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Media Literacy and Information Security in Education

[Umiejętność korzystania z mediów i bezpieczeństwo informacji w edukacji]

Streszczenie: Autorzy podjęli w artykule kwestię umiejętności korzystania z mediów w odniesieniu do szczególnej grupy dorosłych, jaką są edukatorzy. Okazuje się, że osoby, które uczą młode pokolenie krytycznego myślenia, sami nie są wolni od zagrożeń związanych z atakami medialnymi na samych siebie i narażeni są na manipulację. Autorzy dowodzą, że obecnie dysponowanie odpowiednią umiejętnością korzystania z mediów przez człowieka jest nie mniej ważne niż wcześniejsze formy alfabetyzacji. W środowisku nowoczesnych sieci mediów komunikacyjnych nie wystarczy jedynie najprostsza alfabetyzacja funkcjonalna, konieczne jest głębsze zrozumienie natury i globalnej siły interaktywności. Chociaż umiejętność korzystania z mediów można rozumieć na wiele sposobów, to jednak zasadniczo oznacza ona rozszerzanie nabywanej we wczesnych etapach edukacji młodego człowieka umiejętności czytania i pisania. Autorzy postulują potrzebę wprowadzenia efektywnego systemu edukacji medialnej dorosłych, aby dzięki temu znacząco został poprawiony poziom bezpieczeństwa informacji w społeczeństwie.

Summary: The article offers a research framework for analyzing the media literacy of such a special group of adults as educators. After all, people who have to stand guard over critical thinking and teach it to future generations are by no means safe from falling victim to a media attack or manipulation. The article proves that media literacy of an individual is no less important than previous forms of literacy. In the environment of modern communication media networks it is not enough to have only the simplest functional literacy, it is necessary to develop a deeper understanding of the

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nature and power of global interactivity. Although media literacy can generate several definitions, they are all designed to expand what is meant by literacy in general. The need for the introduction of an effective system of media literacy education for adults has been identified, which will significantly improve the level of information security in society.

Słowa kluczowe: media; umiejętność; umiejętność korzystania z mediów; edukacja medialna; bezpieczeństwo informacji.

Keywords: media; literacy; media literacy; media education; information security.

Introduction

We live in an upside-down world, where parents learn from their children to use Facebook or Skype, where a student can sometimes know a subject better than a professor. For example, in areas such as IT. Age, work experience, professional and life experience may not be the key to better knowledge for the first time in human history, and even more so does not guarantee higher earnings and living standards. Young men and women who have not graduated from any university, no experience, but who work for high-tech companies earn ten times more than their parents, who work all their lives in traditional companies, have a classical education, experience and social connections. Let us take the courage to say that modernity is the second Great Geographical Discovery. It is an epoch of re-discovery of the world. The global world that exists in the mass consciousness is the G7 countries, and then “with a stretch”. There is another world that is only on the path of globalization, or even going in the opposite direction. Not only is it systemic, it is asynchronous, as the pandemic has shown.

The word “literacy” usually describes the ability to read and write. Traditional reading literacy and media literacy have much in common. Reading begins with letter recognition. Soon enough, readers can identify the words – and, most importantly, understand what those words mean. Readers become authors who create new texts. As they gain experience, readers and authors develop literacy skills. A similar process occurs in the formation of media literacy. In order to become a consumer of quality information you need to understand what components it consists of. Today is not enough just being literate. Problems with the formation of media literacy arise when a person actively uses media and technology for recreation and entertainment. Media literacy largely takes into account the fact that the content you encounter or create is problematic and deserves reasonable and critical interaction. In addition, this content is used by many representative systems that need to be learned to interpret and use.

The phenomenon of media literacy has become the object of scientific and philosophical analysis relatively recently – in the early twentieth century. International organizations and projects, including UNESCO, the European Commission and the Parliament, the European Association for the Promotion of Media Consumers, the European MediaCoach Project, etc., have been involved in the implementation and determination of the importance of media education for the formation of a media literate society. The most fruitful for our study are the works of such scientists: L. Masterman, R. Hobbs, D. Buckingham, A. Dorr and others.

The development of the media literacy system has been studied by a large number of domestic and foreign scientists and practitioners. At the same time, it is important to study the development of the media literacy system of such a group as educators in the context of information security of society.

Definitions

Analyzing the degree of scientific development of media literacy, we noticed that most often this topic is considered in the context of media education (Svyrydenko D., Terepyshchyi S., 2020). In general, we must recognize that at present in science there is no unanimity and a well-established approach to understanding the essence of media literacy. That is why we consider it necessary in detail how media literacy is interpreted in the scientific literature.

It should be noted that in foreign science there are many definitions of the concept of “media literacy”. It is very noteworthy that the authorship of most of them does not belong to specific scholars, but to various international organizations and projects, which in one way or another are engaged in disseminating ideas and principles of literate attitude to information contained in the form of media texts. In our opinion, this fact very eloquently shows how important such skills are considered in the European community.

