

# ***The Importance of Placing Digital Media in Education***

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## **Abstract**

The usage of social media among the students in education has increased rapidly and become widespread, but nowadays there have been warnings to the students at schools merely about what should not be done in social media. However, the inclusion of social media in formal education will provide positive contributions to teachers and students alike. The main philosophies of media literacy education should be; “The ability to protect students against the negative effects of the media and not to bring prohibitions and limitations for this purpose, to understand the media correctly, to take advantage of the beneficial aspects that will contribute to personal development and to eliminate its harmful effects”. In this article, the importance of adopting social media into the educational system and its educational achievements will be discussed.

***Keywords:*** *Media Literacy, Mass Media, Teaching Methods, Social Learning*

## **Eğitimde Dijital Medya Kullanımının Önemi**

### **Öz**

Öğrenciler arasında sosyal medya kullanımı hızla artmış ve yaygınlaşmış olmakla birlikte, günümüzde okullarda öğrencilere sadece sosyal medyada nelerin yapılmaması gerektiğine dair uyarılarda bulunmaktadır. Oysaki, sosyal medyanın örgün eğitime dahil edilmesi, gerek öğretmenlere gerekse de öğrencilere bir çok açıdan olumlu katkılar sağlayacaktır. Medya

okuryazarlığı eğitiminin temel felsefelerinden olan; “öğrencileri sadece medyanın olumsuz etkilerine karşı korumak ve bu amaçla yasaklamalar ve kısıtlılıklar getirmek değil, medyayı doğru anlayarak, kişisel gelişime katkı sağlayacak olan faydalı yönlerin alınabilmesi ve zararlı olanların elenebilmesi “yeteneğinin öğrencilere kazandırılabilmesidir. Bu makalede de sosyal medyanın örgün eğitime dahil edilmesinin eğitsel kazanımlar açısından önemi tartışılacaktır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** *Medya Okuryazarlığı, Kitle İletişim Araçları, Öğretim Yöntemleri, Sosyal Öğrenme*

### **Social Media**

Social media has become an important element in people’s lives in a surprising way in the last decade (Duggan, Ellison, Lampe, Lenhart, & Madden, 2015). People have begun to use social media sites such as blogs, video sharing sites, forums, facebook, twitter and instagram to maintain communication with their families, relatives and friends via the internet as well as to comment on social and political developments. With this changing nature of the media, individuals have become both consumers and producers of the media. In the face of this rapid social change, it remains unclear as to how schools should offer education models to their students in formal education.

Nowadays, schools are provided with free internet connection by the Ministry of Education in Turkey, however with a restriction regarding social media. People who try to access the world’s popular social media websites such as facebook and twitter, encounter the warning of “This website is restricted by Türk Telekom Corporation within the scope of the security services due to the internet access security policy of the Ministry of Education”. Although The Ministry of Education officials point out that the reason for bringing this restriction is to protect the students from possible damages of social media like entering into obscene sites, making bad friendship and to prevent bad habits, students can easily find a way (i.e. using the internet provided by GSM operators from their mobile phones) and access these social networks. Thus, Turkish Ministry of Education needs to implement policies on developing student awareness regarding the use of internet and social networks rather than putting prohibitions.

Social media platforms have become an indispensable element of life for school-age children and young people. Incorporation into the social media has become synonymous with being involved in life for students (Lenhart, 2015). By its nature, social media platforms are based on individuals, skills and needs; participation, cooperation and production. In this case, it has become inevitable for schools to provide social media education in certain ways and include them in the education processes of schools. Above all, the inclusion of social media in classroom training activities will create an enthusiasm among learners and a willingness to learn. Through social media, students will be able to participate in social networking sites according to their interests, communicate with their relatives with whom they cannot talk for various reasons, be able to share their lessons and learn about current developments. Another important advantage offered by social media to students is that they will have the opportunity to practice and develop their foreign language skills in the foreign language learning stages by making friends from countries where the language they are trying to learn is used as the native language. The function of the teacher at this point will be to inform the students about what they should pay attention to when using social media, what social media sites can teach the students and what kind of information they should and should not share while using social media.

