

# Media Literacy Education and Curriculum Integration: A Literature Review

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# Abstract

Researchers have explored the benefits and significance of media literacy education (MLE) in school education. Media literacy possesses much potential and its application in education has seen much research interest lately. However, little systematic work currently exists on how researchers have applied MLE for education purposes that considers the integration of media literacy and curriculum. To this aim, we systematically reviewed the literature of the last three decades and found 222 articles, of which only a sample of 98 were considered. We performed a narrative analysis of the relevant studies concerning the integration of MLE in school curriculum based on European countries and non-European countries, namely, objectives of MLE, learning experiences of MLE and assessment of MLE. Our review emphasizes three key dimensions of MLE objectives: the knowledge of media, create media product and develop the understanding of mass media. Furthermore, our analysis has uncovered several differences in the stage of MLE integration in the school education sphere-for instance, MLE was approached in a cross-curricular or a subject-specific way in different countries. Finally, MLE assessment should take into account students as well as teachers in training.

Keywords: media literacy, media literacy education, curriculum integration, literature review

# 1. Introduction

As the global village continues to be wired up electronically, and as individuals move their daily lives online, mass media plays a vital role in the society (Clay, 2003). Copps (2006) stated that in a culture where media is pervasive and invasive, pupils need to think critically about they see, hear, as well as read. The European Commission defines media literacy as the ability to access the media, to understand and to critically evaluate different aspects of the media and media contents and to create communications in a variety of contexts. Livingstone and Bovill (1999) define media literacy as reaching the original source of information, and ability to understand the power, limitations, and shape of the content presented in the media. Previous studies indicate that school-based initiatives play an important role in the process of media literacy education as an integral approach is more effective than simply implementing media literacy education as an isolated subject. At the same time, one challenge for educators is to embed media literacy programs as an integral part of education (Wakefild, 2009). Thus, it is uttermost important to identify how to integrate media literacy education into school education.

Despite the growing recognition of media literacy education as a field of study, few studies have focused on its implementation (Stein & Prewerr, 2009), in particular, on how to integrate media literacy education into school education. Therefore, this study aim to explore how to integrate media literacy into education, with the focus on the European context, as the main European countries are the pioneering countries in media literacy education. But relevant documents from other contexts such as China and Turkey are also reviewed, as the China Web savvy population is the second in the world after the United State (Internet World Stat, 2007), and the emerging and development of media literacy education in Turkey is also noteworthy.

The structures for the implementation of Media Literacy Education (MLE) in schools differ from one country to another in the different EU member states (Koller, Haider & Dall, 2005). Some researchers suggest that MLE should be a skill-based teaching rather than a stand-alone subject in the school education (Trivedi & Apak, 2010), while in some other

countries it is a separate subject. The status of media literacy education in different countries is diverse and it is difficult to find a standard module or best practices on how media literacy education is integrated in the school curriculum. In terms of the media literacy education objective, there is also no consistent policy during European countries, neither is there any congruence among the non-European countries (e.g., Burn & Durran, 2007). In some countries, media literacy education aims to provide tools to help people critically analyze messages, offers opportunities for learners to broaden their experience of media, and helps them develop creative skills in making their own media messages (e.g., Neag, 2015). In some other countries, media literacy education is sometimes conceptualized as a way to address the negative dimensions of mass media, popular culture and digital media, etc. (e.g., Koltay, 2011).

Since there is a lack of consistent views and a lack of comprehensive review on the issue of the integration of media literacy education in school context, this research is conducted to fill in this gap. Therefore, this literature review aims to understand how media literacy education is integrated in primary and secondary education. The key research question of the article is: How to integrate media literacy education into curriculum? To do so, the review will focus on the status of media literacy education in the curriculum in main Europe countries and China, and what China can learn from the European countries in media literacy education.

# 2. Methodology

The methodology used was a systematic narrative research review, using a qualitative and thematic analysis (Torgerson, 2003). The working process of this systematic narrative design consisted of three steps: 1) systematic searching, 2) selecting literatures, and 3) analyzing literatures to bring together key themes and findings of research in this field.

### 2.1 Data Collection

The identification of the primary studies in this review was based on a pre-defined search strategy and a multi-step selection process. Search terms and phrases were identified which included 1) media literacy, 2) media literacy education, 3) new media literacy education, 4) digital media literacy education, 5) critical media literacy education, 6) media education, 7) media literacy education in school, etc.

Authoritative electronic databases and other sources were searched including ERIC, Education Full Text, ProQuest, Science Direct, Web of Science, the Journal Media Literacy Education, Google Scholar and the website of the European Union, etc.

