THE EVALUATION PROJECT MEDIA LITARACY EDUCATION IN TURKEY

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Abstract: Media following behaviors and attitudes towards the media have begun to have a significant place in communication studies. The meaning attributed, value assigned, requirements and needs expected from the media varies in terms of different social categories. The translation of the information literacy term from English into other languages is difficult, so information professionals from different countries should consider which words convey the right meaning to avoid semantic rejection by their learning communities. In Turkish, the information literacy literal translation is strongly related to the general concept of „Literacy." Teachers and faculty particularly dislike the term information literacy because of the correlation to the „rather" basic skills of reading and writing. The most commonly accepted term is „Medya Okuryazarlığı" / Development of information skills, a definition that, instead of using a noun, stresses the information literacy process.

The purpose of this paper, the concept of Media Literacy, also it development of media education in Turkey accumulated many years of experience - theoretical, methodological and practical activity.

Key Words: Media Education, Media Literacy, Turkey, RTUK (Radio and Television Supreme Council), MEB (Ministry Of National Education)

Media Literacy

The knowledge and skills necessary to understand all of the mediums and formats in which data, information and knowledge are created, stored, communicated, and presented, i.e., print newspapers and journals, magazines, radio, television broadcasts, cable, CD-ROM, DVD, mobile telephones, PDF text formats, and JPEG format for photos and graphics. (Chambers English Dictionary, 2003).

The world today, for many, especially adults, is much different from that remembered from childhood. The world of the twenty-first century is controlled by media, driven by technology, and globalized day-by-day. In other words, it is a place where people are more connected with each other.(Kellner, D., & Share, J. 2007). Today, mass media influences life from many aspects, and media is more active than ever in shaping daily routines. People have the right to access correct and reliable information and publications from various sources in order to develop their social, spiritual, ethical, and mental abilities. (IFLA

2006-International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions)

The global debate in media education clearly calls for media literacy policies. According to Masterman (1997), media education focuses on representations in media constructions. «The central and unifying concept of media education is representation». It considers media constructions as representations, not as reflecting realities. Another important point for media education, according to Masterman, is the purpose of media education. It aims to «denaturalize the media» and «challenges the naturalness of media images» by questioning them. In terms of values attached to those constructions, «media education is investigative» and «it does not seek to impose specific cultural values». It can be also understood as «being for others, their values, and their identities». In terms of media education's use, it is not supposed to be planned for a certain period of time only. It should be, and actually it is, a lifelong process, acontinuing process. Through this process, «the effectiveness of media education has to be evaluated» (Masterman, 1997).

Translation of the term

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information literacy literal translation is strongly related to the general concept of „Literacy." Teachers and faculty particularly dislike the term information literacy because of the correlation to the „rather" basic skills of reading and writing. The most commonly accepted term is „Medya Okuryazarlığı" / Development of information skills, a definition that, instead of using a noun, stresses the information literacy process.

Why is Education in media necessary?

Information literacy and lifelong learning have a strategic, mutually reinforcing relationship with each other that is critical to the success of every individual, organization, institution, and nation-state in the global information society. These two modern paradigms should ideally be harnessed to work symbiotically and synergistically with one another if people and institutions are to successfully survive and compete in the 21st century and beyond. Theoretically one could pursue the goal of becoming more information literate but not continuously over one's lifetime. Conversely, one could pursue the goal of lifelong learning but without having first become information literate. Taken alone, neither path maximizes the potential of the individual to „learn to learn."(Bundy, A., 2002).

The information literacy concept

There are several definitions assumed by associations and authors. The American

Association of School Librarians (AASL), a precursor in the IL field, and the Association for Educational Communications and Technologies state that „information literacy is – the ability to find and use information – is the keystone of lifelong learning" (Byerly/Brodie, 1999). Under the component of information literacy, AASL states that: „information literate student accesses information efficiently and effectively, evaluates information critically and competently, and uses information accurately and creatively" (Byerly/Brodie, 1999). Users „should have both information-gathering strategies and the critical thinking skills to select, discard, synthesize, and present information in new ways to solve real-life problems" (Byerly/Brodie, 1999). This information literacy definition extends beyond library skills and beyond the use of discrete skills and strategies to the ability to use complex information from a variety of sources to develop meaning or solve problems (Kuhlthau, as cited in Stripling, 1999).

