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**STUDYING MEDIA LITERACY  
OF STUDENTS IN THE 14–18 AGE GROUP**

PhD Thesis

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In recent decades, preparing for adult life has required longer and longer stages in life, during which acquiring more and more knowledge and skills is necessary. This can be achieved only by using the more and more efficient methods and techniques of learning (Csapó, 2002).

By the 21st century, the technology ever-available and ever-present in life has altered people's lives significantly, i.e. the way we communicate, work or learn. Due to this, the scope of knowledge, skills and competences considered to be valuable has also been changed (Molnár, 2011). In an information society, information and communication competences have become the parts of the basic elements of literacy, 'as the most successful transmission of writing-reading-arithmetic seems to be inadequate if it cannot be fitted to the world of the new media' (Z. Karvalics, 1997, p. 691). In this setting it does matter how conscious we are concerning the contents conveyed by the internet, whether we are merely passive recipients of messages or critical viewers of them.

Media literacy refers mainly to the critical handling of information gained from mass media and is partly equal with information literacy, in a broader sense (Bawden, 2001 quotes Koltay, 2009). Access to analysis and assessment of knowledge, skills and competences, and attitudes which are in connection with the different forms of communication, are also meant by it (Hobbs, 2011b; Babad, Peer, and Hobbs, 2012). Media literacy also helps recipients to interpret the media texts having different contents and genres, e.g. still – moving images, audio-audiovisual, digital, etc. or to create them themselves, if needed.

Acquiring media literacy is one of the prerequisites of integrating properly into today's information society. It helps recipients to be able to have a critical attitude on the manipulative techniques of mass media, and their consequences, thus reducing its influence. The European Union treats the issue of media literacy as a priority and all member states accept the point of view according to which media literacy can contribute to the forming of a more competitive knowledge economy significantly (Mlinarics, 2010).

### **The Background and Objectives of the Media Literacy Research**

The institutions of the European Union i.e. the European Parliament, the Committee of the Regions, the Council and the Commission – expect and recommend member states to act strongly for promoting media literacy. According to the European Commission, media literacy is also important as this is how the entire and democratic community participation for the Union's citizens can be provided together with the active participation in the process of life-long learning.

This is the reason why the European Commission Information Society Media Directorate supports studies due to the results of which the media literacy figures of European countries can be characterized using actual data (Herzog, 2012d).

A study of much importance financed by the European Union took place from October 2008 till July 2009, involving 27 European states. Experts defined the structure of media literacy within the framework of the research, providing a starting point for additional studies even in Hungary.

Media literacy can be characterized and examined by two important factors. These are the external-environmental and the individual ones, to which other components are connected:

- (1) *With the help of the external-environmental factors* of media literacy we can characterize the media economy and infrastructure of a given society or nation-state. Elements like social judgement of media literacy, providing access to media and the form and practice of media education belong to this category.
- (2) *By individual factors* of media literacy we mean those cognitive processes which allow learners to use media in a conscious and critical way together with understanding media texts. For example, orientation between media texts, how to interpret, analyse and categorise them, creation of media texts, forming opinion about the influence of the media, critical content choice. A further component of the individual factors is *social competence*, which enables active participation in social communication and public life.

In the European Union's study, experts wanted to answer the following questions: to what extent is access to various forms of mass media provided for people living in member states; how are digital catch-up and the European level harmonisation supported by the state, using legislation in force; how to put media education in secondary schools. Besides the social judgement of media literacy, experts were also interested in how to characterize the media use and the comprehension of media texts in the participating countries, with what purpose and content are media texts prepared, whether they help to adapt to the broader environment and the practice of active citizenship or not. According to the first Union basic research, Hungary – based on an estimated rate of media literacy – is ranked in the lower third of the member states, despite the fact that we have media education in schools (Hartai, 2010).

