

Management Strategies to Enhance Media and Information Literacy and Critical Thinking in Modern Society

Valerii Novitskiy¹, Halyna Taranenko², Volodymyr Kalenych³, Olena Baranova⁴, Hanna Poberezhets⁵

¹PhD Student of Psychology, Interregional Academy of Personnel Management, Kyiv, Ukraine.

²Candidate of Pedagogical Sciences, Associate Professor, Department of Social Studies and Humanities, Educational Scientific Institute of General University Training, Dmytro Motornyi Tavria State Agrotechnological University, Zaporizhzhia, Ukraine.

³Candidate of Philological Sciences, Associate Professor, Department Journalism, Advertising and Public Relations, Faculty of Philology and Journalism named after Mykhailo Stelmakh, Vinnytsia Mykhailo Kotsiubynskyi State Pedagogical University, Vinnytsia, Ukraine.

⁴Assistant, Department of General Technical Disciplines, Faculty of Engineering and Energy, Mykolayiv National Agrarian University, Mykolaiv, Ukraine.

⁵Candidate of Historical Sciences, Associate Professor, Department of Ukrainian Studies, Faculty of Accounting and Finance, Mykolayiv National Agricultural University, Mykolayiv, Ukraine.

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: The relevance of the topic lies in the fact that in the context of the active development of digital technologies and social media, it is necessary to develop critical thinking today, and media literacy needs to be improved among the general population in the modern information society. The growing volume of disinformation and media manipulation in the media space requires the search for new approaches to improving the level of media literacy of the Ukrainian population.

Objectives: The purpose of the study is to identify effective strategies for developing media literacy and critical thinking in the modern world.

Methods: The research methodology includes analysis and synthesis of scientific approaches to media literacy and inductive and deductive methods to identify trends in its development.

Results and conclusions: The work is of practical importance for the adaptation of European media education strategies to Ukrainian realities and their implementation in the educational system in order to develop critical thinking of pupils and students. Another important result of the study is that it emphasizes how much media education can offer to the curricula of different courses at different educational levels. This underscores the critical role of educational institutions and policymakers in fostering an informed and critically thinking society. Additionally, integrating media literacy into everyday learning can significantly reduce the impact of false information on public opinion.

Keywords: Media Literacy, Critical Thinking, Digital Technologies, Social Media, Misinformation, Educational Programs, Information Society, Educational Strategies.

INTRODUCTION

In today's world, the amount of information is overwhelming and that is why critical thinking and media literacy skills are crucial for the people. This is due to the continuous appearance of the new tool of the digital media and the social networks as a means of perceiving, comprehending and distributing the media content. With the rise of social media, blogs and other forms of digital media communication, different types of information dissemination have dramatically changed thus presenting communication theories with profound critical analysis questions with media content. This change has resulted in the spread of fake news, disinformation, and the manipulation of people's minds as the major hazards that threaten the public space [1]. Media literacy, also known as the media literacy, can be described as the competence concerning media assessment and engagement [2]. Although media literacy education is acknowledged, the process of such education remains underdeveloped, especially in countries such as Ukraine, where social media predetermines people's opinions [3]. Schooling is often incapable of preparing learners about the applicable evaluation frameworks that will enable them to differentiate between misinformation and disinformation, something that is actually more relevant today. Also, although the other countries such as Finland and Sweden have

piloted the media literacy programs effectively, Ukraine has several issues as a nation when it comes to implementing the global practices [4]. The absence of elaborated and unified approaches to the implementation of media literacy into the Ukrainian educational system as regard to digital media and social networks also points to the need for further investigation. This work will help to fill this gap and consider how to improve the constitution of media literacy and critical thinking in Ukrainian education in more detail and offer an effective solution on how to build a critically informed society.

The aim of this article is to reveal and justify significant approaches in facilitating the media literacy as well as critical thinking in the contemporary society, taking into account the digitalization, and to define the roles of education and media in this respect.

