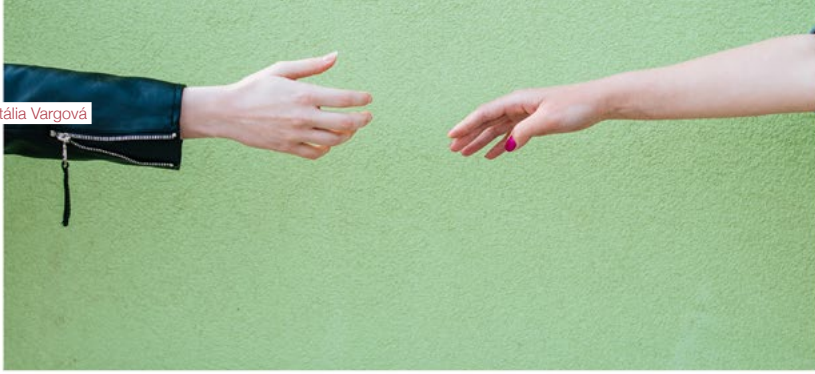


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Axiocentric Teaching And Learning About Media In The Context Of School Practice

ABSTRACT

Axiocentric teaching and learning about media is one of the ways of media teaching and learning that emphasizes the values and evaluation process in relation to the media and its products (Kačínová, 2015). The focus of the educational process is on the formation of personality through the media. It also pays attention to the value orientations and value systems of individuals in the context of media presentations and to those developed under the influence of the media or during interaction with it. At the same time, this kind of media teaching and learning cultivates the critical thinking of pupils in the interaction with the value representations promoted by the media, thus revealing the intentions of media content creators in this area. This kind of media learning leads directly to the essence of media education being perceived as an educational topic in the content of school education. The main aim of our study is to provide a theoretical background to this topic and present the results of empirical research which focused on an analysis of case studies of school practice, observation of teaching and interviews with teachers, through which we demonstrate ways of implementing axiocentric teaching and learning about media in selected Slovak schools. At the end of the paper, we clarify the importance of the educational process for the development of the individual in their interaction with the media.

KEY WORDS

Values. Media. Axiocentric teaching and learning about media. Critical thinking. Primary and secondary schools. Slovakia.

1. Introduction

The media in each era of its development is associated with an impact on the mentality of society and the individual. Through the development of society, we can see how powerful the influence of the media is.¹ The changes it brings about are of a strong socio-cultural nature, since, when under the influence of the media and its content, individuals think about and understand the world differently and their experiences change their value systems.

The cultural and social changes that the media and its content cause are related to the promotion of a wide range of value frameworks. Multiplied by the influence of postmodernism with its characteristic instability, fluidity,² variability, dynamics, plurality and fragmentation,³ and therefore characteristics that also affect the perception of value categories and norms, a maze of values in the context of media culture is created. This is particularly difficult for young people to orientate and the value meanings presented by the media often contradict each other.⁴ Changes deriving from continuous technological advancement and global communication are also reflected in the superficiality of thinking that has profoundly pushed⁵ a transient and provisional lifestyle.⁶ Postmodern young people under the influence of a climate of relativization or the rejection of constant ethical norms and principles find themselves in a state of value confusion as they lack support points and remain dependent on themselves, their decisions, opinions and feelings. Polačková also recalls Jurina's statement which says that if a person rejects moral and ethical principles, they can start wondering until they find themselves in real chaos.⁷ Gáliková Tolnaiová also says that postmodernism is paradoxical, full of fear, uncertainty and contradictions.⁸

Developing the ability to orientate in the media and in the values presented by it, as well as highlighting significant value representations, is realized through axiocentric teaching and media learning, which concentrates on the values and the evaluation process in interactions with the media and its products.⁹ In a process in which the media acts as objects and means of shaping the axiological and moral aspects of personality,¹⁰ pupils develop a primary sensitivity to the values presented in the media, as well as critical thinking towards value media presentations. This makes the selection of quality content conditional on the values being the subject of observation, analysis, comparison, evaluation and subsequent internalization.¹¹

¹ HUBINÁKOVÁ, H., MIKULA, M.: The importance of the Internet in the Life of Students of Media Studies. In *Media Literacy and Academic Research*, 2018, Vol. 1, No. 1, p. 32.

² BAUMAN, Z.: *Liquid modernity*. Cambridge : Polity press, 2000, s. 2-3.