In this thesis we followed the media literacy structure published in the '*Assessment Criteria for Media Literacy Levels*' (Celot, López and Thompson, 2009), on which the results examining the relationship of the 14–18-year-old students and the media (Herzog and Racsko, 2012b).

Elementary and secondary education focuses on numerous fields which are important in children's everyday lives, yet they still do not emphasize developing the knowledge necessary for proper, conscious media consumption. However, nowadays the media has a determining – and ever increasing – role in the life of youngsters (Bazalgette, 1991). Several studies have revealed that teenagers are different from each other in point of their relation to media, choice of programmes, opinion about the television or concerning their aim of media usage, even the amount of time they spend on it. They are also different in respect of to what extent they are

aware of the effects of the media. Opinions about these –which apparently sound convincing- are very often contrary to students’ choice of programmes and the amount of time spent on it. In the background of the difference we can find variables like social background, financial matters, their gender roles and cultural activities. Their difference in their tastes is in strong correlation with their type of school and age, which can serve as a further possibility to work out a differentiated education approach (*Bényei, 2001; Hargrave and Livingstone, 2006; Antalóczy, 2006; Colwell and Payne, 2000; Herzog and Racsko, 2012c*).

Educational, Psychological and sociological research on different media do not deal with the impact research of the traditional means of mass media, i.e. books, newspapers, radio and television, but with that of the ‘*new media*’ (*Hobbs, 2011a; Morris, Gilpin, Lenos, and Hobbs, 2011*). Experts are also interested in the effects of the computer, internet and mobile phone, their related activities, the time and way of activities in virtual space and in communities and how they influence the individual and their social relationships. Researchers would like to answer the question how consciously teenagers – regarded to be unprotected against several media effects for a long time – observe the different media contents, i.e. are they mere observers, passive recipients of messages or they are able to see these messages critically (*Rideout, Foehr, Roberts, and Brodie, 1999; Livingstone and Bovill, 2001; Kósa and László, 2011; Herzog and Racsko, 2012c*).

Public education both abroad and in Hungary reacted rather quickly to the social demand according to which the effective digital literacy and comprehension include the competences which can be related to the information literacy as well, necessary for predominance in society and labour market. The real result of taking into consideration social expectations is the fact that media education has become a part of school framework. Its forms and methodological practices often differ from countries and cultures, providing an excellent field for related pedagogical studies (*Cappello, Felini, and Hobbs, 2011; Herzog, 2009b, 2011; Herzog and Racsko, 2012a; Moore, 2011; Hobbs, Cabral, Ebrahimi, Yoon, and Al-Humaidan, 2011*).

The most important aim of the research revealing the media literacy of 14–18-year-old students is to answer the question of what and to what extent elementary and secondary media education is able to add to the media literacy, which was formed by the most diverse socialization effects and is used constantly in everyday life. For this, we had to ascertain the practice of the Hungarian media education within a survey and then the given phenomena were compared with the media use habits of teenagers, the research of knowledge components, skills and abilities related to the subject called, Moving Picture Culture and Media Studies based on the National Curriculum. During the study of media literacy we worked with two subsamples of the 14–18-year-old students (N=2954). One of the samples included those (N=1961), having the lesson of Moving Picture Culture and Media Studies, the other subsample included those (N=995) not having it.

The obtained data of the research are important because the local-level curriculum adaptation of the content of media education can be successful only if as a first step, the media experiences teenagers have already possessed, are explored. They can serve as a base for the media education work, which can be improved by the different pedagogical methods (*Szljártó, 2008*).