Objectives:

1. To analyse theoretical approaches to the definition of such concepts as media literacy and critical thinking in the context of modern information technologies and assess the influence of digital media and social networks on the formation of critical thinking in society.
2. Outline the essence of the education system in the context of the development of media literacy among different age groups.
3. Investigate existing strategies for improving media literacy in different countries of the world and adapt them to the Ukrainian context.
4. To develop methodological guidelines on how to enhance the content of educational programs on media literacy and the degree of critical thinking in all forms and levels of education.
5. Determine outstanding trends in increasing the level of media competence in the population through public activities and popular science educational projects.

LITERATURE REVIEW

1. The critical thinking and media literacy as the factors of educational activities. This section aims at revealing the ways critical thinking and media literacy acts as the basis for students' competencies formation within the process of education. For instance, Tomita et al., [5] presents the findings on the correlation between media literacy and critical thinking as needs to be incorporated into learning. On the other hand, İçen [6] shows how to promote media literacy through tasks. The two passages show how to encourage media literacy. Analysing the role of critical thinking and critical literacy, Giselsson [7] focus on their interaction in the process of learning. Stanley & Lawson [4] are interested in how educational interventions affect the critical thinking of the young students and present experimental studies of the consequences. According to Baltezarević [1] one can consider the media literacy in a wider cultural perspective in terms of its impact on the critical thinking process. In addition, the article by Yasdin et al. [8] also highlights critical-thinking in relation to students' vocational learning process. As distinct from the paper by Niza et al., [9] the focus is made on the ways critical thinking is applied by social media users to detect the fake news. Therefore, according to the findings of the research, critical thinking and media literacy can be concluded to be the parts of the overall educational process that form professional and personal competencies.

2. Critical thinking in the context of the presence and use of Digital Culture and Information society. The present section is dedicated to the discussion of the application of critical thinking within the context of new media landscape. Lacković [10] specifically points to the role of digital images in the of formation of critical media literacy in post truth. Critical thinking and digital immunity are analysed by Zarić [11] in the context of digital media cultures. Bulger and Davison, in their paper analyze the views and issues that surround media literacy in the current world of technological advancement. The scope of media and information literacy as defined by Singh and Ramaiah [12] comprises of being a set of tools in the current society. Shieh et al [13] describes how the motivation to use social networks affects students' media literacy and their critical thinking. Dikarsa et al., [14] examined students' critical thinking to political news on Instagram. Murzina [15] explores of the meaning of media literacy and media competence with reference to the educational process. The works in this direction reveal critical thinking as the means of the decision-maker due to the constant shifts in the information environment.

3. Building up of critical analysis skills to particularity in war and social crisis contexts. The third section relates to the subject of the media literacy and critical thinking, on building competence in the times of social crisis and

conflicts. Media literacy as one of the components of critical thinking: education of elderly people during the war [16]. Bohdanova [17] examine critical thinking that occurs among cadets during their learning process; the specificity of a military curriculum is discussed here. Ninghardjanti and Dirgatama [18] suggested a new design of mobile interactive media for the critical thinking of the developing students. Chittorajan Mishra investigates the phenomenon of critical media education to raise awareness in multifaceted social contexts under discussion in 2022. According to Bulger and Davison [2] media literacy points to ways of countering mis/disinformation especially in the backdrop of global threats. According to Romero et al. [19] the current study examines the roles of cml and its impact on the competencies of the learners in relation to the new social concerns. Efendi et al. [20] identify and explain students' use of critical thinking in their writing from a critical literacy standpoint. They shift the direction to an understanding of constructive critical thinking and media literacy within social crises and/ or conflicts and positioning them as pivotal for having a stable society.

4. The methods of critical thinking implementation and the application of Information technologies in college. The fourth section is on the interaction of the modern technologies for fostering critical thinking and media literacy in higher education. This paper explores MOOCs that are used within the e-learning system as a tool in teaching electrical engineering master's students with focus on technologies that enhance competence. The study of Batsurovska et al. [21] addresses the factors which influence the development of competencies of students in the higher education institutions with the use of digital media communication milieu. In learning critical thinking Babenko et al. [22] focus on the Information and Educational environment monitoring in the engineering education system. According to Twiningsih and Elisanti [23] the importance of constructing the new STEAM media as the ways of optimizing critical thinking or/and science literacy. Look at, Park et al., [24] where the authors discuss digital and information literacy as the components in consideration to technological advancement. In the work of Gilmour [25] critical thinking and media literacy in the current information environment are identified, including in the context of misinformation. In the perspective of the information literacy and the use of critical thinking within the digital world, emphasis is put by Andersson [26]. These studies demonstrate the significance of critically stimulating the students' thinking in critical thinking and media literacy through the use of modern technologies and contributing to the formation of the specialists required for the modern world.