The main reason for the world community to understand the need for the development of media education and media literacy was the rapid development of communication technologies, which led to a global information media breakthrough. As the early 1960s, UNESCO reaffirmed the undeniable importance of the media in improving world social development and establishing dialogue across intercultural borders. At the same time, to achieve this goal, specific programs and strategies aimed at attracting and using various media were prepared.

UNESCO, a leading international organization that promotes media literacy in 1982, adopted a special Grunwald Declaration on Media Education (*Grunwald Declaration*, 1982).

UNESCO is also actively promoting free access to knowledge, recognizing the important role that media education plays in training the younger generation. Free and fair access to information is the most important component for the empowerment of people and guarantees their participation in the successful and harmonious development of the world community.

According to UNESCO experts: “Media Education: – deals with all communication media and includes the printed word and graphics, the sound, the still as well as the moving image, delivered on any kind of technology; – enables people to gain understanding of the communication media used in their society and the way they operate and to acquire skills in using these media to communicate with others; – ensures that people learn how to:

- 1) analyse, critically reflect upon and create media texts;
- 2) identify the sources of media texts, their political, social, commercial and/or cultural interests, and their contexts;
- 3) interpret the messages and values offered by the media;
- 4) select appropriate media for communicating their own messages or stories and for reaching their intended audience;
- 5) gain, or demand access to media for both reception and production” (*Education for the Media and the Digital Age*, 1999, p. 273–274).

The European Commission has adopted the following definition: “Media literacy includes all technical, cognitive, social, civic and creative capacities that allow a citizen to access the media, to have a critical understanding of the media and to interact with it. All these capacities allow the citizen to participate in the economic, social and cultural aspects of society as well as to play an active role in the democratic process. We understand the concept of »media« also in broad way: including all kind of media (broadcasting, radio, press) and through all kind of channels (traditional, internet, social media)” (*Media and Learning Conference*, 2016).

Similarly, the Commission stated that: “We are aware that »Media« literacy has different meanings in different countries and for different stakeholders. It is also a dynamic concept that evolves along with the changes in technology and society. However, a key pillar in all possible definitions of media literacy is the development of critical thinking by the user or citizen. Digital skills, which we mention explicitly in the Digital Single Market Strategy, is one of the many components of media literacy. Digital skills are about being able to have access to the digital world.

Another linked concept is »digital literacy«, which means understanding and making sense of the digital world” (*Media and Learning Conference*, 2016).

In “European Parliament resolution of 16 December 2008 on media literacy in a digital world (2008/2129(INI))” defined “media literacy denotes the ability to use individual media unaided, to understand, and bring critical assessment to bear on, the various aspects of media as such and media content, and to communicate – irrespective of the context – and create and disseminate media content; notes in addition that, given the many sources available, what is most important is the ability to separate out information from the new media’s flood of data and images and to categorise that information” (*European Parliament resolution*, 2008).

The European Association for Viewers Interests notes that: “Media literacy is increasingly relevant because knowledge is now, primarily, transferred through digital technologies. Individuals who are media literate are able to engage and participate at every level of public life, from social networking to e-Government. Individuals who are not equipped with these skills are left isolated and vulnerable” (*The European Association for Viewers Interests*, 2020). In recent years, this organization has made a significant contribution to the regulatory framework for media literacy.

Another interesting initiative is the European project MediaCoach, which extends its activities to Cyprus, Greece, Portugal, Romania and Bulgaria. Its authors define the following: “Media literacy is the ability to access the media, to understand and to critically evaluate different aspects of the media and media contents and to create communications in a variety of contexts. It includes all media” (MediaCoach, 2020).

Renee Hobbs notes: “The concept of media literacy has been circulating in the United States and Europe since the beginning of the 20th century as a means to acknowledge the set of knowledge, skills, and habits of mind required for full participation in a contemporary media-saturated society. The concept continues to morph and change as a result of rapid changes in digital media, mass media, social media, popular culture, and society. There are a number of competing approaches to media literacy in the United States and around the world. But the acquisition of digital and media literacy competences cannot be conceptualized merely as a set of technical and operative skills; rather, these competencies are embedded in a process of cultural change” (Hobbs R., 2021).

University of London professor David Buckingham defines media education as the process of learning and studying the media, and media literacy – as a result of this process – a set of knowledge and skills acquired by participants in the media education process (Buckingham D., 1999, p. 5).

Another British media literacy researcher Dorr notes that “A media-literate person can decode, evaluate, analyze, and produce both print and electronic media. Two closely related constructs are media education, teaching *about* media as distinguished from teaching *with* media, and media studies, emphasizing hands-on experiences with media production. As an area of scholarship, advocacy, and action, media literacy is contested terrain with some agreed-upon facts: content is constructed using unique languages and must be interpreted; context influences production and interpretation; and content influences understanding of social reality” (Dorr A., 2001).

The analysis shows that the main essence of all these definitions comes down to the fact that in today’s society, in which each of its members with the help of modern computer technology can access, create and share any information, their views and beliefs, it is essential the ability to reliably assess media sources, based on the main motives and beliefs, as well as understanding the degree of bias of the creator of such information. Media educators teach people to think, instill in them the skills of independent thinking that are necessary for the development of a truly democratic society.