³ REIFOVÁ, I.: *Slovník mediální komunikace*. Praha : Portál, 2004, p. 238.

⁴ KAČINOVÁ, V.: *Teoretické východiská učenia (sa) o médiách*. Trnava : Univerzita sv. Cyrila a Metoda v Trnave, 2018, p. 50.

⁵ MOGHADDAM, A. A. et al.: Three of concepts: Modernism, Postmodernism and globalization. In *Elixir Soc. Sci.*, 2012, Vol. 43, No. 1, p. 6648. [online]. [2019-09-13]. Available at: <https://www.academia.edu/2112210/Three_of_concepts_Modernism_Postmodernism_and_globalization>.

⁶ TORNERO, J., VARIS, T.: *Media literacy and new humanism*. Moscow : UNESCO, 2010, p. 13. [online]. [2019-09-13]. Available at: <<https://iite.unesco.org/pics/publications/en/files/3214678.pdf>>.

⁷ JURINA, J.: *Stručný prehľad dejín filozofie: Postmodernizmus*. Ružomberok : Katolícka univerzita v Ružomberku, 2007, p. 156.; According to: POLAČKOVÁ, A.: Krátka reflexia k ponímaniu moderny a postmoderny. In *Annales Scientia Politica*, Prešov : Prešovská univerzita v Prešove, 2012, Vol. 1, No. 1, p. 74. [online]. [2019-08-15]. Available at: <<https://www.unipo.sk/public/media/17464/ASP%201-2012%20Polackova.pdf>>.

⁸ GÁLIKOVÁ TOLNAIOVÁ, S.: *Problém výchovy na prahu 21. storočia*. Bratislava : IRIS, 2007, p. 19.

⁹ KAČINOVÁ, V.: *Teoretické východiská učenia (sa) o médiách*. Trnava : Univerzita sv. Cyrila a Metoda v Trnave, 2018, p. 69.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ KAČINOVÁ, V.: *Teória a prax mediálnej výchovy: mediálna výchova ako súčasť všeobecného školského vzdelávania*. Trnava : Univerzita sv. Cyrila a Metoda v Trnave, 2015, p. 51.

Axiocentric media education, which fulfills what professionals¹² dealing with modern media educational concepts lack, therefore supervises the formation of the value system, the attitudes of the individual and the formation of what he/she should be, not only what he/she should know.¹³ It tries to „interpret“ individual values, their meaning in accordance with their true nature, and at the same time, tries to find a meaningful place in the life of the individual for them. It teaches pupils to establish a relationship with their own lives, with themselves and with the values that the individual professes.¹⁴ This kind of media teaching and learning teaches pupils not to be passive, but tries to make them realize the influence of the media and to reveal the value messages that they are trying to put out to the recipients. Active recipients, on the other hand, will not surrender to these media pressures. They can think soberly and critically and reevaluate the quality of value statements in relation to their own lives. This kind of media learning, in particular, not only develops social-affective qualities, but also cognitive qualities of individuals (with a critical approach that is key to media education).¹⁵

For the process of value transmission in the educational process, the centre of such media education, the starting point is the process of affective learning, including the formation of feelings, emotions, attitudes, values, interests, attention and motivation. In the context of media education, a model has been proposed which is the application of the taxonomy of educational goals in the affective area by Krathwohl, Bloom and Masia (1969) and its basic levels: receiving, responding, evaluating, integration and the integration of values.¹⁶ According to Kačínová's model^{17, 18}, these are the following stages¹⁹:

- 1. Receiving of the values presented by media** – The first step is to realize the values presented in the media; there is then a willingness to accept them and pay particular attention to them. It is therefore important for pupils to actively search and discover the values in the media, be able to distinguish them and assess their importance. This is due to the fact that the media often produces less valuable content.
- 2. Responding to the values presented by media** – This requires active attention and is where the recipients can express their consent and take a positive attitude to the values presented in the media. What is important is a strong motivation for pupils to be able to receive and internalize the desired values. This can be problematic because pupils may have a resistant attitude towards values that are inconsistent with their current value settings. For effectively responding to presented media values, it is necessary to change users' habits and their ability to orientate their attention to valuable media content.
- 3. Evaluating the values presented by media** – The recipients are convinced and aware of the significance of the values presented in the media and can evaluate them and take a positive attitude towards them. At the same time, they can identify with them and

¹² El consejo de Redacción. Editorial: La Formación del Profesorado en Educación Mediática. In *Educación mediática y formación del profesorado. Revista Interuniversitaria de Formación del Profesorado*, 2018, Vol. 32, No. 1, p. 11-12. [online]. [2019-09-10]. Available at: <<https://www.aufop.com/aufop/revistas/artb/impresa/206/editorial>>.