METHODS

This research used mainly theoretical research approach, which allowed to provide the detailed examination of the media literacy and criticism in the contemporary society.

1. Analysis and synthesis – were applied in the context of the paper in order to study scientific approaches to the definition of media literacy and critical thinking. Analysis enabled me to break down the information I came across for the key concepts and ideas whereas synthesis placed them back together to form the body of knowledge.
2. Induction and deduction – induction method was used for generalization of the tendencies and patterns of media literacy development, using specific facts and phenomena. Subtraction made it possible to check these trends with reference to concrete educational systems.
3. Abstraction and generalization – these methods were used to arrive at abstract theoretical generalizations as to the effect of media literacy on cultivation of reason. Through abstraction, the most relevant and significant aspects of the problem were removed and, through generalization, a COCS conceptual model was developed.
4. Technology and systemization – were used to classify the scientific information and the international experience in the use of media literacy in educational activities. Classification enabled pointing out main types of inclusion of media literacy models, while systematization provided a proper flow to the research.
5. Forecasting method – was utilized to envision possible future trends for the Promotion of Media Literacy and critical thinking in the context of Information Society.

The application of these theoretical methods enabled to study and compare the existing approaches to media literacy and design new strategies to support critical thinking in Ukraine.

RESULTS

The review of various interpretations of the notions of media literacy and critical thinking in the framework of the current information and communication technologies was an analysis of the theoretical approaches to defining these notions.

Media literacy means the ability to read and write the printed, spoken, advertised, televised, radioed, and now, the networked messages in newspapers, airwaves, screens, websites, etc. It means critical approach towards the content of the message, the ability to distinguish truth from the lie, meaningful message from the fake one, and to use the information received in active social life. Among the fundamental theoretical directions of media literacy there are cognitive, studying the formation of analytical skills, and socio-cultural-because in this perspective, media literacy is seen as a means of socialization and manipulation of society.

Decision making means the skill of fact appraisal, summation, probabilistic judgments, and rationale of judgments grounded on logistic associativity as well as reappraisal of beliefs coordinated new data. The historical supply related to information technology crucial today due to connections of thought procedures with other labor-demanding propensities in digital information from assorted digital sources. There are several outlined approaches that include, the logical-analytical, which emphasize the problem solving ability of analysts in data and information recourses processing. The other approach as a problem-solvers approach that emphasizes the aptitude to apply knowledge to solve problems and come up with decisions.

In the context of the present Information Technologies, the media literacy and critical thinking co-develop. IT changes availability and speed of information delivery and, first of all, it demands from a person fast assessment of information reliability. The basic theoretical approaches are:

- technological appreciation – acquisition of technical skills that help in the proper utilization of the available technologies in attaining the goals of information access.
- as for the teaching/learning approach, one that is applied in all measures of education is that media literacy and critical thinking shall be taught in all stages of education. In this case, it refers to education attained in school going system as well as in tertiary institutions.

To become active members of information society, interact with information flow and protect oneself against the actions connected with disinformation and manipulation it is necessary to possess media literacy and critical thinking as the part of information culture.

Digital media as well as the social networks that are in existence are substantially involved in the thinking pattern of the society albeit with a number of implications.

The role of the education system in developing media literacy across various age groups is crucial, as educational institutions provide systematic and consistent training in critical skills for working with information. Education, tailored to the needs and capabilities of each age group, has the potential to help citizens navigate the modern information environment more effectively. The stages of development of media literacy in the education system are presented in Figure 1.