## **Research Questions and Methods**

Using the literature analysis and synthesis, our aim is to reveal the media literacy of the 14–18-year-old students. The empirical questions of the research are of basic research nature. There are five groups of problems (I-V.) according to the surveys completed:

1. *Examining the media usage of the 14–18-year-old age group.* Following and synthesizing the national and international research tendencies of media literacy, using our own questionnaire, we wished to answer the following questions: What empirical features can be used to describe the media usage, 'media consumption' of the teenage-learners? What is the mass media means supply like among them? For what purpose and to what extent do teenagers use the different means of mass media? What is the parents' attitude towards their children's media consumption like? Do they control, supervise or restrict the usage of the media in any form? What do the pupils themselves think of the development of their own media usage and media competence? What is the opinion of the teenagers in respect of the influencing role of the media? Are pupils capable of the critical comprehension of media texts? Is there a connection between the Hungarian media education practice and that of the media usage of the learners?
2. *Examining the media literacy of the 14–18 age group.* In developing a paper-and-pencil test, our starting point was the National Curriculum (202/2007. VII.13. Government regulation). When compiling the tasks, we tried to cover those knowledge elements, skills and abilities which were specified under the subject of Moving Picture Culture and Media Studies in the National Curriculum. In the case of the test we looked for answers to the following questions:

*In connection with the students' comprehension of media texts and their skills and abilities to highlight the main point:* Are students able to study the media consumption habits of the audience according to the given aspects? Are they able to observe and interpret correctly the human behaviour seen in the films? Are they able to recognize the main time and place relationships in the media texts?

*Concerning students' conscious and critical media usage, their choice of genres and programmes, their views of media influence and media effects:* Are students conscious when choosing the genre and the programme? Are they able to identify the background of the formation of the moving image texts and the intention of the broadcasting party? After having realized the moving image texts are they able to argue for or against the certain programme type?

*Within the field of applied media literacy, regarding students' skills to recall and interpret moving images:* Are students able to recall and interpret image and sound connections in moving image text contents with the help of their memories?

*In relation to the field of applied media literacy, regarding pupils' knowledge of the codes of moving image text formation:* Are students able to recognize the basic moving image text formation codes, expressions? (e.g. Hollywoodish, hokum, commercial etc.)

*Concerning applied media literacy and pupils' practical usage of moving image text formation codes:* Are students able to plan and build an imaginary moving image event preparing an interview, writing a scenario, etc.) ? Are they able to ask questions themselves, in connection with the given topic? Can they select and visualize simple (coherent in time and space) actions using series of pictures?

3. *Focus group examinations:* Are the students able to form opinions and list pros and cons regarding media genres? Do they know the dominant media genres? Can they use the suitable media language (verbal and non-verbal text forming codes) relevant to the genres in the situational tasks?
4. *The narrative analysis of students' media texts:* Can the teenagers, regarded as digitally socialized, write motion pictures, i.e. do they apply story board when writing a script, or the effect of repetition; can they make a difference between a scene and a setting, do they know close-ups as ways of highlighting?
5. *Examination of the public education practice of teaching Moving Picture Culture and Media Studies, using qualitative methods – structured interviews, classroom observation diaries.* We wished to answer the following questions: What teaching methods, arranging techniques and forms of work do teachers use on the Moving Picture Culture

and Media Studies lessons? What infrastructural background can be provided by the public education institutions for media teaching? Regarding their competence, to what extent are pedagogues prepared to be able to teach Moving Picture Culture and Media Studies?

Hypotheses have been defined according to the national and international theoretical approaches and research results. We distinguished five groups of hypotheses:

***Concerning the media usage of 14–18-year-old students we assume that:***

*H1:* The questionnaire survey referring to the students' media usage provides a reliable measure of their media 'consumption', media usage.

*H2:* According to our hypothesis, the 14–18-year-old students are not different from each other, in respect of their supply of means of mass media in their homes.

*H3:* As we suppose, there are significant differences in the media usage of teenage learners regarding different types of schools (elementary, secondary grammar, secondary vocational etc.), the school years, genders and place of living. Secondary school students are significantly more skilful media users and they are more proficient in technical application of means of mass media than elementary school pupils.

*H4:* In respect of media usage (television, radio, computer, internet) there is no significant difference between students who learn Moving Picture Culture and Media Studies and of those who do not.