### **Media Literacy**

Media literacy has led to the inclusion of electronic media into educational activities within an average of 25 years in the European countries, especially in the schools, including the development and diffusion of Internet technologies. Even media teachers have begun to exchange information about what can be done to establish a better media education method and shared course plans through the internet. Media literacy training applications are not limited to schools and are included in continuous education processes by many developed countries, and these applications have started to be handled by a wide range of people including adults (Pepler and Kafai, 2007). At a first glance, media literacy training, like other courses, seems like an education that can be easily planned and implemented, but due to the rapid developments in media and communication technologies and the constant fluctuations of people's media expectations, it appears to be a multi-faceted education to be addressed. First of all, whether the teachers who gave media literacy training had enough information about

the media cannot determine and set the right training strategies for students. At this point, the way in which educators handle value judgments and issues confronts the fact that students are leading the way in evaluating the media. For this reason, in this article, an attempt was made to develop suggestions about the methods that teachers and students should follow in the media literacy educational process.

### **Individual with Media Literacy**

Today, the mass media has encompassed the entire lives of individuals and it has become almost impossible to escape from media messages. The fact that all individuals are to be exposed to various media messages almost every hour of the day and the ability to extract useful messages by sorting out the messages that may negatively affect them correspond to the definition of the media literate individual. According to Lim and Nekmat (2008), individuals with media literacy are the individuals who can control the media, see the relation of the media to the politics and the economy, able to perceive that some issues of human life are often emphasized and foregrounded, able to ignore the useless information, and aware of the effects that the media can create in itself.

### **Media Industry**

One of the aims of media literacy training is being able to discern the difference between the advertisements of the commercial products on the mass media and the contents of these commercial products. Media messages are often created for profit / benefit, and they are aimed at attracting the attention of the viewer to the commercial unit to which the message-issuing media organization is directly or indirectly connected. Therefore, in media literacy training, media producers should also include commercial aspects and perspectives (Rosenbaum, Beentjes, and Konig 2008). Vande Berg, Wenner, and Gronbeck (2004) argue that media literacy training has changed the way individuals view the television industry, and that television tends to pack and market products and encourage viewers to consume certain products. Primack, Sidani, Carroll, and Fine (2009) stated that media organizations have financial and political elements in their organizations and that they have created a market through the audience, through various methods they use, and one should pay attention to these issues in media literacy trainings. Gotcher and Duffy (1997) assessed how a television program puts the viewer away from the point of view of the

program with the help of the space, characters, budget, and lead them into consumption psychology.

In media literacy education, the fact that the media is formed according to some social and economic conditions and as a result the fact that the media producers take economic interests as a countermeasure are the issues to be explained in detail.

### **Media Messages**

Media literacy education researchers often emphasize the importance of drawing attention to the fact that media messages are inherently fiction. Kellner and Share (2005) state that the media does not reflect reality as a transparent window, because media messages are created, shaped and positioned with fictional techniques, what to include and exclude from the message when presenting the truth are all pre-decided. In this context, Meyrowitz (1998) states that media consists of distributors who collect and disseminate messages. Especially in television broadcasting, sound, camera angle, light, effect and timing methods are used to add meaning to messages and increase the effect of messages. Turning the fiction into a reality by naturalizing the presented messages, these elements hold the power to manipulate their target audiences and often times their employment in productions is not easily noticed by the viewers.

### **Media Audience**

Media literacy training basically defines how media content is perceived by viewers. The characteristics of people, such as age, gender, education and culture, cause them to have different evaluations when interpreting the same media message. Brown (1998) notes that media literacy education also includes the ability to raise awareness, such as meaning and assessment.

Along with the development and widespread use of digital media technologies, media users do not just remain as viewers, but as active users. Livingstone (2008) argues that smartphones, digital games, and social networking sites allow digital inclusion of people, and that media literacy educators should not only focus on traditional media (newspapers, magazines, radio and television) but also pay attention to the new media. Especially social sharing sites such as facebook and twitter have created social spaces where people can express themselves according to their social position, age, gender and interests.

