirements of the European Union in the field of media literacy development in Bulgaria;

- Review of leading experience in the development of media literacy in terms of the factors contributing to the effectiveness of policies implemented; Analysis of the Bulgarian context for the development of media literacy paying attention to key factors, such as the media environment, demographic and political characteristics of society, the state of media literacy training at all levels of education;

- Identification of major players contributing to the formation of media literacy in Bulgaria;

- Choosing a model for developing media literacy in Bulgaria;

- Design of a media literacy training program.

The stages of the research were four and focused on:

1. Working with sources to analyze the essence of media literacy as a concept that introduces a holistic educational approach to training, and combines critical thinking with digital technology and media skills. During its implementation, our working hypothesis was formulated and the main topics that we offer in details in the training program were outlined;

2. Research of good practices and leading experience. This stage helped us to identify the factors contributing to the formation of media literacy and to identify those that hinder its development and effective implementation;

3. Choosing an experimental model for the implementation of the program, which allowed specifying the subjects of training, matching the learning content with their interests and needs, and selecting opportunities for sustainable development;

4. Designing the program as topics, goals, learning activities and expected results, which allowed us to feel convinced of its potential to meet the needs of the selected target groups.

The methods we used in our study included:

- theoretical analysis of sources, concepts and practices related to the development of media literacy;

- a survey of teachers and trainees revealing trends in their media behavior with regard to:

--- types of media used

--- types of digital media used

--- goals in media usage

--- Attitudes towards media and digital media

--- Attitudes towards using digital tools in training and education

--- Understanding the essence of media literacy; - analysis of the environment for identifying strengths and weaknesses, opportunities and challenges regarding the development of media literacy in Bulgaria; - design of a training program for the development of media literacy in Bulgaria In our opinion, the chosen research framework, which binds the various elements of our work, has enabled the achievement of the set tasks, which allowed us to test the working hypothesis and led to the achievement of the formulated basic goal - to offer a sustainable model for improving the state of media literacy by compiling of a training program supporting the implementation of the approach in education.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The idea of developing media literacy dates back to the early 1970s, when it - under the term "information literacy" - emerged in response to the rapid development of the computer industry, mainly in Western Europe, Japan and the United States. In a report from the US Software and Information Industry Association, the term "information literacy" is used to describe the "techniques and skills" required to use a wide range of information tools as well as primary sources to find information solutions to various problems.

Around the same period - the mid-1970s and the first decade of the 21st century - the concept of media literacy developed furtehr. It aimed at raising public awareness of the media influence in general, to create, among media users, an active stance on everything that is published and broadcast in the media. The generally shared opinion was that media literacy implied the availability of competencies that help learners of all ages to interpret correctly the content of any type of media - print, electronic and internet based.

In the context of the second decade of our century, against the backdrop of the boom of social networks and digital platforms, a kind of convergency of the concepts of media and information literacy started to be observed, along with the introduction of and the idea of the need of digital-media literacy, as a specific approach to the 21st century education. According to this concept a proper understanding of media as an environment, tools and content should be achieved through the integration of knowledge, skills and attitudes about them, across the whole range of disciplines covered in the curicula. Meanwhile a rich experience got accumulated in the area, which on its turn brought about much more interdisciplinary approach related to media literacy theory and applied

research. This whole complex led to the development of digital media literacy. In other words, objects that symbolize the digital age - smartphones, tablets, laptops, social networks, etc. - except as tools for accessing, creating and disseminating information – started to be seen as means of civic participation. However, this consequence became also a prerequisite for the continuous development of media pedagogy, because it caused new and new changes, both in the overall media and educational environment, and in its elements - goals, methods, subjects and relations between them. Media literacy started to be defined as a core competence enabling users to use media, media knowledge, media content, media effects and messages, for the improvement of their critical analytical skills, and for their higher civic participation and better social inclusion. Hence, media literacy can also be defined as the ability to properly use and apply the media (tools and environment) and as a means of communication and upward personal development. Media literacy have started to be regarded as competence developed also by media pedagogy, as a key consequence of the acquisition of knowledge on education in the digital age.

According to European Commission documents, "The goal of media literacy is to raise awareness among all its citizens of the many forms of media messages that are encountered in everyday life; a tool that can help understand how the media filters perceptions and beliefs, shapes popular culture, and influences personal choices. Media literacy enables the development of critical thinking and creative skills. "

Despite its full membership in the European Union since 01.01.2007, at present Bulgaria is still far from the average standards for media literacy development in the Union, ranking 27th among all 28 countries; a fact allowing

claims that EU recommendations and directives are not effectively implemented in the Bulgaria. During the 2018/2019 school year, the Bulgarian Ministry of Education provided for the first time media literacy classes at school, but this became possible in a relatively small number of schools in the country. No comprehensive Strategy for the development of media literacy has been published yet, although some specific directions in this area can be found in the Strategy for the effective implementation of information and communication technologies in education and science of the Republic of Bulgaria (2014-2020), adopted in 2014.

In general, however, the education system in Bulgaria is not yet able to propose targeted and interconnected policies, part of a unified strategy for developing media literacy in the country, and initiatives in this area, are insufficient, and coming mainly due to the efforts of academics and NGO representatves. And it is that situation which has become the main reason for this dissertation, aimed at developing a sustainable model for the implementation of a media literacy training program in Bulgaria.

3. PRACTICAL ORIENTATION OF THE RESEARCH

In order to create and implement an effective media literacy training model in Bulgaria, we needed a detailed analysis of the overall context, including a number of factors, such as:

1) Analysis of the state of the media market;

2) Analysis of the social and demographic characteristics to determine the choice of key target groups;

3) Analysis of the state of media literacy eduaction;

4) Analysis of the political factors influencing the process of media literacy formation;

5) Identification of stakeholders and possible partnerships;

6) Analysis of the business aspects of the implementation of the model and creation of conditions for sustainable development.