The search was restricted to articles from peer-reviewed journals, conferences, workshops and official documents published between 1990 and 2011. Initially 222 articles were produced by the electronic database search. The abstracts of these 222 articles were screened according to pre-determined inclusion and exclusion criteria. Following the electronic database searches, reference sections of included studies were searched to identify additional studies for possible inclusion. Ultimately, 98 studies were included in the review (See Table 1).

	Country	Number
	Austria	2
	France	2
	Finland	16
	Germany	9
	Hungary	2
	Ireland	11
	Sweden	6
	Turkey	8
	UK	20
	China	22
Total	10	98

Table 1. Overview of studies included in this literature view

# 2.2 Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

The objective of setting up criteria is to find all relevant studies in our research.

After the initial searching, the initial collected studies were screened to select the documents only related to the implementation of media literacy education, or the integration of media literacy education in school. Among the selected studies, the following countries are included: Austria, China, France, Finland, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Netherland, Turkey, the United Kingdom, the United State.

Studies were excluded from this review for the following reasons. Studies published prior to 1990 were excluded in order to focus on implementation relevant to present day school contexts. Studies do not explicitly relate to the implementation of media literacy education in school context, e.g. how to implement media literacy education in informal education context.

#### **3.** Results and Discussions

In what follows, the review article is presented according to the following main categories: 1) objectives of media literacy education, 2) how the learning experiences to be selected and organized in media literacy education, 3) assessment of media literacy education.

#### 3.1 Objectives of MLE

In terms of the objectives of media literacy education, there is no consistent policy among European countries. The specific objectives are presented as following (See Table 2).

Table 2.	The	objective	of MLE
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country	objective
Austria	Empower students as <i>critical users</i> of the media as well as
	encouraging students to produce their own media text.
Finland	Communication and media skill
France	Developing a <i>critical approach</i> to the media
Germany	Analysis of the media and how they produce message,
	alongside opportunities to create audiences for their own
	interests and needs by making media product
Hungary	<i>Understand</i> the impact mechanisms of electronic media, know their way around various media, <i>find</i> required information and <i>use</i> it selectively
Ireland	The primary purpose of media education should be to educate students broadly
Sweden	Produce, analyze and communicate with pictures, and that
	popular culture is worthy of study
Turkey	Be conscious of the negative influence of media
UK	Empower students as critical users of the media

# 3.1.1 Three Dimensions of MLE Objectives

#### Knowledge of media

As a prerequisite for the other three dimensions, teaching students knowledge of media aims to let students to have access to different sorts of media and ability to use media (Frau-Meigs, 2007; Jarman & McClune, 2010). Media literacy education should enable students to manage in a world about which they are mostly informed by the media, so MLE should give students to media activities that are both conscious and participatory to the extent possible in the relevant life situation.

Media literacy aims to develop an informed and critical understand of the nature of mass media, specifically, it aims to increase students' understanding of how the media work, how they are organized, and how they construct reality (Livingstone & Thumim, 2003). Based on media literacy education, students will develop an understanding of how media work, will learn that realities are constructed to reflect ideas or values, and will learn how to spot a stereotype and to distinguish facts from opinions.

- In Germany, the objective of media literacy education is to develop students ability to analyze media and understand how they produce message, alongside opportunities to create audiences for their own interests and needs by making media product (Pfaff-Rüdiger, Riesmeyer, & Kümpel, 2012).
- In Hungary, the objective of media literacy education focuses on the understanding of the impact mechanisms of electronic media, and focuses on understanding their way around various media, find required information and use it selectively (Neag, 2015).

## Create media product

Media literacy also aims to provide students with the ability to create media products. The third dimension of media literacy education is to foster students' ability to produce and distribute media content. Student cannot only use media but also actively create media message and communicate with others through media.

- In Austria, media literacy education is aim to empower students as critical users of media, as well as encourage students to produce their own media content (Bachmair & Bazalgette, 2007).
- In Finland, media literacy education aims to empower students as a responsible communicator, to facilitate student with learning media criticism and identifying ethic and aesthetic values in communication, learning participatory, interactive, influencing communication, becoming skilled in technical aspects of the media and communication. Communication and media skills are regards as center among the goal of learning and teaching (Palsa & Ruokamo, 2015).

## Create the understanding of mass media

Media Literacy aims to help students develop an informed and critical understanding of the nature of mass media, the techniques used by them and the impact of these techniques (Petranová, Hossová, & Velický, 2017). Furthermore, media literacy is able to strengthen the public interest to improve socio-political conditions, is able to enable citizens to participate actively in public discussions and deliberations to affect change, as well as able to empower citizens to fulfill their rights and obligations. It is considered as an extremely important factor for active citizenship in information society. In this context, media literacy is viewed as one of the major tools in the development of citizens' responsibilities, furthermore, developing students' citizenship is an essential objective of media literacy education.