¹³ See also: GUTIÉRREZ, A., TYNER, K.: Educación para los medios, alfabetización mediática y competencia digital. In *Comunicar*, 2012, Vol. 19, No. 38, p. 31 – 39. ISSN 1134-3478.

¹⁴ KAČÍNOVÁ, V.: *Teória a prax mediálnej výchovy: mediálna výchova ako súčasť všeobecného školského vzdelávania*. Trnava : Univerzita sv. Cyrila a Metoda v Trnave, 2015, p. 51.

¹⁵ PETRANOVÁ, D.: Does media education at schools develop student's critical competences? In *Communication Today*, 2011, Vol. 2, No. 1, p. 71.

¹⁶ KRATHWOHL, D. R., BLOOM, B. S., MASIA, B. B.: *Taxonomy of educational objectives. The classification of educational goals. Handbook II.: Affective domain*. New York : Rerp. D. McKay Co., Inc., 1969, p. 196.

¹⁷ KAČÍNOVÁ, V.: *Teória a prax mediálnej výchovy: Mediálna výchova ako súčasť všeobecného školského vzdelávania*. Trnava : Univerzita sv. Cyrila a Metoda v Trnave, 2018, p. 51 – 52.

¹⁸ See also: KAČÍNOVÁ, V., PETRANOVÁ, D., KOLČÁKOVÁ, V.: Axiocentric media education as a strategy for the cultivation of media recipients. In *European Journal of Science and Theology*, 2014, Vol. 10, No. 1, p. 106.

¹⁹ We add our own commentary to the original characteristics as mentioned in the sources.

integrate them into their value systems. They prefer media content with positive values. It is important to develop critical thinking so pupils can assess the quality of values and their true meaning or reveal their distortions.

4. **Organization of the values presented by media into the personality value system** – To integrate the media's presented values into their own value system, it is important to synchronize values into one whole and create meaningful relationships between them.
5. **Characterization by a value – integration of the values presented by media into personal character structure** – This is the final and most important point because it is a demanding process in terms of time and the internal motivation of individuals. The values are arranged into a coherent unit in the character structure of personality. These changes in personality are permanent and desired through different forms of education.

The current situation in Slovak primary and secondary schools in the teaching of axiocentric media education is favourable because schools include value-oriented topics in their curriculums. This has been demonstrated by an analysis of two methodological manuals, *Examples of Good Practices in Media Education Teaching at Primary and Secondary Schools*²⁰ and *Good Media: Examples of good practices in media education teaching at primary and secondary schools*.²¹ The issues of advertising and the impact of social networks and the Internet are mostly dealt with in schools. The states of educational practices in this given area have become the subject of our research.

2. Objective and methodology of the research

Our study focused on the presentation of results of qualitatively designed research on school practices regarding axiocentric media education. The research problem takes the form of three research questions:

1. What is the relationship of pupils to the selected media's presented values or their values in relation to the media (level of receiving, responding, value valuing)?
2. Do pupils realize the influence of the media on their own value orientation and value systems?
3. How do teachers teaching media education perceive the importance of value-oriented media education (also in competition with other media education orientations)?

The following methods were chosen to address the core questions of the research problem:

- Case study – for a thorough and in-depth examination of the implementation of axiocentric media education at selected schools;
- Structured observation – to determine the relationship of pupils with the values presented in the media space and to identify if pupils feel the impact and influence of the media on their own personalities;
- Interview – to identify the perception and opinions of teachers on the importance of an axiocentric focus on media education.

When implementing the research, we applied an observation sheet made by us. It consisted of a table containing 10 monitored activities and focused on the process of value processing by pupils in connection with the media. These monitored activities enabled us to answer research questions no. 1 and 2.

²⁰ See also: KAČINOVÁ, V. et al.: *Príklady dobrej praxe výučby mediálnej výchovy na základných a stredných školách*. Trnava : Univerzita sv. Cyrila a Metoda v Trnave, 2015.

²¹ See also: KAČINOVÁ, V. et al.: *Dobré médiá : Príklady dobrej praxe výučby mediálnej výchovy na základných a stredných školách*. Trnava : Univerzita sv. Cyrila a Metoda v Trnave, 2017.