1. In the stage, the educational system act to influence elementary notions regarding the media. They develop capacity to differentiate between the various media (television, books, internet) and also their main purpose. Media literacy is taught by designing multimedia lessons and games whereby children learn how to discern media content and not to believe everything that they are told.
2. At Secondary level of education student learns different types of media and the features associated with them in details. Students learn to critically evaluate news information and learn about disinformation at the beginning of the lesson. Media literacy during this phase is associated with problem solving, comprehension of the text and argumentative discourse in general.
3. At this level the component of educational system also develops media literacy among students and prepares them for active citizenships in the information society. Greater conceptual demands are placed on students, they accomplish tasks in terms of using a variety of analysis techniques, manage a great volume of information and become capable to generating own media messages. Media literacy is then seen by higher education as a part of the citizens' competence.

4. The adult education system helps to increase media literacy of citizens who are already employed, or participate in public activities. It is possible to make educational programs targeted directly at strengthening critical thinking abilities and identification of the information threats, especially such threats as disinformation, and propaganda.
5. The use of media literacy is useful for individuals of older age to assimilate into the contemporary society and also ensure one does not fall victim to various tricks that may be availed through the media such as fraud or anything of that nature. Organizations serving the educational programs should make their programs to fit their needs and technology.

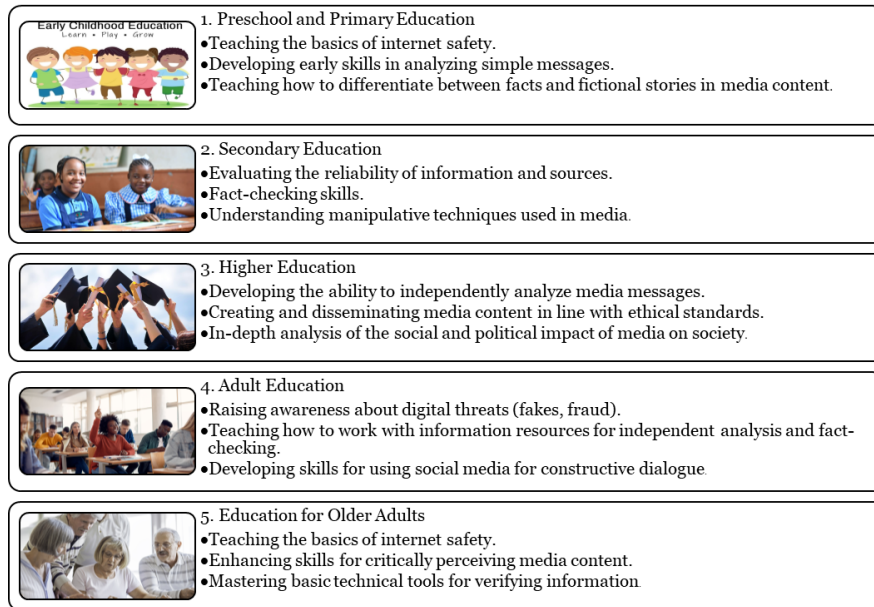


Figure 1: Stages of Media Literacy Development in the Educational System

The education plays the crucial role in acquiring media literacy throughout different ages of people. Besides, yielding the access to the knowledge base it helps in building the thinking skills for active participation in the modern informational society. Every age group needs a different strategy that would take into consideration the age, interest, and understanding of the concept of the internet of the targeted age group.

The analysis of such promotion techniques in other countries together with the subsequent application of the acquired data allows enhancing the national educational programs in Ukraine. The following involves an analysis of successful practices of implementing media literacy in practice across the levels of learning. This will enable the citizens to be prepared for constructive participation in the contemporary information society as well as enhancing the development of critical thinking. The below table provides examples of the ML strategies visible in various countries and their possible applicability for Ukraine. Strategies for promoting media literacy in different countries and their adaptability for Ukraine are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Strategies for promoting media literacy across different countries and their adaptability for Ukraine