*H5:* Regarding the time, aim and the amount of media usage we assume that there can be considerable differences between elementary and secondary school students. Elementary school students spend significantly more time on the use of the means of mass media than their secondary school counterparts.

*H6:* For the 14–18-year-old age group, internet is the most important, most efficient and most frequently used means. There is no significant difference between pupils who learn Moving Picture Culture and Media Studies and of those who do not.

*H7:* According to our hypothesis, the majority of parents does not regulate or restrict the use of any of mass media (television, radio, mobile phone, computer, internet).

*H8:* Students' views on the effects of the media and the media text comprehension of teenagers can be measured reliably with the questionnaire. We suppose that significant differences can be justified in respect of genders and school years. Media text comprehension of secondary grammar school students is significantly better compared to that of elementary or secondary vocational students.

***Concerning students' performance on media literacy test we presume that:***

H9: The performance of secondary school students is significantly better than the results of the elementary school pupils.

H10: Those teenagers who had Moving Picture Culture and Media studies classes, performed significantly better compared to those who did not. The differences in their performance can be seen mostly in the field of knowing the motion picture text forming codes and their practical application.

H11: Girls show significantly better performance than boys, which is apparent especially in media text comprehension and the skills of highlighting the main points rather than moving image memory.

***Regarding the results of the focus group examinations we hypothesize that:***

H12 There are number of differences between secondary school students in respect of conscious and critical media usage, in the choice of genres and programmes and their views on the effects of the media. The reason for these might be their age and their participation in media education.

H13: There will be a significant difference between the experimental and control groups, especially in the formation of media texts during the situational tasks.

***Regarding students' media texts we supposed that:***

H14: In respect of students' media text formation, the efficiency of media education cannot be proved with certainty. Probably, there will not be significant difference between the students who have already had the subject of Moving Picture Culture and Media Studies and those who have not had such a subject at school.

H15: When writing the script depicting life-like situations, it will be probably justified that the views of the students on gender roles and gender specialities prove to be lasting in connection with the moving image examples made by them.

***Concerning public education teaching of the subject Moving Picture Culture and Media Studies we assumed that:***

H16: The appearance of Moving Picture Culture and Media Studies in public education and the infrastructural background provided for the teaching institutions do not necessarily mean the change and renewal of the methodological culture.



H17: Teachers still use the so-called traditional, classical teaching methods, forms of work (teacher's explanation, frontal class work, individual work, teacher's presentation, oral or written tests, assessments, discussions).

H18: There are few examples for the interactive teaching methods (team task solving, student's presentation, games, common assessment, disputes, etc.), and for the so-called new-generation teaching methods (co-operative learning, project method, self-assessment, dramatizing, etc.)

## **Research Results**

### **Media Usage of 14–18-year-old Students**

The results of the media literacy research have proved that our own media usage questionnaire was a suitable measure to reveal the media 'consumption' of 14–18-year-old students, their supply with mass media and their attitudes towards television, internet and mobile phones. Among the students involved in the study, concerning the most preferred three media, 98% of the respondents have television (in their own rooms 69,4%), 96,7% have mobile phones and 92% have access to the internet. Our results are in accordance with the quantitative figures of media literacy researches referring to this age group (e.g. *OFCOM*, 2005-2007; *Covey*, 2009; *Bauer and colleagues*, 2005; *Sági*, 2006; *Kósa and László*, 2010; *Németh, Kopp, Szabó and Székely*, 2010).

Differences can be proved between students in the time and amount to be spent on media and the aim of why to use them. Our research verifies that in the background of the difference in the usage of television, internet and mobile phones we can find such variables as the type of school, age, gender recognition or place of living. In some cases it has also been proved – in the case of students' attitudes towards means of mass media – that media usage can be influenced by media education, the time spent on the internet and the own TV set as well (*Herzog and Racsko*, 2012b). Based on the results, we can state that the 14-15-year-old students spend more time on the use of media. In the sub-sample of the eighth-grade learners the number of hours spent by watching TV and using the internet on weekdays is extremely high. 25,1% of the respondents spend 2-3hours watching TV a day and more than three hours in front of the internet.