Turkey, a secular state with a population of 99 per cent Muslims is of strategic importance with its geopolitical location where west meets east. Following 1999, the year of its official candidature to the European Union, Turkey is currently a country at the doorstep of EU although various debates on her status of democratization, human rights and fundamental freedoms in the country are still ongoing. Turkish citizens are predictably in need of critical approach in such above media environment. However, they do not have knowledge about the new media ownership structure, the close relationships between the media-politics-business world and the deconstruction of the messages. Since Turkey is still a developing country with a high degree of dependency on the global media, Turkish citizens' increasing level of critical thinking and self-expression through the media literacy would be the core element to expand the culture of democracy. Through the media literacy would be the core element to expand the culture of democracy.(Binark, M. and M. Gencel Bek, 2007).

On the other hand the current Turkish media, in particular popular TV has a very big influence on the daily life of citizens. According to a study by UNESCO in 2005, Turkey is the second country in the world watching TV on an average 3.5 hours per day. Turkey has directly passed to the audio-visual culture without completing the transition process from the oral to the written culture. As a result, the circulation of newspapers is quite low (4-4.5 million per day) for a population of 75 million. Even though the population of the country has doubled since 1960, this rate has stood still. Although more than 300 private TV stations (24 of them are nation-wide), more than 1000 private radio stations and 700 newspapers exist, this does not signify that there is pluralism within the media. There are mainly four big groups controlling the mainstream media, which do not give any

chance for local ones to survive. Turkish media is over-dependent on technology and importation is required to replace by investing on qualified human resources and productivity. (İnceoğlu Y, 2004.)

Media writing is underlining to creating media to promoting children's participation. Families, schools, media organizations, and the states all have responsibilities for protecting children against harmful publications. For example, generalizing children's rights, facilitating accessing of information, and protecting against harmful broadcasts and publications is a crucial responsibility of the media. Creating consciousness, awareness, and public opinion in these topics is also a responsibility of teachers and families besides media.

The steps made in recent days by The Turkish Ministry of National Education and Radio and Television Supreme Council (RTUK) for introducing media education into the high schools' seven grade curriculum are encouraging efforts toward a „media literate society" and a robust democracy. To protect students against the negative and harmful influences of media, teachers should benefit from the „Media Literacy" class which was put in programs in 2007-2008 education years. (RTÜK, 2007a). In this class, teachers can raise awareness in their students about their rights for acquiring information. The primary responsibility of the state in this area is to create and apply legal regulations that are in line with international principles.

In this point, there is a very important question: „Who will teach the media literacy lessons?" The Ministry of Education assigned social science teachers to give these lessons. The main question is that if the social science teachers do have enough skill and knowledge to teach media literacy.

Teaching media literacy requires a specific training on subjects like main structures of media, historical backgrounds of media, theories and effects of media and the methods for reading a text in terms of semiotic analyses, rhetoric and other related subjects. It is obvious that the specialists graduated from faculty of communication have this knowledge and instruments to teach media literacy in an efficient way. Therefore letting social science teachers to teach media literacy courses will raise the risk factor of a possible unsuccessful project. (MEB, 2006)

1. Are there any positive changes on the behavior and on the thinking style of children on the media subject after this education?

2. What are key difficulties of this project regarding teaching capability, content of courses, used methods and instruments?

In response to the importance of this issue, RTÜK (Radio and Television Supreme Council) and the Ministry of Education in cooperation began the 'Media Literacy' courses in five pilot cities (Ankara, İstanbul, İzmir, Adana and Erzurum) in 2004 following the training of the 30 teachers.