Country	Media Literacy Promotion Strategy	Strategy Features	Copy and paste adaptability potential in Ukraine
Finland	Implementing media literacy at all levels of education: from the period of the primary school going up to the tertiary level of education. The emphasis is made upon critical thinking and on the capacity to interpret media messages.	Education on Media Literacy to be offered as a compulsory course in all the levels of education. Lack of participation of the course instructor in face to face teaching and learning process.	In the same manner, more obligatory subjects can be taught in Ukrainian schools and universities that are necessary, relevant and feasible to the local context. Creation of multimedia applications in Media Education.
Sweden	Development of programs for the formation of media culture among youth and adults through the relevant ministries of different countries, insisting on the necessity of media education in conditions	Targeting young people through posts in social networks and in-depth temporary targeted campaigns on the formation of critical thinking against the	In Ukraine educational campaigns and national programs for various age groups can be conducted corresponding to media literacy needs, using

	of democratic transformation and fight against fake news.	background of fake news and media manipulation.	social networks and other digital resources.
USA	With regard to the current issue, the support of the initiatives carried out by the communities and non-profit organizations focused on media literacies strengthening among citizens should be backed by free online courses and training.	Control and support of educational processes of the mass CBLU, training and practice, MOOCs, training sessions, seminars, and informal education and communities support.	In Ukraine, the approaches and programmes may be created and funds may be provided, which could offer the free media literacy to the population and if necessary, especially during the war, proposing the various types of disinformation.
Canada	The formal adoption process of media literacy across School Courses and credit bearing courses in English, Social Studies and Technology Departments/Division. In case with Media and Society the curriculum in a nutshell is about analyzing the content of media and the effect it yields.	An important element of media literacy included into the curriculum of the schools where media comprehension would be taught as a cross-curricular activity based on the academic comprehension and focus on the content analysis.	The concept could be implemented Ukrainian educational institutions to teach media literacy as a separate course in addition to as a part of Ukrainian language, history, IT classes if needed.
Germany	Media literacy as part of digital literacy: to include it in the technical disciplines classes and the development of IT working abilities while handling information in the electronic landscape.	The importance of SafeMedia lessons for schools and adults courses and media literacy programs used in schools aimed at safe media use and manipulation recognition.	In Ukraine, programs and projects for media literacy that can be launched and implemented especially in the sphere of IT and digital technologies in schools and universities.
Australia	Twenty-three educational projects targeting the development of teacher competencies in the area of media literacy, as well as the attempts to implement the given knowledge in the learning process. Generation of resource materials for the teachers.	Organization of media literacy training for teachers, production of teaching and learning materials, seminars and hands on workshops for the educators.	It is, therefore, crucial to develop ways of continuing teachers' practiced professional development in Ukraine through focusing on the area of media literacy, and the construction of supportive tools and material for these professionals.

It's suggested that the process of adaptation of media literacy strategies in Ukraine should include the following steps: further provision of systematic courses delivery across all levels of education, creation of new community-based initiatives aimed at supporting media literacy practices, and assistance in building up the strategies for critical thinking among teachers. One of the options is participation in the active use of digital platforms and public availability to the free online courses, the use of accounts in the social networks.

The incorporation of media literacy into the teaching learning processes of education systems at different levels is essential in nurturing the abilities of critical thinking of students. Suddenly, media literacy when introduced to subjects like the Ukrainian language, literature, history, and computer studies allows the students to use the critical evaluation in many areas in different subjects. Furthermore, the development of the project-based activities to produce the media content by students contributes to enhancing the knowledge on the contemporary media tools. The following figure also shows the important steps for the implementation of the media literacy in the educational process (Figure 2).

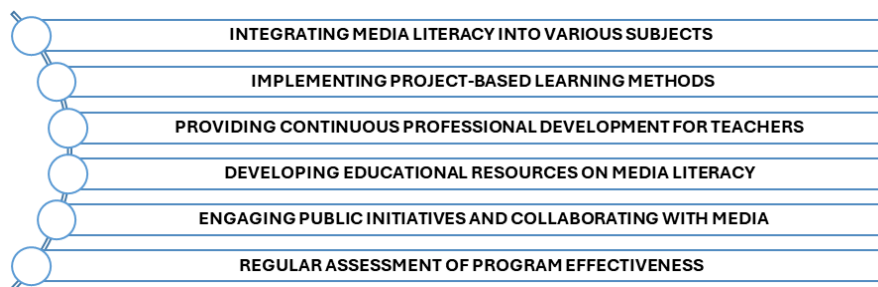


Figure 2: Recommendations for improving educational programs on media literacy and critical thinking for different levels of education: integration of media literacy into curricula of various subjects

Primary School.