Value transmission algorithm	Monitored activities	Pupils' response
Receiving	Are pupils aware of the value of the media?	
	Are pupils sensitive to the value of the media?	
	Can pupils correctly designate (identify) value in relation to the media?	
	Do pupils understand what a particular value means in relation to the media?	
Responding	Are pupils willing to pay active attention to the value of the media?	
	Are pupils active in the debate on the topic of concrete value in the context of the media?	
	Do they respond to what the teacher says about the values?	
Valuing	Are pupils convinced of the significance of values in the media?	
	Do pupils have a positive or negative attitude towards the values presented in relation to the media?	
	Are they willing to follow the values in their lives? (practice the values)	

SCHEME 1: Observation sheet

Source: own processing, 2019

For the interview, we used pre-prepared questions for teachers that focused on identifying their perception and opinions on axiocentric media education in relation to answering research question no. 3.

2.1 The research sample

The selection of the research sample determined the topics the schools discussed regarding media education. It was crucial for us that there were topics about values and evaluation in relation to the media in the thematic teaching plan. After addressing several schools, we finally selected a research sample consisting of three schools: the Private Joint School in Námestovo, a secondary grammar school in Bratislava and a private primary school in Banská Bystrica. Media education is classified as a separate school subject at all the above mentioned schools.

Name of the school	Topic of the school subject	Time for media education	Observed class
Private Joint School, Námestovo	Opinion or fact in the news	0,5 hour per week	fifth
Secondary grammar school, Bratislava	Manipulative techniques - Disinformation campaign	0,5 hour per week	second
Private primary school, Banská Bystrica	A true and virtual friendship	1 hour per week	eighth

SCHEME 2: Research sample overview

Source: own processing, 2019

3. Results

The research was realized at the selected schools from March to April 2019. In accordance with **research question no. 1**, we observed the teaching process and investigated the first stages of value processing by pupils according to the abovementioned theoretical parameters. The other two were irrelevant to our research as their evaluation goes beyond the context of the observed teaching.

3.1 The level of receiving

The result of the observation was the finding that the pupils were aware of the values of the media (truth, friendship). On the topic of differentiating between factual information and opinion or media spread disinformation and manipulation, they showed that they understood what the value of the truth is based on their own experiences from the Internet and under the influence of tabloids. They could correctly identify the value of truth in a disinformation context. They used their inner vigilance to not let someone put them under pressure to say something or accept a foreign, unverified opinion without using critical thinking. At the same time, it was shown that students have more difficulty reading opinion-based news because news is not entirely attractive to them (due to their ages and interests). Reading and analyzing the given texts in the classroom, however, provided the opportunity to think more about the value of truth in media content.

Regarding the value of friendship, pupils feel the difference between real and virtual friendships. They can recognize the qualitative differences between both forms (positives and negatives), also in respect to themselves. They also showed sensitivity to threats coming from the virtual world (being influenced by news flow, the dangers coming from interactions on social networks) as they perceive them as very real because they commonly encounter them on their own or in an educational setting (from discussions with experts or media education lessons). They were able to take a relevant attitude to the topic because they are active users of social networks and are therefore very close to this topic.

3.2 Level of responding

Due to their ages and interests, the students actively responded to the values that the teacher explained and initiated discussion on (without pressure), and with pedagogical support, they participated in the discussions individually or in groups. The teaching activities in the lessons stimulated their attention and increased the interest of the pupils and provided a space for deeper thinking and feedback about the value received from the media (also in the form of arguing their own opinions on the topic). On the topic of media disinformation, the teacher appropriately selected interesting topics from various areas (history – „*Adolf Hitler as a perfect manipulator*,“ health care – „*the supposed danger of vaccinations*“ and so on), which, thanks to their timeliness, kept the pupils' permanent attention and motivated them. With the value of friendship, as we have already stated, pupils have experience with the virtual world so they have also tested it themselves, and consequently can approach the value based on personal experience. Students also enjoyed the exchange of views in teams on given topics.