The seventh-grade pupils are interested in the internet the most. Their 29,2% subsample spends more than 3 hours doing this activity on weekdays. For the 14–18-year-old students the internet is the most important, efficient and frequently used form of mass media. According to 79,2% of the students (N=2123) internet is the main source of information, this is what they use the most frequently – 84,6% of the respondents – and this is what they find the most efficient, too, (66,1%). The opinions cannot be associated with media education.

94,2% of the respondents (N=2568) use the internet at home alone and it can be proved that there is not a significant connection between the media usage and media education. According to the data referring to the usage of mobile phones, the seventh-grade pupils use them to make a phone call the most frequently, which means 2-3 calls a day. We can assume that in this age group the calling function of the mobile phone is prevailed mostly because of being in contact with family members and the peer group. The part of our hypothesis regarding older students more skilful in the technical usage of mass media in respect of age cannot be proved.

The majority of families does not regulate and does not bind conditions to the usage of the means of mass media (television, internet, mobile phone, computer). With our findings we can strengthen the results of the related studies (e.g. *Kósa*, 2002, 2003, 2008). 88,8% of parents do not constraint the use of television, 90,5-97,7% the use of internet. Concerning the mobile phone, families of 21% of the respondents try to regulate the media usage of children with limited upload account.

There is a significant connection of students' opinions about the media influence and the teenagers' understanding of media texts with the place of living, the type school, age, the time spent on watching television and also whether students have their own TV sets.

We have stated that the bigger the settlement students live in and the older they are, the less they think that television contents can have a favourable impact on the recipient. Our data prove the previous research results of *Kósa Éva and Berta Judit* (2006), in addition those of *Domonkos, Fehér, Hegyi, Kincses and Szlahotka* (2006). This view is even more typical of those youngsters who do not own their TV set in their rooms. The same is true for the judgement of the statement 'it is possible to learn while watching TV' Only 39,8% of the respondents think that it is possible to learn efficiently while watching television. Concerning genders, girls are more rejective.

Students are highly influenced by comedies, popular science films and news programmes. Especially female respondents find the contents of the above mentioned genres real, as they are more naive in respect of the reality of television media texts. It is typical for the eighth-grade pupils and students of 11-12 grades to think that these programmes transmit the worldwide events and those around us authentically.

The research results show that concerning media usage (television, computer and internet), there is no significant difference between students having Moving Picture Culture and Media Studies and those not doing so.

### **Results of Media Literacy Test of 14–18-year-old Students**

To define the reliability of the media literacy test, we used the Cronbach- $\alpha$  co-efficient. Of the total 122 items, there were 121 dichotomous and one trichotomous ones. In these cases Cronbach-

$\alpha$  is the proper reliability-estimation process. The value of Cronbach- $\alpha$  is 0,95, which arguably meets the test criterion. On the basis of the validation processes we can state that the test is a valid measure of the psychic construction, called media literacy in respect of curriculum requirements and reference base. All in all it was proved empirically that the test is one of the potentially highly reliable measures of media literacy.

According to the students' performance on the media literacy test, the hypothesis assuming significantly better task solving of students having Moving Picture Culture and Media Studies classes cannot be proved entirely. In four out of the 18 cases— see *tasks 4, 5, 8, 13* – students who had not had previously Moving Picture Culture and Media Studies lessons, performed better. We can make the conclusion that the above named tasks could have been solved having the abilities and skills for which the material of the media lessons was not necessary.

Analysing the total score of the students we have also proved that secondary school students have reached significantly better results in each and every task compared to the primary school pupils. An explanation for it can be their age, proficiency in media usage, motivation, a genuine interest in the topic and curiosity (e.g. *OFCOM, 2005-2007; EU KIDS Online I-II.; Bauer and Szabó, 2005*).