The lack of official and credible information is a serious obstacle to the attempts for qualitative analysis of the Bulgarian media market, which is characterized by too an opaque functioning. Both print runs and sales are unclear.

The radio sector also operates in a lack of clarity mode. Public data on media market shares of players and media groups is not supported. Similar is the situation with the online media, where market shares of individual companies are not published. The lack of clarity on the real origin of capital in the Bulgarian media creates a big problem. Real data can hardly be commented on due to transparency deficits - not all print publishers comply with the legal requirement to declare their true owners, and the electronic media continue to take

advantage of the off-shore business registration capabilities, making any real identification impossible.

The assessment of the state of media freedom in Bulgaria made by a number of reputable agencies, such as Freedom House, IREX, Reporters Without Borders, etc. done over the last ten years, show a steady decline, from 70th to 120th ranking among 190 countries surveyed. That is why a White Paper on the Freedom of Speech in Bulgaria was drafted and it claims that "the independent media and journalists in Bulgaria are under unprecedented pressure", and that "if the different groups of media problems are not addressed in a timely manner, the free media in Bulgaria will disappear completely."

To conclude, we may say that inspite of the fact, that during the last 30 years the Bulgarian media market has changed fundamentally, its key technological, economic and social transformations have hardly contributed to media production and content of high quality.

The analysis of the media environment shows the growing need for increasing the level of media literacy in the Bulgarian society, both as a way of successful counteracting the current negative tendencies, and as an opportunity to take advantage of the benefits that the modern digital media environment has offered, as means to provide for upward personal and professional development.

This led to the need of a thorough analysis of some of the basic social and demographic characteristics relevant to the choice and design of the media literacy training model. In this analysis, we focus on:

- the profile and number of representatives of the selected target groups;

- number of digital media tools used (smartphones; tablets; laptops; personal computers);

- number of teachers in primary schools;

-the presence or absence of willingness among stakeholders to support the implementation of this type of training, ie clarity on the attitudes of students, parents, teachers, school principals vis-à-vis media literacy development;

- the opportunities and challenges of the overall educational environment; and last but not least

- the possible sources of financial support for such a large-scale initiative.

Statistics for Bulgaria show that 50% of children get access to the Internet, i.e. to media, media and content up to the age of 7, i.e. before they started school, before they learned to write and read. The same study shows a significant increase over the six-year period in the use of digital media by children - smartphones, tablets, etc. According to a joint study conducted in 2016 by UNICEF - Bulgaria and the State Agency for the Protection of the Child, 93% of Bulgarian children use the internet daily, 20% of children contact people who know only through the Internet. NSI data show that there are 1969 schools in the country as of 2017, and the total number of students in the country is 587,800, of which about 19% (nearly 112,000) study in Sofia.

The data we provide, illustrating the widespread adoption of digital technologies and tools in Bulgarian society, including among children, do not indicate a tendency to develop critical thinking skills, to understand, analyze and evaluate media content. Moreover, the statistics on media literacy capacity cited

show a lack (and even absence) of the majority of educators, parents and teachers.

These data are confirmed by our surveys of over 300 teachers and over 100 students, as well as by surveys of leading non-profit organizations - the Parents Association and the ARC Foundation, etc. - working in the field of digital media literacy. All this reinforces our conviction that it is precisely among teachers, and beginning and present, that we should focus our efforts on developing the media literacy initiative.

As already argued, media literacy can be defined as a competence that allows consumers to access, create, process, distribute, analyze, and evaluate media content, including text, graphics, photos, and video, and thereby to formulate, decipher, and communicate a large variety of media messages. Internalization of that competence means starting to acquire it at an early age, given that 51% of Bulgarian children access the internet before they start school, according to statistics (Danov, 2018). This is accounted for by educational authorities in the country making efforts to help children with their media literacy related skills. According to data from the Bulgarian Ministry of Education and Science, primary school curricula include various subjects that assist media literacy development. What follows is a review of the way the educational system tackles these subjects.

Starting in the second year of school, children take 32 classes (one class per week) in information technology. The curriculum is aimed at acquiring basic knowledge, skills, and positive attitudes toward digital technology. The topics include "Computing Systems," "Information Science and Information Activities," "Electronic Communications," and "Information Culture."

Additionally, the school curricula try to integrate the acquisition of digital literacy skills through all subjects according to the requirements of the state educational standards. The idea behind this approach is to teach children both traditional literacy (reading and writing) and media literacy (digital media skills) simultaneously, thus helping them comprehend and use different digital instruments.

During the third year of school, children start studying "Computer Systems" and "Information Activities." Both subjects are aimed at:

1. The acquisition of basic skills in the usage and application of digital tools such as personal computers, tablets, laptops, smartphones etc.;

2. The acquisition of key knowledge related to various information activities and clarity on the functionalities of the digital instruments;

3. The acquisition of basic skills in the usage of computer applications;

4. The introduction of basic ethical principles related to digital media usage;

5. The development of positive attitudes toward digital technologies and willingness to use them in daily life.

Our in-depth analysis on this educational approach shows, however, that the achievement of the set goals remains quite problematic due to the following reasons. In regard to Goal 1, it has to be noted during their second year in school, children in the majority of households already possess the key skills needed for the usage of digital media tools (Kanchev, 2016). Furthermore, teachers classify the technological tools currently available at Bulgarian schools as "out-of-date," "sluggish," and functionally "quite inappropriate" for every day application, especially when compared to those which children use in their homes (Interviews with one hundred teachers conducted by the author in 2019). The same is true in regard to Goal 2 and Goal 5, at least when it comes to the way

they are being implemented by the Ministry of Education and Science. The outdated school technologies offered to the children create a perception among children, parents, and teachers that "schools are not capable of meeting the needs of modern life (Interviews with one hundred teachers conducted by the author in 2019). It is this attitude that seems to hamper the achievement of Goal 4, as it seems that the outdated technology in schools brings about another negative attitude, i.e. "the strong irrelevance of school with respect to today's realities." This also includes various ethical issues, such as ineffective systems and structures, and needless bureaucracy in relation to teachers and students that emphasizes outdated values that are not relevant to the realities of the present and future (Interviews with one hundred teachers conducted by the author in 2019). The fact that it is quite typical for many of the schools in Bulgaria to lack modern digital applications that the majority of children consistently use at home impedes the achievement of the Goal 3, thus helping the development of the above mentioned negative attitudes.