In order to achieve realistic results, in depth interviews were held with social science teachers who were assigned to give media literacy courses. In addition to that, surveys were conducted with the 38 students of media literacy classes to determine the effects of the courses on them. This program will be rolled out countrywide in the 2007-2008 education semester as an optional course for the 6th, 7th and 8th grade of 35,000 schools in 81 cities. RTÜK officials mentioned that their intention is to make it an obligatory course.Some Results of In-Depth Interviews with the Teachers(-İnceoğlu Y,)

1- According to findings of this research, both teachers believed the neccessity of implementation of media literacy course in the Turkish education curriculum. They said that children gained different perspective through the lectures that support them to increase their ability to distinguish between reality and imagination. Teachers believe that this course encourages children to analyze the media in a critical way and learn to protect themselves of negative effects of media(considering TV,internet.newspapers as media) while eliminating ads, movie, magazines, books.

2- On the other hand, both teachers failed in defining the elements of media and functions of the media.

3- Surprisingly, both teachers didn't recommend any other book than the course book. They only suggested the official web site of RTUK for children. They are also not aware of the difference between evaluation and media critic analysis.

4- When they were asked to make comments and suggestion about media literacy lesson in terms of increasing its efficiency, one of them said that lectures should generalize to other schools for the future but before this, teachers should take education and than teach the children. Other teacher said that in order to increase effectiveness of lectures it is necessary to link with media outlets and use technological apparatus otherwise it might be only a „read and explain" method.

5- When they are asked if they are interested in media before the lectures. One of them said that she was interested in media just as the people in the street. Also she added that before the lectures she did not know the technical terms concerning the media and learned them while teaching to students during the lessons. For instance she claimed that she had never heard the name and meaning of „fake event" before the lectures.

6- Both of them have not taken any media lessons doing their education and they added that ministry of education provided „in house training" course for social science teachers prior to this project only for a week.

Lifelong learning instructional methods and education theories:
The library skills of locating and accessing information are not the same as the higher thinking competencies of know-

ing how to evaluate, interpret, and use information. Lifelong learning instructional methods and education theories have influenced information literacy instruction. A constructivist approach focuses on students engaging with information to solve a problem and thereby creating new understanding through active investigation and thought, instead of memorizing facts presented in class lectures. Such a pedagogical approach, where information literacy is needed, enables students to become qualified learners. Information literacy is or should be based, on the other hand, on resource based-learning, information discovery, and inquiry- and problem-based-instruction. (IFLA 2006-International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions)

One of them claimed that she had difficulties during the lectures for this reason she had a hard time preparing the lessons by visiting the relating web-sites www.medyaokuryazarligi.org.tr

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In recent years, viewing habits of TV viewers and television itself have changed significantly thanks to the integration of exponentially developing web technologies to continuously evolving mobile devices. Televised content became digitized and freed from time and space, while public expression became available in a time and space unbound form via social media. This integration and its ever growing outcomes started to be called Social TV, which includes dialogues among viewers and/or producers, social media based ratings, screen interactions, analyses over user created content both in numbers and in relation to contexts etc.

These analyses may focus on people's television viewing habits, political preferences, brand choices, shopping habits, where they exercise, their health conditions, social statuses etc. As a result, the clash of at least two analyses made on the data set that is acquired from social media would lead to better decisions. (Temel, E.A., 2016)

RTÜK aims to protect children and the young from harmful content; warn children and the young about the programmers' which 'contain violence, horror, sex and behaviors that can build negative examples' by a system of 'intelligent signs'. Intelligent sign system has four symbols (7+, 13+, 18+, general audience) showing the appropriateness of programmers according to age groups and three symbols defining harmful content (violence/ horror, sex, behave ours which can lead to negative examples). (Sütçü, M,A.,2007)

TV-Y (Children of All Ages).

TV-Y7 (Children Seven and Older).

TV-G 13 (General Audience).

TV-PG (Parental Guidance Advised ldren).

TV-14 (Parental Guidance Advised ldren under 14).

TV-M (Mature Audience)

Today, poor content of media is still under discussion in Turkey, as tabloidi-zation and infotainment became a major trend for those private media in a competitive environment. This was particularly the case of television, where very few programmes were considered to qualify as fine in terms of content quality. The print media followed very similar developments. Issues around women were the major «material», with some sections in newspapers devoted to pictures of naked women. (Cankaya, Ö.,1997).