3.3 Level of valuing

The students were obviously convinced of the significance (importance) of the examined values in relation to the media. We could see from their responses that they appreciated the topics in the context of expanding their own outlook and knowledge in the areas in which they take part daily (media, social networks). They were happy to discuss the possible threats from virtual space and to hear the opinions of other class members and then confront them with their own perception of the problem and their own opinions on values. On the subject of truth, students agreed that the truth is currently hard to find, not only in the media. In the media space, disinformation and assumptions are circulated by people who make posts. They realized the importance of this value for their own and social good. They also found that they just cannot take in all the information from the media and how important information balance is. At the

same time, the students expressed the opinion that the subjectivity of journalists in the media's description of an event can be very difficult to eliminate. On the topic of misinformation, pupils showed that they have experience with manipulation, and therefore are aware of the problem. However, they are willing to follow the value of truth and turn things around in their „favour“ – to go into active defense, or rather „counterattack“ (e.g. by verifying information). On the topic of friendship, the liveliness of the pupils was recorded as they wanted to personally speak about the topics because they were convinced of their individual abilities to present their positive attitudes on the subject. The teaching lesson was part of the initiated process and certainly contributed, in the case of a given value, to its better perception for pupils. According to our evaluation, the pupils were ready to think more about whether to reconsider their friendships, including virtual ones.

In **research question no. 2**, through the increased activity of pupils, we observed that they are aware of the influence of the media on their personality and value orientation and that the media can shape their character. At the same time, they are aware of the importance of selecting the media messages they receive because they have a significant impact on their personality, opinion, attitudes and behavior. On the topic of truth, students agreed that an individual can succumb to deception and half-truths without having sufficiently verified information and by receiving information that is not important for their life and having an absorbing personality. On the topic of disinformation (manipulation), the students confirmed that they not only encounter manipulative techniques in the media, but also in direct contact with other people, and have proven that they are not indifferent to manipulation and are able to diagnose it, taking their ages into consideration. On the topic of friendship, they also showed that they perceive the value of a true friend that everyone needs in life, and at the same time, they understand the difference between online and offline friendships.

In **research question no. 3**, we investigated how teachers perceive axiocentric media education. Based on the responses from the interviews, we can conclude that they are aware of the value of the media to their pupils' personalities and consider this direction of media education to be an important part of teaching and media education itself (i.e. different directions). This comes, for example, from the evaluation of one of the teachers: *„I think (media education) is very important because in today's world, young people are missing it and (...) those children tend, especially those who are not so educated, to take in information that is manipulative and engrossing. They are not able to orientate. (...) The media has a great power in terms of manipulation. (...) They are still being pushed by idols, pseudo-models, and those children (...) let the information take over without critical thinking.“*²² Strengthening critical thinking and its training in the educational process is also perceived by teachers as the centre of focus in the context of the occurrence of disinformation in the media. Pupils should learn to search for multiple sources of information as well as how to check and verify the credibility of websites, especially when they provide disinformative content.

Teachers also expressed what topics they think are important in relation to the media. Despite different opinions, the consensus on the value of truth in the context of media reality prevailed. This finding corresponds to the current situation that we mainly encounter in the Internet environment, where a lot of false and misleading information circulates. This is expressed by one of the teacher's statements regarding pupils' need to direct *„their attention to the fact that what they consume in the (...) media world may not always be true, or that there are those hidden intentions of someone who sends this information out to the world. (...). The most important things nowadays are misinformation and conspiracy theories which are part of their world.“*²³

²² Personal interview with Mgr. Katarína Miková, Námestovo, 19.3.2019

²³ Personal interview with Mgr. Slávka Molnárová, Bratislava, 28.3.2019

Teachers also noticed their pupils' feedback in the media education lessons. Therefore, they observed what attitudes they took towards particular values and realized that pupils' attitudes are not identical and depend, for example, on their particular family setting. In the interview the opinion that the media has the power to „educate“ was also presented, but still the greatest responsibility lies with schools. Teachers also said that they partially perceive the results of students' acceptance as being due to an increased alertness to their occurrence in the media world. In one case, we came across a way to measure the value system and critical thinking of pupils from the teachers' side through the IPAO (Institute for active citizenship) methodology.²⁴ One teacher stated that despite the more difficult possibility of modifying attitudes, there was a slight improvement with pupils.

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²⁴ IPAO (Institute for active citizenship) is an institute whose goal is to educate citizens that are active and critically thinking. Primary and secondary schools in Slovakia can participate in the Institute. The Institute focuses mainly on improving the civic competence and skills needed for life. According to: *Školy, ktoré menia svet*. [online]. [2019-08-28]. Available at: <<https://ipao.sk/portfolio-items/skoly-ktore-menia-svet/>>.

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