- Teachers' competencies. Employ multimedia techniques, to teach children about criteria of media literacy for distinguishing between advertisements and informative communications. Skills for critical perception of media content are best taught when delivered in an engaging manner, used as forms or games and tasks.

- Performance indicators. Job as indication of students learning and achieve jobs I Where students will have to do a distinction between ad and news. Recommendation of children's activity in the discussions of content of media and their capacity in explaining the conclusion.

Secondary School

- Teachers' competency. Include into the learning curriculum methods and ways of telling a counterfeit in news, articles and other source of media contents. Organize debates, brainstorming sessions, problem and case solving, discussion and all the other forms of analytical thinking.

- Performance Indicators. Give occasional small tests on how the students are capable of analyzing different information sources. Evaluate the balance and depth of analysis in the discussion of the issues associated with media outlining the extent of criticality shown by the students.

High School

- Teaching skills. Explain to the student the general approach to seek for information on the internet and how to deal with the reliability of the sources obtained. Media can also be incorporated into history, Ukrainian language, and social studies through the following way; by containing the students on how to dissect the media content of the specified time periods.

- Performance indicators. The students' work should be evaluated from the position of source analysis and also of the content produced, with consideration of whether the student would be able to discover cases of media control. Furthermore, in the case of media literacy, certain to conferences and publications, knowledge of how many instances involved students should be kept.

- Media literacy has to be included into the curricula of various subjects (Ukrainian language, Literature, History, Computers Studies etc.) in order to offer a broad approach in its cultivation. This will enable the students to use critical analysis skills in evaluation of content in media as found in different situations.

The table below presents information on the media literacy courses and the integration of effective practices to improve media literacy within classroom and other learner contexts. These examples allow for the illustration of how various endeavours such as MOOCs and gamified learning help build critical thinking and media literacy. Each of these categories consist of one or more particular courses or projects with real life case studies as examples. Table 2 presents examples of media literacy courses and best practices for increasing media literacy.

Table 2: Examples of media literacy courses and best practices for enhancing media literacy

Category	Course/Project Name	Description / Case Examples
1. Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs)	Coursera: "Media Literacy and Critical Thinking"	A course that is conducted online with the main aim of building media literacy mainly in analyzing news with particular emphasis on 'fake news'. It is relevant for content analysis and it contains case of social media analysis.
	Prometheus: "Медіаграмотність для громадян" (Media Literacy for Citizens)	Ukrainian course on which the basics of media literacy are explained. Comprehensively it encompasses projects intended to detect false information and manipulations in media.
2. Educational Campaigns through Social Media	IREX: "Learn to Discern"	A campaign aimed at youths and adults in order to improve their ability to critically approach media especially social media. Facebook's platform seems to be used in the case examples for fake news detection.
	National Anti-Fake Campaign during COVID-19	engaging educational videos and articles that decode myths and disinformation regarding the COVID-19 and the war targeting millions of social media users in Ukraine.
3. Workshops and Seminars for the Public	StopFake: "Workshop on Media Manipulation Detection"	Several training seminars for journalists and students organised at least once a year. Such examples include solving cases base on the

		manipulated news and also explaining different real life scenarios of fake news.
	IREX: Critical Thinking Workshop	Setting up of creative thinking and media analysis for adults and youths' workshops. Participants are provided with selected practical examples of media manipulations in the practice of journalists.
4. Fact-Checking Initiatives and Platforms	StopFake	A fact-checking service that exposes all the fakes in Ukraine. It is possible to submit news to be reviewed. Some of agendas involve the recognition of propaganda and disinformation in important news.
	FactCheck Ukraine	A news and media verification service that received considerable engagement at the time of war and pandemic. It employs users in filtering falsehoods as they happen in real-time.
5. Partnerships with Media to Create Educational Programs	Television Project: "Media Literacy for Everyday Life"	A nationally viewed educational television program that awards more than two million viewers each year. A part of the programs have been based on real life examples of the media analysis, including cases.
	Podcast: "Media Literacy and Critical Thinking"	Podcast mostly consisting of media literacy lessons that can well be found in such services as YouTube, or Spotify. Explains what media literacy is and how it addresses modern problem and provides examples of fake news.
6. Gamification of Media Literacy Learning	Bad News Game	News is a game where the participants act together with generating fake news and learning about manipulations. It is noteworthy that the app was downloaded more than 1 million times all around the world. Examples of ordinary users who became more media literate while playing.
	Gamified Media Literacy Learning in Ukraine	At school, learners are taught in specific gamification courses within the Ukrainian educational system to develop their media literacy and have fun while doing so. Real life examples include students recognizing that content displayed in media is fake.