On the media literacy test, female learners reached significantly higher average scores. In the background of the results we can find that women are more open and interested in the media, media contents and media genres, thus probably in the contents of Moving Picture Culture and Media Studies.

### **Focus Group Survey**

The results of the focus group discussions are in accordance with both the national and international research results, including own ones as well, which take into account the parallel media usage and provide data concerning the media usage of the 14–18-year-old age group (e.g. *Kósa and László, 2011; Livingstone and Bovill, 2001; Rideout, Foehr, Roberts and Brodie, 1999*).

These results verified those empirical researches according to which in most industrial countries members of the 14–18-year-old age group spend more time watching television than being in school or doing any other activities, except for sleeping. If we add the time they spend watching films, reading magazines, playing computer games and listening to music, it can be seen that the most important form of spending their free time is media (*Herzog, 2009a, 2010*).

During the focus group discussions we could prove differences in respect of age and media content choice between the 15–16 and 17–18-year-old learners. The more mature students in age 'consume' more varied media texts, they are also able to justify their more colourful interest, unlike the younger age group.

Based on the follow-up analysis of the group processes, we can state that students have quite a massive knowledge regarding the language of the media: they can read ‘fluently’, i.e. they seem to understand the happenings of the television moving image creations, the difference and the aim between the several types of texts, they think and have their opinions about these. However, we have also seen that not only the control groups but also the students participating in media education felt only intuitively the meaning of certain moving image conventions and they were not aware how and for what purpose particular moving image meanings can be built up. The research results – especially concerning the presupposed effect of media – have not proved fully our hypothesis. We reckon that the background of it can be the fact that on the Moving Picture Culture and Media Studies lessons neither the aim nor the meaning of media texts, nor the potential effects of certain contents are dealt with properly.

Based on the research results it was verified that the really significant difference between the test and control groups could be seen mostly in the field of media text production, during the situational tasks. The reason for it, on the one hand, can be that students on their Moving Picture Culture and Media Studies lessons dealt with genre theory; on the other hand, they are skilful in improvisation situational role plays due to their drama speciality. This kind of consciousness helped them not only in the situations but also when reflecting to these. It was seen that they were able to notice their own mistakes and those of others, mainly to be able to avoid these mistakes next time. On the basis of our experiences we can maintain that the students of the groups which could use the language, idioms and events typical of the series in their situations, implemented media genre consciousness and reflectivity regarding own creation a lot better. It means that whether or not students had media education previously, they have the ability of media text interpretation to some extent, i.e. theoretically, they are able to compose important differences, yet these abilities cannot be applied on the level of practice, i.e. when they are skilled and acquired.

### **Content and Narrative Analysis of Students’ Media Texts**

While evaluating the open-ended questionnaire and the creative text production (*storyboard*) the statement of Drotner, was justified, according to which ‘media text production and the difficulty of its evaluation is due to the different experiences and background knowledge of the students coming to the media lesson, and they have also different motivations concerning creative tasks’ (Drotner, 1989, p. 211). Although in our case each student involved in the survey had a certain kind of knowledge about media texts and their level of understanding, the direct experience-based media text production applied on lessons was the privilege of students having media education beforehand. On the basis of our experiences we can state that for students the possibility of *storyboard* was new, regardless the fact whether or not they had Moving Picture

Culture and Media Studies lessons. They had not met such a task before neither on the media, nor other lessons (Herzog, 2009a).

Students were uncertain in connection with the task solving, results proved the experiences of Buckingham (2005, p. 169.) according to which '*... students have a wide range of knowledge regarding the language of the media: they can 'read' fluently, yet unable to 'write', as they had no chance of that. This existing passive knowledge should be activated in order to use it. They may feel it intuitively, what this or that convention can mean, but do not know how this meaning is built up.*

According to the content and narrative analysis of media texts we can state that in respect of students' media text production the efficiency of media education has not been proved.