## **Effects of Media**

Media researchers have been more interested in the negative effects of media on individuals and society (Byrne 2009). Among the negative impacts, media and violence were the most discussed issues. When studies on the negative effects of media were examined, it was frequently underlined that children were affected by the violence in media and they argued that the children should be kept away from the violence in media.

Some researchers have argued against this view and pointed out that children should face the negative effects of media and that the possible negative effects of media should be eliminated with media literacy training. Buckingham (2007), for example, says that media education does not mean to bring restrictions and prohibitions on children, but rather to help children understand the media messages surrounding them by giving them critical insights.

## **The Role of Media Literacy Education**

Teachers of media education are adopting a more protective approach, explaining ways of increasing the knowledge of children and young people towards mass media and protecting them from possible harms. Of course, the individual and social influences of media are visible and this is sometimes happening at an advanced level. Media educators first make an introduction from a broad perspective, focusing on issues such as citizenship, community health and ethics, and then explain the effects of the media and the media itself by narrowing the scope.

Lewis and Jhally (1998) argue that media literacy training helps individuals read critical messages in order to read mass media correctly. Therefore, it is expected that the individuals who receive media education are not only conscious consumers but also sensitive and selective towards harmful information bombardment and can receive only beneficial ones. Research has shown that media literacy students are less influenced by media habits (alcohol, drugs, smoking ...) and more critical of messages they receive from the media while making decisions about their future (Bergsma, 2008).

## **Discussion and Conclusion**

The most important issue in the foreground of media literacy inclination is related to how this education can be processed more efficiently. While some researchers have argued that cultural and critical approaches should be integrated into the media as a framework plan, some researchers have argued that media education should be given by incorporating social sciences, literature and psychology.

In general, media literacy is based on knowledge and ability. Individuals must first have information about the mass media, the media industry, media messages, the media tracker, and the effects of the media. It is also necessary to be able to know and evaluate and have access to all media messages. Of course, adults in particular have some knowledge about the media, whether based on their experience or not. Media literacy educators are emphasizing that the information of voluntary and involuntary media must be moved to a critical point of view and that knowledge and competence must be possessed. Here, the ability to use media is what is meant by talent. Being literate in the media is beneficial to many individuals. For example, nowadays people are exposed to intense information bombardment through different media channels, and the media can literally discriminate between which information should be screened, which information is useful, and which information, whether voluntary or involuntary, may be harmful.

In this context, media literacy educators need to know what information and skills are needed for media literacy training and how they can be developed. Especially in the last decade, research on media education and content has shown that digital media is more important as media content. This shows that in order to understand the media, individuals need to be able to analyze, evaluate, group, deduce and distinguish only the information that is not sufficient. Hobbs and Frost (2003) suggested that in addition to these features, media literacy is also based on the ability to critically read, write, listen and observe. The displacement of traditional media research with digital media research shows that efforts to be made about future media literacy will clear the clouds with an emphasis on cognitive abilities.

Another important issue that media literacy educators should consider is that media education cannot be given only through traditional methods and straight expression, but also with practices. The widespread use of digital media in the community and the increase in the use of mobile applications vary according to the needs of people. Therefore, the evaluations made should be diversified with practice examples and the reasons for this should be set out when there is any evidence. For example, although social media is generally used at every age and culture group, social media content varies according to individual needs, expectations, socio-economic levels, and collectivity. The common effects that traditional media create in people have turned into digital media and a person-specific influence. Therefore, media educators need to consider how media influences individuals by categorizing different ages, genders, social status, economic indicators, social belonging and expectations.

As a result, Turkey is obliged to education and training activities for education policies, including the use of digital media. The widespread use of social media at all levels of the society, which is the main source of digital media, internet and internet use, is pushing the fact that digital media education is no longer an optional learning type but an obligatory form of learning. The only element of intra-community integration and international integration has become dependent on digital inclusion through digital media. In today's world, digital technology offers new application areas with every passing day and in terms of adding a rapid momentum to the development of educational policies in Turkey, there are some legal and functional decisions to take expeditiously.



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