• In France, media literacy education aims to foster students' general ability that related with social participation, as well as aims to develops student a critical approach to the media. In France, the essential feature of media literacy education is the emphasis on fostering a conscious, responsible citizen of a democratic society (Šupšáková, 2016).

# 3.2 How the Learning Experience to Be Selected and Organized in Media Literacy Education

European countries are quite diverse in terms of their stages of media literacy education. Media literacy education is undeniably an essential skill and a core literacy, so ideally it should be approached in both a cross-curricular and a subject-specific way (Lemmen, 2005). It is an independent subject in only a few European Union members, such as Hungary, Turkey, etc. Media literacy education, in Hungary, is a compulsory subject that called "Moving Image and Media Knowledge", and is taught in the last year of the primary education (8<sup>th</sup> grade) and in the last two years of the secondary education (11<sup>th</sup> -12<sup>th</sup> grades). While media literacy education, in Turkey, is a selective subject for 6<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> grades students (See Table 3).

	1.	
	Hungary	Turkey
Overview	MLE is a compulsory subject in Hungary which call "Moving Image and Media Knowledge", which as an independent subject firstly and then later integrated into other subjects	In Turkey in 2006-2007 media literacy education started in five primary schools selected arbitrary for testing purposes
Policy	1996 Hungarian Government accepted the "Moving Image Programme" which leading the implementation of the new subject that titled "Culture of the Moving Image and Media Education"	The National Ministry of Education (MEB) in 2004 with the idea of integrating MLE lesson to the primary school curricula
Objective	They specify that Schools should teach children how to understand the impact mechanisms of electronic media, know their way around various media in general, find required information and use it selectively	Aiming to protect children from the negative effects of media, and mainly focusing on the decoding of media texts
Subject	Independent course Integrated part of Hungarian, History and Civic Education, Visual Culture (Arts) and Information Communication Technology, etc.	Selective course
Content /Method	The possible lesson-number is very little in both level, one lesson per week. They can make their final examination (at the end of the secondary school) on the Moving Image and Media Knowledge subject for what they can get extra lessons on a so called facultations which is choosable at the last two years of secondary school	Teachers should teach students about the negative influences of media, specifically television, without dismissing its significant contributions to democracy didactic and medium-centered approach. The main problematic issue emerging from the state definition of media literacy in Turkey is not only due to a text-based analytical reading approach to media but also to the identification of children as incapable "passive" viewers those who are in need of protection
Grade	The last year of primary school (8th class in Hungary -14 years old children) The last two years of secondary school (11th -12th class – 17-18 year old people)	MLE in Turkey is to start an elective media literacy course for 6th, 7th and 8th grade students
problem	Lower secondary level media education classes were removed and media literacy was transformed into a cross-curricular topic.	A child-centered approach and the participation of children in the production process should be given priority

Table 3. MLE is	an independent course
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However, in most of the European Union member states, media literacy education is not a specific subject, but an integral part of other subjects, as a cross-curriculum approach. Especially be integrated into Mother tongue, Social science, ICT and Arts subject.

Austria is a typical example that integrating media literacy education as an education principle into all subjects. In Austria, media literacy education is not a special subject in the Austrian educational curriculum, but it is one of the integrated principles in Austrian education (Seethaler, Beaufort, & Dopona, 2017). It is specified in the media literacy education policy decree of the Ministry for Education, Science and Culture. Media literacy education, as a part of media pedagogy, has been an educational principle since 1973.

Typically, Language subject has been the main carrier of media content and has been studied as the principal means of communication. For instance, German as a subject in school has the aim to enable students to take part in communication in society. It is only logical in a time when other forms of symbolic meaning are gaining importance that increasingly more young people are reluctant to engage in traditional forms of text. Thus, the Language subject, such as German, English or French (possibly with the addition of the words 'communication'), should be open to accepting and dealing

with other sign systems as well. Moreover, this opening could bring with itself a fresh breeze by directing more attention to semiotics and cultural studies. Particularly, taking the stream of cultural studies into account would be a productive approach towards turning more to the lives of children and young people. The increasing chasm between the 'high literature' taught and fostered in schools and the texts (in the above-mentioned all-inclusive manner) used in children's and young people's private lives could thus be narrowed.