During the third year of primary school, along with the subjects offered the previous year, children start studying one more subject related to media literacy: "Electronic Communication." The analysis of the set goals is given below together with their formulation.

1. *Application of digital media instruments in different situations and contexts*: As already mentioned, most are not part of the school learning environment. Instead, they belong to totally different contexts. This does not allow primary education per se to take advantage of the high level of interest that children demonstrate toward social media, for instance. Instead of harnessing this interest for teaching, learning, and development, schools are creating and encouraging numerous unnecessary taboos.

2. *Familiarization with various information activities and striving to apply them:* At that age (9-10) children are already familiar with using digital technology to communicate and to search for information, as well as to create interactive media content. Their sporadic application in schools, however, along with the negative ethos created by the school environment often leads to the forbidden fruit effect. Therefore, children continue to use digital media instruments without having any meaningful pedagogical support and they are thus constantly left to improve their media skills by trial and error, or by relying on the help of their older and more skillful friends. This process brings about a negative attitude to school in general, and more specifically, a negative attitude to media literacy education.

3. *Improved practical skills for media applictions usage:* There is no doubt that children at the age of 10 possess many basic digital skills, but that is hardly a product of the educational support provided at school. The reason for the schools' inability to provide this support is the small number of teachers qualified in media literacy, the missing technological base capable of answering children's needs, and the fact that schools' resources do not compare to the digital media tools available to children in their homes.

4. *Inroduction to digital media safety rules and to the ethical standards of digital media usage:* The analysis of this goal should certainly consider teachers' willingness to tackle the issue as well as the experience they have to do so. Teachers are making lots of efforts to familiarize children with the numerous dangers of using the internet. Key problems, however, such as online aggression, cyber-bullying, etc., remain insufficiently addressed as is clear on a daily basis. According to recent research, many similar problems are a direct consequence of children's online habits and behavior (Kanchev, 2016).

5. *Stimulating children's curiosity and the willingness to apply digital media tools in their daily habits:* Achieving this goal is hardly possible given that for the most part, school administrations rarely allow children to use their personal smartphones and tablets in class, while those available in the school environment are outdated and children show no interest in using them. In a number of school districts in Bulgaria, especially in the countryside, there are a lot of teachers above the age of retirement who are still working, and due to their negative attitudes to new technologies and their preference for traditional education, the above-mentioned goals are not at all achieved.

The school curricula related to media literacy that is offered during the 4th year of school aims at improving the skills acquired during the previous two years and also attempts to create positive attitudes vis-à-vis digital technologies. The goals as formulated include:

1. *Building awareness of the significance of digital media tools and better understanding their role in the overall personal development of children*;

2. *Applying digital media instruments for school purposes;*

3. *Improving the already formed digital media literacy;*

4. *Understanding the safety rules and ethical standards of digital media usage;*

5. *Encouraging readiness and willingness to use media literacy instruments for educational purposes*.

The first goal is being achieved to a large extent, but it is not due to, rather despite the school curricula, as children already apply digital technology quite willingly. As for the second goal, it has hardly been achieved as the majority of Bulgarian schools do not have enough capacity for collaborative usage of digital technology. It is mostly limited to the use of power point presentations in class, which is too single channeled, as it is directed mainly from the teacher to

the school-children, thereby hardly contributing to a broad application of digital media for the purposes of learning on the one hand, and failing to improve children's technical skills on the other (Goal 3). The achievement of goal 4 is quite problematic due to the reasons already explained, as well as because the number of classes allocated for its accomplishment, usually 1-2 per year, is insufficient. Goal 5 seems to be easier to achieve because children's technical skills allow them to use digital media tools to search for and access information. It is unlikely however, that they use these skills for school purposes.

The above offered analysis leads to the conclusion that school curricula related to media literacy are much more on track on paper than in reality, as many schools still lack sufficient technology and staff to teach the effective application of digital media tools. This is especially valid in the formation of proper attitudes toward *netiquette* (ethical usage of the internet) as well as toward the general awareness that nowadays, digital technology must be an indispensable part of the school learning environment, because they are vital to both personal and professional development. The deficits mentioned so far unfortunately continue with respect to media literacy education in middle school as is explained further in this article.

Middle school in Bulgaria starts in 5th grade and lasts for four years. With regard to media literacy development during that stage, students study "Information Technology" and there are 34 classes per year (once a week). The main idea behind this is the improvement of already acquired digital skills. Hence, school curricula pay attention to areas such as computer systems, information technology, information activities, electronic communication, and information culture. Students are expected to be able to create, process, and disseminate text, graphics, photos, video, as well as to freely operate different digital applications. They also need to be able to interpret the different formats,

to translate text into graphics and vice versa, and to explain pictures, audio, and video. Furthermore, they should also be able to search for and verify information on the internet. In a nutshell, along with the various technical skills, children should also possess the ability to analyze and evaluate media content. In other words, there needs to be a greater degree of interaction between the various elements that constitute media literacy, namely access, analysis, evaluation, and design of media content, as that goes hand in hand with the development of critical thinking. The key goals currently set in school curricula include:

