Media education as a part of higher education curriculum*

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European communication and education policy documents repeatedly refer to media literacy as a pre-requisite of successfully performing active citizens and conscious consumers in information society. Substantial part of the task to provide systematic media education lies on the formal school-based education system. Hence a question arises about the competences teachers should acquire at university or from further training courses. The aim of this article is to examine how existing university curricula on media and communication could contribute to the development of media education programs in higher education system.

The authors take into consideration that the media education programs in curricula of a higher education system depend on the national media and education policy; already available programs in higher education curricula and further education projects; concept of media education in national curricula; local media context.

Proceeding from the media education components the authors propose a possible content of media education modules that should be available for the students in teacher training. In order to create such modules media studies and pedagogy should be combined and the whole program should be embedded in the discourse of media and pedagogy.

Key words: *media education, media literacy, media education components, higher education curriculum, European communication policy*

Introduction

The modern information environment requires different communicative competences from everyone The need for informed citizens brings along a changing regulatory regime, from "command-and control" government to discursive, multistakeholder governance (Livingstone and Lunt, 2007, p. 51) EU communication and education policies (White Paper on European Media Policy, Audiovisual Media Service Directive, Recommendation of the European Parliament and Council of 18 December 2006 on key competences for lifelong learning; European Charter on Media Literacy are the most important) repeatedly refer to *media*

literacy as a prerequisite for successfully performing active citizens and conscious consumers in the information society. Although *media literacy* is the outcome of a learning and teaching process in any given context: in formal, informal, social, family and media settings (Tornero, 2008, p. 105), the task to provide *systematic media education* lies with a formal school-based education system. Therefore on a national level it is important to determine what competences teachers should acquire at university or from further training courses? In order to fulfil the Bologna process, higher education institutions must rewrite the curriculum but the need for media literate teachers raises the question whether the journalism, media and communication institutes and schools should provide media education programs, modules or courses for trained teachers and for teacher education programs?

What should be the minimum content of courses the teacher training should include?

We propose that the development of *media education* programs in the curricula of a higher education system depends on four components: i) how media literacy is defined at the national level: e.g. how the EU media and education policy documents are interpreted in the national media policy and education policy documents and teacher education programs; ii) the existing programs, modules and subjects on media and communication education in either, or both higher education curricula and further education projects; iii) the concept of media education and communication competences in the national curricula of formal education, which could be a cross-curricular theme, a special subject (optional or compulsory),

an element in a language course, social sciences or art subject or mixture of different approaches and iv) local media context (number of active Internet users, national journalistic culture, level of e-society etc.)

These factors depending on each other: the successful integration of media education into initial teacher training depends on the infrastructure, the context and the curriculum (Lemmen, 2005). We argue that the critical relationship lies between the second and the third components: the national curricula and the teacher education at university level.

Structures for implementation of media education in schools differ from one country to another. For the present analysis we will use the Estonian national curricula and the media education module provided by Tartu University as an example of one possible model.

The policy concept on media literacy

The most widely adopted definition of *media literacy* is: "… the ability to access, analyze, evaluate and create messages in a variety of forms (Livingstone, 2004, p. 5). Already in 1992 US media educators and activists established a definition for media literate person who should be able to access, analyze, evaluate and produce print and electronic media (Kubev, 2005) and the UK's OFCOM uses the same definition. The Audiovisual Media Service Directive (AVMSD; Directive 2007/65/EC) intends that media literacy should be the counterbalance factor to the market liberalization ideology in addition to the self and co-regulation of the media sector. Section 37 of the AVMSD states that "media literacy" refers

to skills knowledge and understanding that allow *consumers* (our italics – HHL, KU) to use media effectively and safely, exercise informed choices, protect themselves from harmful content etc.

The 'Implementation of "Education and training 2010 programme' (2004) which the European Parliament approved on December 18th 2006, provides a list of competences that are related to critical thinking, high-level information management skills and well-developed communication skills. For example: ability to read and understand different texts for various purposes; ability to search, collect and process written information, data and concepts in order to use them in studies and organize knowledge in a systematic way; ability to distinguish, in listening, speaking, reading and writing, relevant from irrelevant information etc. (ibid., p. 9).