From the analysis of students' creative writings it turned out that the text is very often a compromise between the peer group interest (leaning towards popular culture very often) and the criteria of the 'valid' school composition, verifying similar observations of Moss (1989).

The screenplays worked out by the students included a scene of a romantic film, without exception, marking that for the age group this film genre is the best to visualize male and female roles. The task provided adequate chance for students to activate their imagination and the results show that we can verify the similar research statement of Buckingham and Sefton-Green (1994, quotes Buckingham, 2005, p.182.) according to which '*... apparently, student very often interwove in the fictional actions and plots not only themselves and their classmates, but their previous, real experiences related to films, expressing their identity and friendship this way as well*'.

According to Becker (1982, quotes Bourdieu, 1984, p.74.) '*... creative work does not happen isolated from the world. No one can be totally independent of the world around them, as the propaganda and reception of works of art are also influenced by different economic and social processes*'. However, we agree with the statement of Dyson (1997, p. 142.), according to which '*... it would be a mistake to reckon that students express their 'most personal essence', 'their deepest selves' during these tasks.* Media texts and scenes written by students contain a kind of imaginary or expected series of events, put in a romantic setting, which are closer to the film and fiction, typically to popular culture.

The narrative analysis of the media texts of teenagers bears out that secondary school youngsters are strongly influenced by the media and their beliefs regarding gender roles seem to be lasting in respect of both real life and film expectations. According to our survey:

- Teenagers do not know any Hungarian films or actors, actresses.

- Teenagers' characterization of men and women can be said traditional: in case of women, emotionality and the roles regarded traditional (mother, lover, wife, working woman) are named, while to men more colourful personality traits are associated: brave, militant, determined, kind.
- Media texts of 14–18-year-old students reflect the stereotypical expectations overemphasized in mass media messages, regarding appearance. The body ideal represented by the media shows a unified picture, which has a great influence on teenagers' expectations concerning gender roles, according to the research, justified.

### **Observation in Moving Picture Culture and Media Studies Lessons**

Based on lesson observations we can say that during the interviews with teachers, the contents referred to as the aims of media education are not in accordance with the classroom process. Media teachers pay little time and attention to develop students' skills of media text comprehension and highlighting the main points, or how to choose programmes and contents in a conscious and critical way. We saw hardly any examples during the lessons for students' own explications about the biasing roles of mass media means, media effects, or that they could share their views with their coevals on their opinions and attitudes concerning the media.

Our research seems to prove that the infrastructural background of media education in Hungary is appropriate. Both primary and secondary schools have the adequate number of computers, laptops, the necessary digital network and access facilities, in most cases even projectors. During the media lessons for illustrations mainly projectors are used, connected to laptops (computers). The above named technical equipment is applied regularly mostly for analysing moving image works, i.e. films, commercials, video clips and news programmes (*Herzog, 2009b; Herzog and Racsko, 2012a*).

According to our research findings, there are more and more teachers having the necessary qualifications to be skilled in media teaching. It may be due to this fact that during the observed lessons we did not see any examples for teachers' forcing students to accept their own, subjective opinions concerning media. Our experience is that the majority of media teachers have given up applying the traditional way of teacher's presentations in order to cope with the stated material of the Moving Picture Culture and Media Studies lessons. Media Education is not an 'academic' approached subject, knowledge transmission is not one-way and theory-dominated, either. Although on most lessons still the frontal work is typical, there were a lot of examples during our observations for discussions – 96 occasions – and group work – 21, 9% occasions.

Using textbooks and workbooks is not typical on Moving Picture Culture and Media Studies lessons. Homework exists, yet very often it is not checked. During media education teachers

hardly deal with the issue of conscious and critical media choice, thus teenagers are left alone in this field. They are not given any instructions or alternatives regarding how to choose a media text for a given purpose. The lessons lack the tasks connected to creative media text production which might help the conscious media usage of students.