1. Computer skills;

2. Skills to freely navigate in the internet by using different search engines;

3. Extended knowledge on computer system functionality and the skills to process and present information;

4. Skills to design and process text, graphics, pictures, and video;

5. Skills to analyze the above-mentioned formats;

6. Skills to design, archive, and retrieve various computer files.

Our research based on interviews with 100 teachers shows, however, that the achievement of these goals is problematic due to the reasons explained below. According to the teachers that were interviewed, over 95% of middle school students can use computers and know their functionalities, over 80% can successfully navigate the internet using smartphones, tablets, laptops, etc., but less than 50% are able to use digital tools for learning purposes, a fact that makes Goals 4, 5, and 6 pointless.
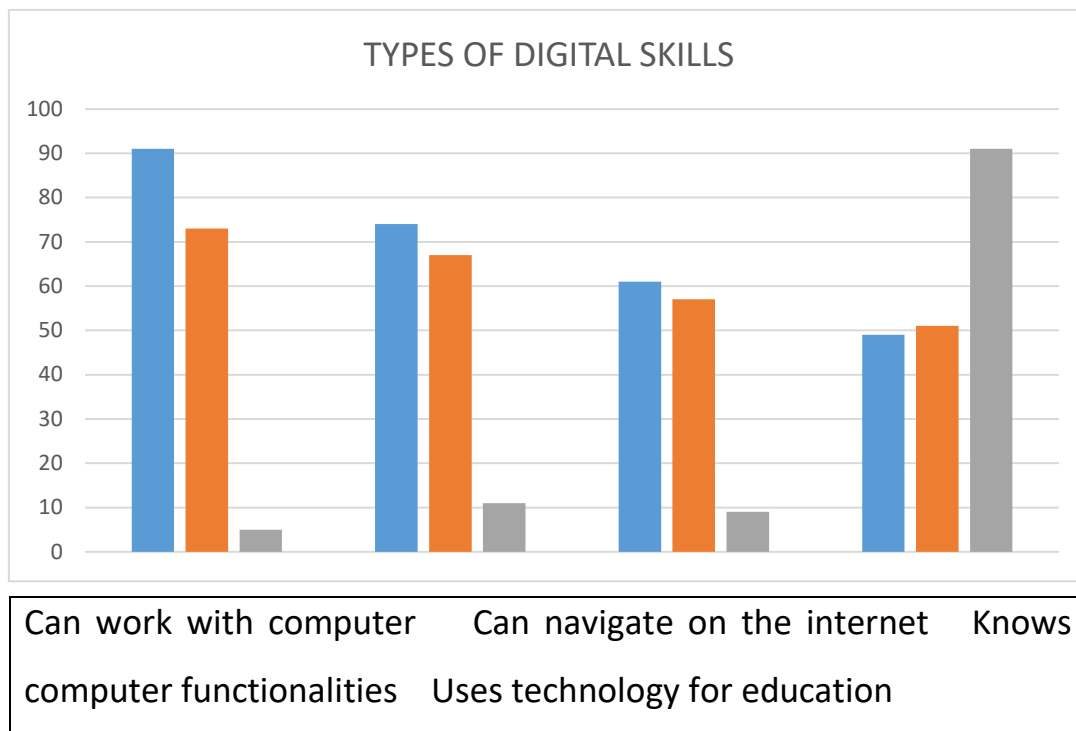
TYPES OF DIGITAL SKILLS

Can work with computer   Can navigate on the internet   Knows computer functionalities   Uses technology for education

Fig. 1. Digital skills of mid-school children

Given the relatively high percentage of teachers who are not computer literate themselves, the current media literacy curricula are quite irrelevant. Moreover, the targeted skills remain unused when it comes to their application in the rest of the classes, i.e. Bulgarian language, mathematics, the sciences, humanities, and foreign languages. In our opinion, the key reason for this is the lack of proper understanding of media literacy as a cultural characteristic of 21st century realities.

The key goals of media literacy development during the 6th grade include:

1. Understanding the role of computer operational system;

2. Using word-processing programs;

3. Reading and analyzing different types of graphics;

4. Understanding the potential of electronic communication;

5. Improving in-depth skills in integrating files with text, graphics, etc., and processing electronic information;

6. Developing skills to archive and retrieve different types of files.

Our analysis shows that even the very formulation of the learning goals demonstrates their irrelevance and lack of a relationship with other school subjects, not to mention the missing idea of using the acquired knowledge and skills for upward personal development in real life situations. We can conclude that at this stage of education, media related skills get farther and farther away from how they are envisaged by the General European Qualification Framework.

The deficits discussed so far remain in media literacy related subjects taught during the next two years of middle school. Students in 7th grade are expected to:

1. Be aware of all key parameters of the computer operational system;

2. Be able to work in teams using electronic communication;

3. Archive and process electronic data.

These expectations are not fully met as students do not systematically use their digital skills in the rest of the subjects they are taught. This then does not allow the proper internalization of the skills. What is worse, the lack of any practical application of the media literacy related learning content brings about strong negative attitudes to both digital culture and school education. This does not allow the implementation of the strategic idea behind overall digital culture development, i.e. using digital tools for problem solving, collaboration, and critical analysis of the world. That, in turn, makes the goals set for 8th grade irrelevant, as is evident in the way these goals have been formulated:

1. Confidence in working with digital media tools and electronic data;

2. Skills for creation of electronic data and its dissemination over the internet;

3. Teamwork and effective communication related to students' future professions via digital tools.

These three goals do not seem well planned, firstly because as our interviews show, the overall majority of students start planning their career at a later stage (high school), and secondly due to the fact that confidence as a positive attitude results from development of skills, which as practice shows, have been acquired outside of school. Thirdly, students claim they do not have teamwork skills, not only in regard to digital media tools usage, but also in general, which they think is a major deficit of school education.