The European Commission has a web-page section on media literacy that provides this definition:

> "Media literacy can be defined as the ability to access, analyze and evaluate the power of images, sounds and messages which are now being confronted with on a daily basis and are an important part of our contemporary culture, as well as communicating completely in media available on a personal basis… The aim of media literacy is to increase awareness of the many forms of media messages encountered in their everyday lives. It should help citizens to recognize how the media filter their perceptions and beliefs, shape popular culture and influence personal choices. It should empower them with critical thinking and creative problem-solving skills to make them judicious consumers and producers of information. Media Education is part of the basic entitlement of every citizen … Today Media Literacy is one of the key prerequisites for active and full citizenship." (http://ec.europa.eu/avpolicy/media_literacy)

Hence, the concept of media literacy is a polysemic package of knowledge, skills and attitudes that should not be treated as an isolated or independent skill. As Tornero (2008) explains:

> "On the contrary, it is a skill that involves and encompasses other skills and forms of literacy: reading and writing literacy, audiovisual literacy and digital or information literacy. Furthermore, media literacy is a necessary part of active citizenship and is key to the full development of freedom of expression and right to information" (Tornero, 2008, p. 105).

Media education therefore includes three main components.

By using these definitions Ugur and Harro-Loit (2009, forthcoming) created a possible matrix of 'media education components' that could provide "gates" for becoming "media literate". (The process is not static and is a subject to change in line with technological and individual development).

Media education in national curricula

If media education is integrated into the national curriculum we should ask what could help students to become media literate? There are four possible approaches to teaching media education, as we have previously mentioned: cross-curricular; a special subject; part of social sciences, language or citizen courses; the combined approach. Usually multi-faced topics such as Health, Environment and Citizenship would benefit from cross-curricular approach (Reid and Scott, 2005). As media education is certainly multi-faced and includes different competence areas we would argue for the combined approach: different academic subjects should

Table 1. *Media education components*

Key competences for different phases of information processing	Knowledge structures			
	Image + audio-visual education +	*Communication education* (listening, reading, writing, functional reading + Methods of text and discourse analysis - *Language education*	*Civic education - Constructivistic approach to the media (power relations, economy, legislation etc)*	*Technological education:* digital competencies
Access	The ability to use new media	e.g. Functional reading skills in mother tongue. Knowledge on foreign languages enables individuals to seeks information globally		Students should be able to find information by using different IT possibilities + different technology
Understanding and analysing	The ability to understand and evaluate images, words and sounds	Individuals should be able to deconstruct text (eg. perspective of the author and outside sources; time categories used for constructing a story etc.)	Individuals should be able to distinguish between different discourses (e.g. news, ads, infotainment etc.), pick out different techniques employed in media messages etc.	
Evaluating	Value clarification and self-reflection abilities according to age and life experience			
Creating	Ability to produce audiovisual content	Ability to express oneself in different forms and with different purpose: orally, in writing, visually, directly and indirectly using different media; political and artistic self expression.	e.g. knowledge on laws and norms of public communication, ability to form valid opinion	Ability to use technology for content production
Distributing			e.g. knowledge on the responsibility of distributor (ability to make informed choices about delivery of personal information); competence to consider social consequences of publishing and distributing	Ability to use technology for distribution

help to improve the student access, analysis and evaluation abilities in a specific way and the school community should find ways and opportunities to put this into daily practice. The cross-curricular approach also has the potential to function as an instrument of providing links between disciplines.

Media education could be realized also in school communities outside certain academic subjects: e.g. school radio or school

newspaper, audiovisual projects, school or class homepages, the development of the communication environment of the school by the pupils and teachers etc). Still we argue that these out-of-class activities could be an efficient part of media education if there is enough supervision by media literate teachers. The supervision and coaching should include practical guidance, training of self-reflection methods and critical analysis. The cross-curricular and mixed approaches presuppose that most of the teachers should become media literate independently from their major subject(s).

The Estonian national curriculum that came into force in 2002 has three parts: general demands, description on subjects and cross-curricular themes. In Estonia *media literacy and computer competency* as well as safety, environment and career planning are the five cross-curricular themes (the Estonian National Curricula, hereafter RÕK, passed in 2002, paragraph 10, section 4). In addition certain sub-topics are written into the curricula of specific subjects (e.g. introduction to the journalistic genres in the Estonian language curriculum; advertising, manipulation and source analysis in social science class). Media education can be also a special (optional) course optional, the content is not regulated and is therefore created by the teacher.

Although media education seems to be well integrated into the national curriculum there are some aspects which make it difficult to create a teacher training program that supplies young teachers with full expertise of media literacy as well as methods how to train and guide their students.