### **Conclusions and Suggestions**

When children or adults would like to regard themselves to be conscious media users, it is not enough to know the ‘system of codes’ typical of media texts, i.e. to be able to interpret the messages conveyed by the media, but also they should handle media texts in a conscious and critical way. For this, they need specific knowledge and skills, the overall name of which is media literacy. In our essay we published the results of a basic research, the aim of which was to characterize the media literacy of 14–18-year-old students, presenting the characteristic features and external environmental factors of media literacy structure. Such research is timely as with the help of the data gained, we could get a more accurate picture of the relationship between the new, digital media and teenagers, the time spent by them on media usage, in addition the aim and way of media usage.

We also found it important to be informed about the views of youngsters concerning media effects and their ways of media usage in several ways. This is why we provided students with the opportunity of expressing their opinions not only in written forms but also during the focus group discussions or in situational tasks, too. Owing the experiences gained here, we could make more exact the results of the quantitative research.

During the study we learnt a lot not only about the individual factors of media literacy of 14–18-year-old students, but also about the domestic position of media education, which is one of the most important of the external environment factors. Based on the media lessons observed in classrooms, we can state that it is high time methodological culture was changed. We would like to see the change in attitudes and the practice in and beyond the community of media teachers, in which it is accepted that media education is based on the ‘existing media experiences’ of students, thus giving chance to differentiated teaching methods, in addition, to recognize that there is a need for media exercises to help self-expression, as these can lead students to a higher level of theorizing. This kind of learning process can be based on the mutual communication between the student and the teacher, during which sometimes it is the teacher who is forced to learn as well, since very often students are more confident in the field of the media, especially when handling electronic means and the internet.

Obviously, pedagogues cannot be required to be at ease professionally in every field of media (e.g. films, photos, television, radio, internet, computer games, commercials, etc.) as Moving

Picture Culture and Media Studies is a subject with heterogeneous contents. Yet it is very important for the teacher to have a high level of qualification at least in one or two fields. In other fields (e.g. with the help of creative exercises) teachers should aspire to use efficiently the supplementary materials, tools and should be in contact with those experts of a subdivision – less familiar for them – whom can be invited for the lessons from time to time, or to whom students can be taken for internship (e.g. local television specialists, people in radio studios, etc.) This activity can be helped by those civilian associations and organisations which deal with improving students' media literacy within several programmes – e.g. MediaSmart programme – (Herzog, 2012e).

The research results enable to ask further questions and serve as base for additional studies.

Among politicians dealing with education, the issue of making Moving Picture Culture and Media Studies lesson compulsory and extending it for several years in primary schools often arises. One of the obstacles of it is the lack of qualified pedagogues. Nowadays, in Hungary there are MA degree trainings of Moving Picture Culture and Media Studies, which can mean the relatively quick solution of this problem.

It is also obvious that the textbooks and anthologies containing practical exercises need refreshing according to today's standard. It is often stated how important it is to form the skills and abilities of critical and conscious media usage in children. However, the relevant knowledge and information appear neither in textbooks nor in the topics of the lessons. We have confidence in the fact that the highly-qualified specialists graduated from universities, owing the experiences gained during the media lessons will be in the forefront in respect of developing the teaching material.

As the central topic of this dissertation is the media literacy of 14–18-year-old students, it is worth emphasizing the responsibility of the broadcasters as well. We have to mention that with the help of the media contents conveyed by them their task is to encourage youngsters' education for democracy, their acquisition of social values, tolerance of differences and forming an open-minded view instead of making these even more difficult. Naturally, researchers are aware of the fact that compliance with it requires a totally different aspect, especially when talking about the media operating mostly with a commercial aim, relying on revenues from advertising. It is encouraging that public broadcasters have launched a kind of change in their programme structure for the past one and a half year. We can only hope that this is part of a long-term strategy and they keep on producing home-made, 'protected' programmes like value providing documentaries, or children and educational programmes.



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