During 9th and 10th grade, school curricula include a subject called "Information Technology," which is offered for 36 classes per year (again once a week), when students focus on:

1. Information technology and computer systems;

2. Text processing;

3. Graphic design;

4. Design of integrated files.

The key learning goals related to media literacy development include:

1. Understanding the roles and functions of digital media instruments;

2. Developing skills for using technology for problem-solving;

3. Observing safety and ethical rules.

Our analysis of these goals shows that the majority of students are well aware of digital tools' functions, although they predominantly use these tools for entertainment, interpersonal communication, and search for information. However, they lack the skills for information verification and analysis. The main reason for this deficit is the fact that during the course of their education, students neither work on problem-solving systematically, nor are case-studies used as a method of education, and media literacy formation is not stressed in

the different subjects taught in school. Hence, even when it is part of students' life experience, media literacy is hardly associated with school education. It is rather regarded as something students have learned away from school, while school education burdens them with knowledge that they claim is not relevant to real life (Interviews with 100 students from Sofia University, Faculty of Journalism and Mass Communication, Faculty of Classical and Modern Philology and Faculty of Education Studies and the Arts).

The last conclusion opens a discussion on the essence and role of media literacy, as well as on its multifaceted nature resulting from the acquisition of knowledge, skills, and positive attitudes, along with the development of critical thinking. Before analyzing that issue, however, we will mention that media literacy related classes are not included in the school curricula aimed at students in 11th and 12th grade. Most probably the authors of these high school curricula consider media literacy skills as already developed, and hence unnecessary as classes during the last years of school. This brings us to the issue of the whole philosophy of education, its overall relevance and appropriateness in terms of preparing people for real life in regard to their ability to cope effectively with their environment, to pose the right questions and find the needed solutions, to analyze, forecast, and prevent negative consequences and manage reality. In other words, it is about discussing critical thinking and the role of education in its development. Hence, it is necessary to define critical thinking and explore how it interacts with media literacy development. There are plenty of definitions and concepts related to critical thinking, some of which conflict with each other on the issue of that competence. The main differences relate to whether critical thinking should be regarded as a general educational approach applicable to the upbringing of children, to all forms of pedagogical interaction and education, including school level, university and lifetime learning, or to whether it should

be considered a method of characterizing the specifics of each subjects taught in school. There are also conceptual differences when it comes to the way critical thinking has to be formed on an individual level. According to the most widespread concept of Bulgarian education, critical thinking should be regarded as being based on common sense usage, on correct and proper evidence that shows whether a certain statement is true or not. From this perspective critical thinking relates much more to the way a claim is formed, rather than to how it is assessed (Moore & Parker, 2009: 23–27). It is also related to decision making, which requires an ability to find, analyze, and select appropriate arguments (*Ibid*).

There is also another scientific trend in the field, supported by authors such as [Bassham, Irwin, Nardone & Wallace (Bassham, Irwin, Nardone & Wallace, 2010)](), who regard critical thinking as "a framework encompassing a large number of cognitive skills and intellectual characteristics needed for the effective identification, analysis and evaluation of arguments and correct statements that are then used to find out and overcome own bias and subjective attitude, and ultimately present convincing arguments and examples that help proper decision making and become basis of our behavior." To consider the validity of those concepts, we need to view critical thinking also as a generally accepted social goal set by all levels of education and as equally significant for all age groups. David Klooster's ideas support this notion, as he defines critical thinking as both an individual and social feature. Searching for and verifying information is an initial rather than final step, as the process is based on asking questions aimed at solving a problem, as long as there is enough evidence to motivate the ultimate decision. (Klooster, 2001).

The same ideas are confirmed by the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, where critical thinking is defined as a key norm of modern society

whose development should be considered a main educational goal. According to this definition, "critically thinking people possess competences and attitudes that help them take the right decisions in all types of contexts and circumstances, making a correct and motivated choice among numerous options." The article also views critical thinking as a result of media literacy education, which is much more a product of the numerous competences that modern education brings about than to the skills derived from media technology usage and application. From this perspective critical thinking allows us to find any media content, analyze and evaluate its validity, and make the correct assessment of results and consequences. In other words, critical thinking is the engine that generates the motivated choices and decisions that help people develop successfully both on an individual and social level.

This is the way media literacy development and its interrelations with critical thinking is assessed and understood by the all members of the Bulgarian Media Literacy Coalition, in which we are also participating. The Coalition brings together organizations and individuals engaged in the development of education, media, and civil society. All members share a common concern for the necessity of adequate education for Bulgarian children and they acknowledge the need for its rapid improvement and transformation according to the requirements of the 21st century. In an attempt to assist state institutions and organizations in their efforts to modernize education, the Coalition aims at developing media literacy and critical thinking in order to guarantee the safety and well-being of consumers of all ages in contemporary society. Thanks to its activities, the Bulgarian Ministry of Education and Science introduced media literacy classes in schools at the beginning of 2018-19 school year. This decision, however, requires the adequate training of teachers so that media literacy skills are taught in all subjects, and not as a completely separate discipline, as was the

case until now. There is an urgent need for instructional materials and the development of a methodology of teaching that literacy. In November of 2018, the Coalition organized a conference in which we also took part, where numerous discussions on the topic were conducted, including one on "How to Teach Media Literacy," and where the European Commissioner of Digital Economy, Maria Gabriel, gave a special address, in which she critically analyzed media literacy development in Bulgaria, and offered various examples of good practices. The participants in the conference came up with a list of recommendations, among which are the following:

- Enhancement of cooperation among stakeholders for design, approbation, approval, and dissemination of didactic content;

- Adaptation of social networks for primary school children;

- Legal amendments related to media regulation of online content;

- Drafting and implementation of a code on digital media ethics;

- Drafting and implementation of educational standards related to media literacy;

-Development of critical thinking through implementation of modern teaching and learning approaches and collaborative work.