A general communication competence is defined as: "the ability to understand,

memorize, spread, interpret and create texts via language. Generally it is the ability to communicate in different situations in writing and orally" (RÕK, 2002). This definition partly overlaps the internationally accepted (EU Commission) definition of media literacy except the critical thinking, visual analysis and reading abilities. The key issue is defining the method that the general communication competences and media as cross-curricular theme should be learned in the classroom (methodologically) and school as well as the necessary resources. The connection between general communication competence, cross-curricular theme and sub-topics in the mother tongue and social science classes is ambiguous. The critical point is that the objectives concerning media education in the Estonian curriculum are formulated in a manner that requires teachers to have an excellent and up-to-date knowledge on the performance of media systems as well as good training in text analysis methods.

For example by the end of the 9th grade (the end of compulsory education in Estonia), students, among other media competencies, should be able to distinguish between advertising and news, reality and fantasy and "to write a story, description, simple discussion, news story, application, CV, review" (RÕK, 2002, Appendix 1, p. 2). In order to distinguish between advertising, promotional text and news, the reliance on genre definitions (in the mother tongue students get a brief introduction to news, advertising and other non-fictional 'genres') is not viable. In order to decode the mixed genres and hybrid discourses, media scholars would identify a list of skills and methods that enable people to find hidden

messages, decode the structure of the text and evaluate critically the whole message. The skill required for writing a news story or review is available from a textbook; neither a teacher nor a student can create a news story after reading a textbook chapter on 'news genre'. Therefore it is important to determine the variety of teacher education that could offer competence for the methodological repertoire for teaching text analysis, deconstruction and construction of different formats; i.e. the tools for audio-visual analysis? In addition the teacher should be able to know something about media economy, new media technology, public communication norms and ethics.

Most of the methodology and knowledge that is a prerequisite for the key competences and knowledge structures that are described in Table 1 are available in journalism, media and communication schools, departments and institutes. Still in order to teach critical text analysis for teenagers one needs a good collaboration with schoolteachers, and good didactics.

Journalism, Media and Communication Studies curricula combined into teacher training programs

Journalism, media and communication studies are usually established in universities as a major program or a minor subject. In the Nordic (but also Baltic) landscape the discipline represents both faculties of humanities and social sciences, but also art, design and technology oriented programs (Nordenstreng, 2007, p. 214). With the development of new media, convergence and globalization, the field has rapidly expanded and diversified. Therefore departments of media and communication studies usually may have the skills, experience and resources to deliver key competences for different phases of information processing in different media environment, but lack pedagogic methods, understanding of the specific classroom requirements, knowledge about child development. Hence, the know-how on media performance should be translated into classroom didactics.

Some higher education systems with better resources (e.g. the Finnish) develop specific programs on media education where media studies and pedagogy is combined and the whole program is an embedded discourse of media and pedagogy.

In situations of limited human and financial resources (i.e. the Baltic states) students could specialize by combining different BA and MA studies. Nordenstreng claims that the media and communication schools, departments and institutes of today provide challenging prospects by interdisciplinary programs, which seem to become popular at the MA level opening up the possibilities to combine different BA backgrounds (Nordenstreng, 2007, p. 213). Combining different BA programmes might be one solution for teacher training programs in media education.

In case *media education* is not recognized as a subject on its own in the national curriculum (except as an optional course carried out by an enthusiastic teacher) the most efficient solution might be to provide it as a minor subject or as part of minor subject. One module could consist of 2–6 subjects and could be combined to any other minor subject the student would like to choose.

At Tartu University the combination of both possibilities is available. As we do not

have a separate media education program, people with different BA backgrounds can take an MA in journalism. The journalism program has two options for specialization: practical journalism and media education. In addition, the Institute provides single subjects on media education at BA level and a special module at MA level.

What should be the content of such modules? I will use the matrix of knowledge structures (Table 2) and propose one possible approach for the content of media education modules.

The third and final task of any media module is to create an opportunity for the student-teachers to involve the knowledge in the classroom. The learning outcome is the student-teacher's ability:

1) to translate the knowledge into the questions and approaches that help to reflect the students' media experience in the classroom
2) by using different methods provide opportunities to translate this everyday experience into critical analysis
3) to guide the students to discover new ways to use different media.