Personality media literacy is no less important than previous forms of literacy. In the environment of modern communication media networks it is not enough to have only the simplest functional literacy, it is necessary to develop a deeper understanding of the nature and power of global interactivity. Although media literacy can generate several definitions, they are all designed to expand what is meant by literacy in general.

Over the last decade, technology has been implemented very rapidly, and this is causing profound changes in the world in terms of communication and types of media. The term “media literacy” has given rise to various definitions with an emphasis on the following: critical thinking in media literacy, analysis of messages and decoding of information.

Information security of society

Modern development of the information field provokes the spread of a significant array of information. Some of this information is unstructured and untrue, that is, it distorts reality, it is often called manipulative information. The manipulative information disseminated by the media is called “fake news”. In the conditions of dynamic increase of information pressure on adults the introduction of media literacy as a tool of self-filtering of information and useful skill for adults on the occasion of self-deter-

mination of potentially manipulative news and “fake news” is actualized. In the strategic field, this can significantly improve the level of information security of society.

Back in 1992, one of the most authoritative foreign media educators, the British Len Masterman, called the main questions in this area: “Should information be considered only as a commodity or does it have social value? Is it desirable to produce information that meets general social needs or information that is profitable? Is access to information a basic right or should it be restricted to those who can pay? Is the information an extension of ownership or is it publicly available? It can hardly be exaggerated to say that the future of cultures depends on the ways in which they answer these questions” (Masterman L., 1993, p.13).

In Ukraine, the problem of media literacy became relevant with the beginning of Russia’s armed aggression in 2014. Therefore, the information security of Ukrainian society is not just a theory, it is a daily practice that minimizes the information threats of disinformation, including in a hybrid war, the spread of potentially manipulative news and “fake news”.

Media products are created by people who make conscious and unconscious choices about what to include, what to ignore, and how to present what is included. These decisions are based on the creators’ own point of view, which will be determined by their opinions, assumptions and prejudices, as well as the media to which they have been exposed. As a result, media products are never exactly accurate reflections of the real world – even the most objective documentary filmmaker has to decide which frames to use, what to cut, and where to place the camera, but we instinctively consider media products as direct images of the real.

Most of the media is a business, and therefore it must be profitable. In addition, the media industry belongs to a strong network of corporations that influence content and distribution. Ownership and control issues are central – a relatively small number of people control what we watch, read and hear in the media. Even when media content isn’t profitable – such as videos on YouTube and posts on Facebook – content distribution methods are almost always profitable.

Media literacy in the implementation of the concept of information security of society:

- expands the concept of literacy, as today’s messages come in many forms, and literacy can no longer relate simply to the ability to read and write;
- offers solutions to public health issues, such as body image and substance use problems, which are exacerbated by reports of toxic media;
- enables all people to participate in the global media environment.

The Roadmap of the Academy of the Ukrainian Press states: “Media literacy is the active or passive perception and use of media materials, including their critical perception and conscious evaluation, understanding of the methods used by the media and their impact. The term means the ability to read, analyze, evaluate and communicate using various forms of media (eg, television, press, radio, etc.). There is another understanding of this term: the ability to decipher, analyze, evaluate and communicate in various forms. Media literacy is a set of competencies that allow people to access, analyze, evaluate and create messages in various types of media, genres and forms for personal expression and realization of their civil rights and, thus, ensuring fundamental freedoms of society” (*Road map*, 2016).

Conclusions and discussion

First, analyzing the main theoretical aspects related to media literacy, we concluded that modern science is still actively discussing the diversity of aspects of the phenomenon of media literacy – its functionality, disciplinary affiliation, commitment to relevant courses in education. institutions, the most active ways of forming competencies, assessments of improving the level of media literacy, etc.

Secondly, media literacy of educators means a set of competencies necessary for understanding the media, in which the creation, storage, transmission and presentation of data, information and knowledge, as well as skillful analysis and creation of media information and media texts presented in various formats and formats. Despite the large number of various new scientific approaches to the definition of “media literacy, we concluded that, emphasizing something specific”, each of them clearly fits into the framework of media literacy in both broad and narrow sense (for educators).

Third, currently in Ukraine there are no effective mechanisms to ensure the system of information security of society, including in the context of media literacy. This necessitates state grant funding for projects that provide educational activities for adults to develop media literacy. In the strategic perspective, this allows for an effective system of information protection of society, including from the influence of information hybrid tools.

Fourth, the dynamics of information development objectively provokes the growth of information channels of information, but not always all the information provided meets the principles of objectivity, reliability, com-

pleteness, honesty. This necessitates the implementation of information protection tools for society, in particular, the beginning of adult education in the field of media literacy. The need for the introduction of an effective system of media literacy education for adults has been identified, which will significantly improve the level of information security in society. For this purpose the formation of the system of information values concerning public and private life of the person is first of all actual. In the future, it is important to expand the circle of people who take media literacy courses.

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