Based on all of this, we may conclude that media literacy and digital media literacy development has begun to receive the attention it is due, but there is still a long way to go, given that statistic show that Bulgaria ranks towards of bottom of European Union states in this field. Currently there are efforts being made to include media literacy training in programs carried out at the higher education level. Several universities are already making efforts in this respect as explained below:

Sofia University St. Kliment Ohridski

The Faculty of Journalism and Mass Communication at Sofia University offers BA, MA, and PhD programs in Journalism, PR, Book Publishing, and Communication Management. In March 2019 the Faculty launched a program on media and information literacy, comprised of 45 academic hours and covering the key issues in the field. So far 35 students have completed the program successfully.

The Faculty of Educational Studies and the Arts of Sofia University has for the last ten years conducted a BA program entitled "Pedagogy of Media and Artistic Communication," which is strongly focused on training future teachers to use and apply digital media literacy at the kindergarten and primary school levels. Each year between 10 and 12 students complete the four-year education program and among the various didactic and pedagogical disciplines they study, are Media Studies, Artistic Communication, Graphic Design, Digital Media, Media Literacy Formation and Development, Characteristics of Children Audiences, Child Psychology, Critical Thinking Development, etc.

New Bulgarian University

The University offers a BA Program in Journalism where no media literacy or any related subjects are taught. Students that complete the program acquire knowledge on communication theory, media studies, and journalism. Currently university authorities are considering starting a specialized course in media literacy.

American University in Blagoevgrad

Along with the various courses related to journalism, communications, and media, there is a special course entitled "Development of visual and media literacy as sources of creativity." The course, however, is strongly oriented

towards technology, and hardly touches on the educational aspects of media literacy (using media as an educational tool).

The University for National and World Economy

The University offers two media related programs, one in Media Economics, and one in Media Journalism. The former tackles broadcasting communications, media management, media planning, media marketing, PR, and business communications, while the latter is oriented towards qualifying journalists for all types of media. Currently there are no course on media literacy.

University of Library Studies and Information Technologies

The University offers a BA program training librarians and experts to work with the administration of information. Many courses relate to computer technology, computer networks, information systems, software development, intellectual property, application of technology in business, and administration. Yet there is no course on media literacy development, although university authorities a planning to launch such a program in the near future.

There are also a few universities in the country offering educational studies, such as Konstantin Preslavski University in Shoumen, Southwest University in Blagoevgrad, Paisii Hilendarski University in Plovdiv, Patriarch Evtimii University in Velko Tarnovo, etc., all of which attempt to develop media literacy related courses and/or programs, but currently do not have the capacity to do so. These realities prove that ultimately, while media literacy has begun to be prioritized, there is still a long way to go in order for its opportunities to outweigh its challenges.

Towards a sustainable model for media literacy development

On 3rd of May, 2018 the European Parliamen voted a Resolution related to pluralism of opinion and media freedom in Europe stressing the fact that "in today's context media literacy is a key democratic competence which empowers citizens to critically assess, create and use media content". The Resolution asks the European Commission and all member-states to come up with concrete measures boosting media literacy development and making it an indespensible part of their educational policies. Trying to comply with the Resolution and fully aware of the fact that Bulgaria is among the least developed EU countries in the field of media literacy, the University of Sofia St. Kl. Ohridski pays strong efforts to improve the situation in this area. Over the last few years the Faculty of Educational Studies and the Arts (FESA) offers BA, MA and PhD programs on Media Pedagogy and Artistic Communication with a strong focus on media literacy, the Faculty of Journalism and Mass Communication (FJMC) has included few subjects related to that area; the Faculty of Classical and Modern Philology (FCMP) runs courses focused on the ways media and digital technologies can be used for teaching and learning purposes.

Since the end of 2017 these three faculties have joined an international project entitled European Media Coach Initiative, and consequently effectively cooperate in regard to media literacy development, together with six other organizations from Belgium, Cyprus, Greece, the Netherlands, Portugal and Romania. Subsequent to this project participation the Faculty of Educational Studies and the Arts launched a post-graduate program on Media Literacy, aimed at students, teachers, journalists and other professionals, all interested in media coaching. The program allows the participants to deepen their knowledge on the media, and on digital-media technologies, as well as to transform this

knowledge into practical skills, which allow their tailor-made usage in various working environments.

As a result of the above-mentioned cooperation media literacy training got also included in some of the under-graduate and post-graduate programs, taught at Sofia University: Media Pedagogy and Artistic Communication, BA and MA; Preschool and Primary School Education, MA; Intercultural Education and Intercultural Communication, MA (Faculty of Educational Studies and the Arts); Methodology of Foreign Language Teaching, MA, and Language, Communication and Media, MA (Faculty of Classical and Modern Philology); Media Management, BA (Faculty of Journalism and Mass Communication). Programs curricula and syllabi got prepared by Sofia University professors, experienced in the field of the media, digital technologies, and educational studies, and are fully in accordance with the national educational standards. The students who successfully graduate from those programs are eligible to receive three credits in accordance with the Bulgarian national educational framework, as well as get certificated which allows them to practice media literacy training in all Bulgarian institutions for high education, or in other organizations that require in-depth competences in the digital-media field.

Along with that a new post-graduate program on Media Literacy has been launched, which involves the capacity of the three faculties mentioned above. The program, conducted by Sofia University professors comprises 60 hours and includes 28 hours for self-training (offline, online and interactive) by using different files, as well as 32 hours for face-to-face training. It can also be offered upon request to other organizations, and curriculum and syllabus could be adapted according to the needs of the respective target groups. After successful completion of the training program, subsequent to a successfully passed final

exam all participants receive a Certificate for Media Literacy Competence and Media Coaching, issued by Sofia University "St. Kl. Ohridski". Holders of such certificate receive also two credits in accordance with the Bulgarian educational framework requirements.