These cases illustrate how different educational and informational activities that prepare an educational product incorporate media literacy as a subject in their programs to prepare students and citizens to be critical thinkers that can analyze media.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this research are in agreement with some scholars who posit that media literacy promotes critical thinking, but there is actually controversy in regard to the ways through which this has to be achieved within the learning institutions. For example, Baltezarević [1] point out that media literacy has a wide cultural significance as it encourages the development of the critical thinking abilities of people due to media content availability. On the other hand, Gilmour [25] however warns on the detrimental impact of social media emphasizing on the aspect of algorithms and filter bubbles in discouraging rational thinking towards the information accessed. The goals of the proponents of media literacy, which are aimed at the formation of critical thinking, however, state that the effectiveness of media literacy is variable and largely depends on how it is incorporated into the curricula.

Based on our results, we can endorse İçen's [6] proposition that media literacy enhances critical thinking skills particularly when related to social media platforms. However, the current study also reveals several pertinent issues that can be attributed to the process of importing so from the global context to the Ukrainian environment. Stemming from the aforesaid findings of Stanley and Lawson [4] if there are benefits proven from media literacy interventions among the younger students hence beneficial, but this research finding may not suffice the complexity of media usage in Ukraine with rather an influence of fake news and propaganda materials.

The findings obtained were compared with the results of similar researches from other countries and it could be stated that sometimes, the results are similar. Sometimes, the data are contradictory. On the someday, there are very successful samples such as the program completed in Finland and Sweden where all levels of education curriculum have adopted full-fledged media literacy programs [4]. However, the Ukrainian experience show that it is necessary to elaborated specific recommendations based on the socio-political conditions and the trending upward of the popularity of social networks. This is consistent with Bulger and Davison's [2] work, which vehemently underlines media literacy in checking false information circulation but it also brings out the scenario in Ukraine that is highly influenced from external forces and conflictual communication.

In conclusion, the study acknowledges the fact that media literacy offers a great potential in improving critical thinking skills as well as the specific focus on the problems highlighted in the Ukrainian context there is still a number of barriers that hinder the media literacy implementation. More specific researches should be conducted in order to discuss these strategies in details and overview their application at different levels of education. Greater future study should also be honored towards finding the ways of how digital media is useful in complementing the defects of the conventional media literacy training and how continuous learning can be tackled in the constantly evolving field.

CONCLUSIONS

First, experiential approaches to involving media literacy and critical thinking into the curricula of all levels have been introduced. These strategies focus on the use of media literacy across the different forms including the Ukrainian language, history, and social study forms. It is crucial for students' active and responsible citizenship in the information society that is why this approach encourages the critical evaluation of media content. Thus, the successful adaptation of the best foreign practices is focused on the Ukrainian environment is achieved.

Second, awareness has been enhanced by high-level campaigns and, less officially, educational campaigns and projects. The media literacy and critical thinking promoted by campaigns organized with the help of social media and media platforms have come to result in positive inputs with adults and youth. Thus, a great many of participants have been getting education at national and international levels.

Third, tools for the evaluation of media literacy programs have been designed. An important milestone is the development of a set of indicators for the effectiveness of media literacy program activities. These are for instance assessing practical undertakings, analyzing discussions and students' assignments and observing engagement in local endeavors. Such tools allow evaluating the progress of focal skills, such as critical thinking and media literacy of the program participants, and improve the quality of educational programs.

Therefore, the study has successfully addressed the goal to construct suitable and efficient means and approaches for the increase of media literacy and critical thinking levels among the population of Ukraine of different educational levels and through community practice.

The further researches should concern the empirical verification of the suggested approaches as well as the creation of the effective means for their application at different levels of education.

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