Local media context

In the context of media education the physical access to media plays an important role. The communication policy that

Table 2. **Content of possible media education modules**

Key compe-tences for different phases of information processing	Knowledge structures			
	Image + audio-visual education	Communication education (listen-ing, reading, writ-ing, functional reading	Civic education	Technological education
Access	Different methods of text analysis in order to be able to decode information that is configured in different discursive (and generic) arrangements; Ability to handle modalities		Public communica-tion law and ethics, basic understanding of media economy	Basic skills of using ICT;
Understanding and analysis			Knowledge on meth-ods of analysis of communication envi-ronment in organiza-tion, community	Safe use of the Internet and new media
Evaluating				
Creating	Ability to decode and create texts according to the requested function. e.g. understanding of news value; mixed time structure in news story	Methods of im-proving listening abilities, question-ing, self-reflection etc.	School newspaper, homepage, radio etc.	Creating multi-media projects; programming, etc
Distributing	Practical delivery of audiovisual projects	Practical training of writing news text, essay, speech,		Use of various channels and programs in creating diffe-rent communi-cation formats
Practice in classroom and school environment				

guarantees access to the Internet has been especially efficient in Estonia. The rapid increase of Internet usage since the end of the 1990s is linked with several factors, such as government initiatives, liberalization of the telecommunications market (foreign investments, increasing competition and decreasing prices), and the development of e-banking. The well-orchestrated decisions and investments had far reaching results – the number of frequent (daily / few times per week) Internet users in Estonia gradually increased over the period 2002-2006 from 16 to 70 per cent of the population, and 39 per cent has Internet access at home (TNS EMOR, research done in March-May 2006). Internet access and expansion of Internet use in Latvia and Lithuania lagged behind Estonia until 2005/2006 but is now developing rapidly.

Therefore the requirement that a child "should be able seek information from various channels, interpret, use and spread information (RÕK, 2002, paragraph 19 sections 15-17) seems to be attainable, as access to the various media channels in Estonia is not a problem. Furthermore, easy access to the Internet creates a specific need for introducing 'netiquette', safety means and critical analysis of sources.

Conclusion

Media literacy can be achieved only if the media education is fully recognized and integrated into the national curriculum. But in order to improve teacher's training it should find a place in higher education curricula. The in-service training for experienced teachers is necessary but media education also needs a critical mass of teachers who have gained systematically basic competences in media education training methods. In addition, the accreditation system that is applied to the university curricula provides assessment and quality control that usually is not available for different projects that support media education courses for teachers. We would not argue against projects that could support innovative approaches and new knowledge more flexibly than any curriculum. Rather we would claim that these two formats could work in synergy. Still, without a critical mass of media literate teachers the successful implementation of media literacy as a prerequisite of active and informed citizen and consumer is impossible.

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ŽINIASKLAIDOS RAŠTINGUMO UGDYMAS KAIP AUKŠTOJO MOKSLO STUDIJŲ PROGRAMOS DALIS

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S a n t r a u k a

Europos komunikacijos ir švietimo politikos dokumentuose nuolat kalbama apie *žiniasklaidos raštingumą*, kaip būtiną sąlygą, ugdant aktyvius piliečius ir sąmoningus vartotojus informacinėje visuomenėje. Esminį vaidmenį *sistemingame žiniasklaidos raštingumo ugdyme* atlieka formalioji bendrojo lavinimo švietimo sistema. Taigi, kyla klausimas, kokias kompetencijas turėtų įgyti būsimieji mokytojai studijų arba mokymų metu? Pagrindinis šio straipsnio tikslas – išsiaiškinti, kaip vykdomos universitetinių studijų programos žiniasklaidos ir komunikacijos srityje galėtų prisidėti prie *žiniasklaidos raštingumo ugdymo* programų aukštojo mokslo sistemoje.

Autorės sutinka, jog *žiniasklaidos raštingumo ugdymo* programų įtraukimas į aukštojo mokslo studijų programas priklauso nuo nacionalinės žiniasklaidos ir švietimo politikos; jau vykdomų aukštojo mokslo bei tolesnio ugdymo programų; žiniasklaidos raštingumo ugdymo koncepcijos; vietinio žiniasklaidos konteksto.

Remiantis *žiniasklaidos ugdymo komponentais*, autorės rekomenduoja žiniasklaidos raštingumo ugdymo modulių turinį būsimiems mokytojams. Tokiems moduliams sukurti, būtinos žiniasklaidos studijų ir pedagogikos žinios, kadangi visa programa pagrįsta žiniasklaidos ir pedagogikos diskursu.