The overall dynamics of media and media technology development brings about constant changes in the very contexts media literacy is used. This calls for constant needs for updating of the program, and hence, its designers offer opportunities for refreshment of knowledge, skills and competences already acquired. This is made possible through participation in an Up-Grade Course offered at Sofia University at the start of winter and summer term. The course is face-to-face, with a duration of eight academic hours, and a short course assignment. The course gives participants one credit and a renewed certificate for valid for another three years.

Students in the post-graduate program on Media Literacy work in the topics, prepared in the form of dossiers, prepared in advance, reading, writing, doing hands-on activities, online, offline and in class. They also use the so called method "flipped classroom" focused on individual work at home which allows the smooth transfer of theoretical knowledge acquired online prior to face to face sessions. Then, during the face-to-face sessions they can more effectively carry out the practical tasks and concentrate mainly on issues which they find more difficult to do alone by themselves. The method encourages motivation and allows for a better acquisition of knowledge, skills and positive attitudes related to the respective topics of the program curriculum. During the program, participants work actively on the preparation of their own plan for usage of digital media literacy tools in their own working practices. This plan allows them

to start the direct application of the acquired digital media competences and media literacy skills right after the successful completion of the program.

Upon successful completion of the program each participant is equipped with a large spectrum of competences, based on knowledge, skills and better vision and positive attitudes vis-à-vis application of digital media. During the course the focus is on transferring the competences acquired into measurable pedagogic and didactic skills, which allows each participant to see the benefits of the training in his/her own working environment. The graduates from the program may themselves become examples not only for proper usage of digital media tools but also for fair and objective assessment of other people's digital media competences.

1. Knowledge: Participants to the program who complete it successfully acquire in-depth due knowledge about media, digital media platforms and tools and would be able to use them for upward development, as our experience, based on leading practice in the field has shown. Trainees will know a lot about key media topics that get often public attention, moreover they could use creatively this knowledge in their own professional field. At the end of the program participants will be quite familiar with the very essence and aims of media literacy, i.e. they will:

1.1. Understand the dynamics of the relations between media, media technology, communication and education

1.2. Understand the essence and goals of planning in education

1.3. Comprehend the essence and structure of the news and the technology of their production

1.4. Understand the characteristics of the main social networks and digital platforms

1.5. See the advantages and disadvantages of working in a digital environment

1.6.   Understand the technology of media content production

1.7.   Assess critically the media from the view point of quality and content

2. Skills: Participants to the program will get important skills that allow them to more effectively integrate themselves in their own working environment. The course content has a strong focus on formation and development of pedagogical and didactical skills that help the impartial assessment of utilization, and practical application of learning materials and activities. Due attention is paid on working with digital platforms and tools which facilitates their everyday usage not only for the purposes of the current program but also for specialized personal needs, participation in projects etc. At the end of the course participants will be able to:

2.1. Work focused and analytically

2.2. Formulate learning goals and achieve objectives

2.3. Communicate effectively with different target groups

2.4. Prepare focused and catchy didactic presentations

2.5. Use digital media tools and platforms for personal and professional usage

2.6. Work safely with digital media tools and technologies

3. Attitudes: The post graduate program on media literacy pays strong attention to the development of positive attitudes, own vision and overall mentality related to digital media usage. The designers of the program consider the ability to forecast future developments in the digital media field as crucial for participants' future personal and professional advance. Acquisition of such vision helps the smooth transition from academic to field work, as well as helps bridging the gap between academia and industry. At the end of the program course participants will possess clear and positive attitudes about:

3.1. The essence and dynamics of development and application of digital media content, tools and environment

3.2. Using digital media content, tools and environment for training, educational and personal needs

3.3. The inter-relations between media, technology and education

3.4. The need of constant self-development which requires updating and refreshing of knowledge, skills and competences related to digital media

3.5. The necessity to understand digital media content, tools and environment

In regard to its content, the post-graduate program on Media Literacy requires the observation of the following principles:

1. The course content has to be presented in positive and constructive manner. Content should not focus mainly on the risks and dangers of digital media technologies but rather stress actively on their advantages, and on the opportunities their usage would offer.

2. The leading point is not that much on preventing digital media users from possible dangerous effects but mainly on raising their awareness about the essence of digital media, and the opportunities and challenges related to digital media application.

The program curriculum comprises ten topics, handled in face-to-face fashion, individually or in groups, by reading, writing, analyzing, or doing hands-on-exercises. A proper balance between theory and practice, offline and online work has been sought for. Participants have access to learning materials in print and/online version using either mail or Moodle. Thus, they can work alone or in groups both online and offline with the various parts of the curriculum. The topics, included in the program are the following:

1. Communication, knowledge, training. Media and education. Information, media, digital-media literacy, media pedagogy

The topic is crucial because it shows the interconnectedness of concepts related to the nature of communication, knowledge and learning. It also reveals the ways in which the media fit within the educational context and presents a critical analysis of the dynamics of their relationship.

2. Learning domains. Objectives, means, indicators. Cycles of learning and teaching

The purpose of the proposed topic is to acquaint the participants in the program with the nature of the knowledge and its transfer from the source to recipient. The topic looks at both the foundations of cognitive theory and its analysis - through the perspectives of the teacher and the learner - as an expression of the desire to explain more clearly the link between communication, learning, and media.

3. Creating a perceptive communication learning environment

The topic is essential for the process of media literacy formation, since it focuses on the details of the necessary conditions that make the training modern and euristic - a process that allows the free exchange of views and perspectives, stimulating curiosity and expression of own ideas, lack of worry about making mistakes, seeking constant improvement - all prerequisites for forming analytical and critical thinking skills.

4. Planning the Class-Work

The topic was chosen as it sets out the overall framework of the planning process, essential both for the effectiveness of each training and for that of

media literacy. In parallel, it addresses a number of issues related to the development of critical thinking.