Besides the increasing number of private television stations, radios, newspapers and Internet in today's media landscape, the regulating structures in Turkey are considerably new. During the early 1990s, the main problem was that there was neither a law to regulate newly emergent private radio and television stations, nor a regulatory body to assign frequencies to private operators and hold them to their responsibilities. As a result of these developments, the State monopoly over broadcasting, limited to public radios and televisions only, was abandoned in 8 August 1993. The Radio and Television Supreme Council (RTÜK) was established by the Radio and Television Law (law 3984) in 20 April 1994 in order to regulate private broadcasting and to ensure the compliance of the broadcast contents with the legal framework. «RTÜK is granted with the authority of giving penalties to the broadcasters for breaching the legal framework which may range from warning to the suspension of the TV and radio channels» (European Journalism Centre,

2008). The Supreme Council is composed of 9 members who are elected by the Grand National Assembly. According to the Directorate General of Press and Information, the main duties and powers of RTÜK can be listed as follows: «Granting license to the radio and television enterprises, allocation of channel and frequency bands, issuing licenses for the construction and operation of telecommunication facilities and monitoring the compliance of radio and television broadcasts with regard to the national and international legislation, deciding on the relevant sanctions in cases of violation of the provisions of the Law, conducting or commissioning public opinion surveys in order to determine the reactions of the public, representing the State at the organizations that have legal personality under international law, and are concerned with radio and television broadcasts» (BYEGM, 2008).

We argue that RTÜK's approach to media literacy is fuelled by this protective mentality. In almost every expression by RTÜK's head and its officers, the basis of media literacy is seen as children being able to recognize the difference between fact and fiction. In the guide book prepared in cooperation with the Ministry of Education the protective approach can be traced in the focus of children being seen as the 'most sensitive group' open to media effect, their being in danger, their being 'undependable receivers', the need to raise their consciousness against the media.In another

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teacher's handbook published by RTÜK in 2007 media literacy similarly is described as increasing the resistance of individuals against the possible harmful effect of the media texts. As an education program, it gives priority of protecting children and youth against the possible harmful effects of the media. (İnal, K., 2009).

When one looks the official website called www.medyaokuryazarligi.org.tr however, no up to date information could be seen on the number of students taking this course during the current term across Turkey. The materials which comprise the content of the course within the project and which were used for the lecturing of the course are mentioned under the titles of teachers and students. In the part related to teachers we see the page „media education manual, annual plan, teaching plan, teachers guide" manual pool activities and the project page. The part reserved for teacher activities is however not yet filled in. Under the title related to students in the website however are the media literacy manual for students, schooling program, useful links and games.

The teacher's handbook for primary school media literacy course, Media education handbook for teachers prepared for teachers and the Media literacy handbook for students prepared for students are the Turkish translations of texts prepared by UNESCO. Said materials are uploaded in the media literacy website set up by the Radio and Television Supreme Council.

Information literacy program

Media literacy and media education have recently become part of department programmers' of communication schools in Turkey. They can be used in all schools of communications. At the same time, media literacy and media education can be also considered as a responsibility of curriculum development programmes in schools of education. These two sectors of education and communication should come together to put their communities of practice in common.

Conclusion and assessment

Turkey, a country which has not yet completed its process of democratization, is still far away from being a media literate society with the slow advances taken for the development of it's infrastructure, debates on human rights and fundamental freedoms. In our country, although some useful studies have been conducted in the recent years about the protection of children's rights and their right to access information, the body of research in this area is still limited.

This project which is tried to be brought to life in Turkey with the cooperation of the Ministry of National Education and Radio and Television Supreme Council is a belated yet significant step for Turkey. This study assesses the point arrived by taking up both the standing of the media education provided in elementary school within the media literacy project which has a ten years past in Turkey and the problems encountered in practice. Therefore, it has been determined that problems are encountered in the functioning of the media education project when putting theory into practice, i.e.in the implementation thereof.

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