REMEDIS

POLICY BRIEF 1

The REMEDIS (Rethinking Media Literacy and Digital Skills) project, funded by the European Union's CHANSE (Collaboration of Humanities and Social Sciences in Europe) programme, is a collaborative endeavor involving seven academic partners from six countries, in addition to evidence-based approaches for the development and evaluation of initiatives aimed at nurturing media literacy and digital skills (ML&DS) with a keen focus on understanding the manifold positive outcomes these interventions can have across various life domains.

Taking an innovative research strategy to heart, REMEDIS sets out to achieve two pivotal goals.

Firstly, it endeavors to discern and quantify the most influential driving forces behind ML&DS from a lifelong perspective.
Secondly, it seeks to synthesize the existing body of evidence regarding the efficacy of current interventions designed to foster ML&DS.

Of particular significance is REMEDIS's dedication to addressing specific target groups, including disadvantaged youths (NEETs or Not in Education or Training), the unemployed, refugees, individuals with lower socioeconomic status (SES), caregivers of NEETs, and prospective educators.

Four research objectives

Enhancing Theoretical Understanding: REMEDIS aims to contribute to the enhancement of our theoretical knowledge concerning the actual outcomes of ML&DS interventions.

Optimisation of Intervention Strategies: By leveraging existing and emerging evidence, REMEDIS endeavors to improve and enrich existing ML&DS intervention strategies.

Methodological Advancements: The project plans to adopt advanced research methods while concurrently developing and validating instruments for the evaluation of intervention strategies.

Policy Recommendations and Evaluation Toolkit: Ultimately, REMEDIS seeks to produce evidence-based policy recommendations and craft a user-friendly, customizable evaluation toolkit.

This policy brief contributes significantly to REMEDIS's research objective by developing an **evidence-based synthesis**. It accomplishes this through a **systematic review of the drivers and outcomes of ML&DS interventions**, as well as an **exploration of the characteristics that make ML&DS intervention programs effective in yielding positive** outcomes.

REMEDIS presents a **systematic evidence review** of Media Literacy and Digital Skills (ML&DS) intervention programmes. It includes an analysis of 248 relevant studies, employing a comprehensive search and rigourous screening and coding process. The study primarily concentrated on publications in the English language and quantitative research. It is important to note that there could be studies that are potentially relevant but were not included in our analysis.

Enhancing Research on Media and Digital Literacy Interventions

Recommendations for further research

Theoretical Frameworks: Approximately three-quarters of the articles incorporated theoretical foundations from diverse fields, including media studies, media psychology, psychological science, pedagogical science, and related disciplines.

Outcome Categories: Among the 119 articles with robust methodologies, media literacy and digital skills-related outcomes were most frequently examined. Psychological wellbeing and education/learning outcomes (for children and young people) followed closely. Diversifying outcome measures beyond these categories is recommended to gain a comprehensive understanding of intervention benefits.

Target Groups: Nine distinct target groups were identified, with outcomes varying based on the specific group being examined. Customising interventions to suit particular demographics is crucial to maximize their effectiveness. Research in settings outside of formal education is advantageous for a broader perspective.

Differentiating Factors: Few articles explored differentiating factors like mediators or moderators. Gender emerged as the most frequently considered moderator, indicating a need for more research into the nuanced effects of ML&DS interventions.

Methodological Considerations: The majority of articles did not employ stringent experimental designs. Researchers should prioritise randomised controlled trials or high-quality experimental designs for more reliable results. There is a need for more consistent reporting of effect sizes.

REMEDIS underscores the importance of diverse theoretical frameworks, comprehensive outcome measures, and tailored interventions for specific target groups in ML&DS research, extending beyond formal education settings. Researchers should employ **rigorous methodologies, prioritise randomised controlled trials, and consistently report effect sizes.**

Future research should explore differentiating factors and expand the scope of outcome measurements for different target groups.

Enhancing Media and Digital Literacy Interventions

REMEDIS findings indicate that the success of ML&DS interventions depends on a **combination of factors** related to participants, design, methodology, and external support. To enhance the effectiveness of such interventions, the **following recommendations** are made.

Factors of Success

Participant Involvement: Successful interventions emphasize the importance of actively involving participants in the design phase. Homogeneous grouping based on participants' needs and characteristics, including socioeconomic level and cultural context, is crucial. To ensure success, participants should be central to the strategy's activities from the outset.

Peer-to-Peer and Group Methodologies: Particularly in educational settings, "peer-to-peer" and group-based learning approaches have proven effective in ML&DS interventions. Collaborative learning enhances engagement and skill development.

Assessment of Participants' Skill Levels: Starting with a baseline assessment of participants' digital skills and literacy is essential for designing tailored interventions. Surveys are commonly used to determine participants' initial skill levels, allowing for the creation of relevant content and activities.

Length of Intervention: Longer interventions are considered more effective. The duration and frequency of interventions directly impact participants' skill development. Establishing follow-up criteria for activities ensures the expected outcomes are achieved over time.

External Expertise: Collaboration with external organizations, such as NGOs or universities, can enhance the evaluation of programs and prevent the repetition of unsuccessful practices. Their expertise contributes to more effective intervention design and implementation.

Instructor Training: Instructors should receive training that aligns with participants' specific needs. Properly trained instructors are better equipped to deliver content effectively and guide participants throughout the intervention.

Research Design: Studies using experimental designs with control groups and observation methods are considered successful. Integrating tested theoretical frameworks enhances the methodological soundness of interventions.

Barriers to Success

Participant Characteristics: Participants' digital skills and media literacy levels can act as barriers if not aligned with intervention content. Resistance, motivation issues, and difficulties in independent learning are common challenges that need to be addressed.

Overlooking Individual Characteristics: Ignoring factors like age, education level, or nationality during intervention design can lead to anxiety and helplessness among participants. Contextual factors must be considered.

Technical Issues: Technical barriers, such as a lack of access to updated digital equipment and internet connectivity issues, can hinder intervention progress significantly. Ensuring participants have access to the necessary tools is essential.

Location Factors: Characteristics of the intervention location, including room size, disruptions, and cultural context, can affect success. Scheduling conflicts also pose a significant barrier and should be addressed.

Lack of Support: Insufficient "hands-on" practice and personal support for participants can result in disinterest and dropouts. Clear objectives and engaging learning activities are necessary to maintain participants' interest.

Short Intervention Length: Short interventions may not allow for meaningful behavioral changes, making it difficult to measure lasting impacts. Longer interventions are recommended for comprehensive skill development.

Methodological Issues: Weak research conditions, such as the absence of control groups, reliance on self-reports, and small sample sizes, can limit the effectiveness of evaluations. Robust research methodologies are essential.

In conclusion, addressing these success factors and barriers can significantly enhance the impact of media and digital literacy interventions, ensuring that participants acquire essential skills for the digital age.

Policymakers, educators, and practitioners should consider these recommendations when designing and implementing future interventions.