5. Critical Thinking as a Way to Form Media Literacy. Communication styles

In this topic, we consider critical thinking as the ability to gather and analyze alternative perspectives, both with respect to the media content and the motivating factors behind it, and about the correctness of each idea and statement contained in a given media content. We are also looking at the different communication styles that are essential to the ways in which the teacher and the trainees participate in the learning process - both in terms of communication and in the choice of supprting media tools.

6. Media and Journalism. News as topics, content and form. Ethics and standards.

The topic deals with the essence of media and journalism, and at the same time, zooms in the details of ethics in the media, which, if not taken into account makes the formation of media literacy impossible.

7. Teaching Media Literacy: Key Issues and Questions

The topic focuses on media literacy as an expression of media wisdom (understanding, analysis, evaluation). It provides tools for critical thinking related to the media, skills for coding and de-coding media mesaages, characterizing all types of media.

8. Media Effects and Their Consequences. Information disorders: nature, types and forms.

The topic under consideration focuses in details on the overall impact and individual effects that the use of media causes in consumers, paying particular

attention to the various types of disorders that conscious and / or unconscious distortions of media content can cause.

9. Working with Digital Media Platforms

In this topic we present the capabilities of some of the commonly used media tools that allow communication, search and verification of information. We also focus on the main components of the term 'digital literacy' included in the European Digital Competence Framework (DIGCOMP) relating to information processing, communication, content creation, security and problem solving.

10. Managing Information Disorders through Media Literacy

The topic presents ways and means of proving that a good knowledge of digital media can become a serious means of counteracting various forms of "information disorder". It also offers various relevant practical exercises for using digital skills as a means of detecting incorrect and malicious information.

The ten selected topics included in the media literacy curriculum are logically organized and directly related to each other. In our view, in their entirety, they adequately represent the essence of media literacy as a contemporary educational approach, which simultaneously enables the acquisition of knowledge, not only as a set of facts and claims, but also as a way of critical analysis, for creative application in practice, in accordance with the needs and interests of the trainees.

We have tried to present each topic with the knowledge, skills and attitudes that we aim at developing through the respective content. We have also included the planned activities related to the achievement of the objectives

(together with a critical analysis of their effectiveness - advantages, disadvantages, etc.), the expected results and the recommended literature on each topic.

Simultaneously with the transfer of the offered curriculum, building the backbone needed for the formation of media literacy, the program also envisages the preparation of a final project, an individual assignment showing how each participant in the program intends to implement media literacy for the needs of his/her individual and professional development.

The program philosophy considers media literacy as a set of competences developed on four levels, each part of the training curriculum. Those levels are the following:

a) Media awareness: knowledge related to the different types of media and their classification (traditional and online, commercial and public), the opportunities and challenges consumers face when using them, especially in regards to the very philosophy and didactics of media application for education, training and individual and professional development;

b) Media understanding: knowledge and skills needed for the critical analysis of the media tools and content;

c) Media attitude: the appropriate attitudes related to the media, digital technologies and the opportunities they offer;

d) Media behavior: critical media usage and application for the needs of upward personal and professional development.

The post graduate program on Media Literacy is in its last phase of approbation and will be launched in the beginning of the academic year 2019-2020.

Conclusion

In our research, we have tried to reveal the essence of media literacy as a comprehensive educational approach that meets the requirements of the digital 21st century, and to offer a sustainable model for the development of media literacy in Bulgaria through a specific training program. In our view, media literacy should build on the foundations of knowledge and provide a framework for access, analysis, evaluation, creation and participation through new media forms.

We also believe that it is media literacy that empowers people to understand the role of the media and to develop their critical thinking, to become effective communicators and active citizens.

CONTRIBUTIONS

1. Our dissertation offers a comprehensive media literacy program aimed at improving the overall situation of education in Bulgaria. The program, conceived as a media literacy post-graduate qualification, takes advantage of the capacity and experience of Sofia University, and the interest it offers to higher education professionals who have chosen to dedicate themselves to the teaching profession. In this respect, the program offers opportunities for new career development not only for educators, but also for representatives of other fields of humanities and the natural sciences, such as philologists, psychologists, historians, geographers, biologists, mathematicians, etc.

In our view, the program is particularly suitable for journalists and media and communication professionals, as it gives them clear guidance on how to apply their potential in the production of educational programs and products, given the serious shortage of such specialists in Bulgarian practice.

2. Inclusion of different modules of the proposed program in the currucula of current BA, MA and PhD students from different faculties of Sofia University enables the understanding and application of the various aspects of media literacy as a holistic educational approach, an alternative to the traditional teaching methods that still are widely practised. The numerous research and practical tasks included in the topics of the program are, in our view, adequate training tools that meet the needs and interests of the students. Moreover, the active application of the 'flipped classroom' allows for serious reflection on every topic and therefore works towards the development of critical thinking, and also allows for a much higher degree of collaborative learning. The results of our surveys, which reveal different aspects of the media behavior of students, and teachers, show clear trends in their attitudes to include the media in the preparation of internet-based educational products and digital resources.

3. Our analysis of leading foreign experience and practices that have proven effective in developing media literacy can serve as a benchmark, both at the managerial level - for the formulation of educational strategies and policies, and at the level of applied research - as reference ideas in the preparation of training courses. This also applies to our analysis of the various social, demographic, political, etc. factors of the media and educational environment that support and / or impede the formation of media literacy.

4. The model, for implementing the program as a postgraduate qualification, as well as the planned - every three years - modules for updating media literacy competences, allow for its sustainable development and for continuous upgrading of content related to the contstant opportunities and challenges that technological development implies.

What has been said above makes us think that we are correct in choosing our working hypothesis, and more precisely that "in order to develop an effective media literacy program, we need a thorough analysis of the overall development of the concept itself on a global scale, a thorough review of key initiatives and practices that have led to significant changes in the understanding of its nature, and understanding of the particularities of the context of implementation. We believe that through this work we are contributing to the better education in general, and in particular, with regard to the development of media pedagogy as a science.

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