Instruction approach emphasize the process of analysis, discussion, and the representation of ideas in verbal, visual, and graphic forms. Applying critical questions to stimulate students' active reading response is increasingly a common classroom practice, and this instructional strategy has been extended to include the texts of popular culture, including television, movies, and popular music (Alvermann, Moon, & Hagood, 1999). As mentioned in the table 3, all European Union members that choose to integrate media literacy education into native language curriculum.

The UK curriculum for the English subject includes media, both explicitly and implicitly (Lee, 2010). The media aspect is integrated across the strands: Speaking and Listening, Reading, and Writing when outlining the importance of English in the introduction, it is stated "In studying English, pupils develop skills in speaking, listening, reading and writing. It enables them to express themselves creatively and imaginatively and to communicate with others effectively. Pupils learn to become enthusiastic and critical readers for stories, poetry and dram as well as non-fiction and media texts." The curriculum is specific when it comes to what pupils should be taught, listing, for each strand, several areas of importance and specific requirements, in some cases including examples of suitable objects of study.

Media literacy is so embedded in social studies education as to be hidden from view. Students are often asked to use media content or information from the Internet, and television, studying cartoons, advertisements, pamphlets, and other resources that provide primary source information about historical and current events (Wan & Gult, 2008). Media literacy education is relevant to the social science for a number of reasons.

Media provides compelling fiction and nonfiction narratives about people, places and events. Indeed, lots of young people construct their knowledge about the world through mass media (Postman, 1985). Media also play an important role on shaping young peoples' attitudes and opinions about history, government and politics (Gerbner, 1999; Graber, 1984; Iyengar & Kinder, 1982). As citizens, students rely on media for information about elections, public policy and political processes. Consequently, media literacy education play an important role in shaping and disseminating particular views of the world (Wan & Gult, 2008). For instance, teachers can employ media literacy education to hone students' abilities to assess media as evidentiary sources, to identify bias in mediated constructions of society and history, to understand how media frame issues, to separate fact from opinion and to assess the credibility of media sources. Moreover, media literacy education is able to foster students' analytical and reasoning skills (Hobbs, 1999), as well as serves as an important tool for examining issues of democratic citizenship and the political process in society (Considine, 1995).

The Swedish curriculum documents explicitly state media in goals to aim for as well as in the structure and nature of the subject (Oxstrand, 2009). In the definition of the Arts subject, it is stated "Arts has its own distinctive forms of expressions and covers...pictures used in the media..." indicating the significance of the picture as an information carrier in the media. Moreover, the ability to visualize and observe has explicit references to media, and how pictures in media are used to create conventions "...examine a picture's representation of reality and how this is expressed in pictures, films and on TV. ... it may also involve moving away from the picture as such, and understanding the social and cultural patterns that create conventions." In the music subject, it states as "...to reflect on the functions of music and the way this has been expressed in society in the past and today..." It is able to conclude that Arts is the most important media literacy-subject in the Swedish curriculum, for instance, reflecting on the statement in the arts subject saying that "Art bears the main responsibility for developing the pupils' visual language..." and the statement in the Music subject saying that "...music and text are integrated, often in combination with pictures, into new means of expression which reflect and influence..." This type of statement, including other similar statements, clearly connects to the overall objective of the school to impart a cultural heritage, influence construction of identity, and knowledge. Nevertheless, media literacy has explicit connections to reach overall goals for the school. It is further indicated by stating the importance of pictures and visual communication as an important prerequisite for active participation in society, and "the way in which the media world represents class, ethnicity and gender.'

Hobbs, Deslauriers, and Steager (2019) states that Arts provide creative opportunities for children and young people to explore the artistic and social potential of media and technology. Teachers are able to teach students learn how to decode the media by analyzing the massage of advertisement, music, television, and film. Participants then cultivate their ideas and learn strategies to counter the stereotypes around them by creating their own media projects. In order to help students develop their ideas, guest artists and mentors conduct special workshops on a regular basis and students meet with media

professionals for intensive research and hands-on guidance.

The Swedish curriculum documents explicitly state media in goals to aim for as well as in the structure and nature of the subject (Österlind, Østern, & Thorkelsdóttir, 2016). In the definition of the Arts strand, it is stated "Arts has its own distinctive forms of expressions and covers... pictures used in the media..." indicating the importance of the picture as an information carrier in the media. Furthermore, the ability to observe has explicit references to media, and how pictures in media is used to create conventions "... examine a picture's representation of reality and how this is expressed in pictures, films and on TV. ... it may also involve moving away from the picture as such, and understanding the social and cultural patterns that create conventions." In the music strand, we find statements such as "...to reflect on the functions of music and the way this has been expressed in society in the past and today..." With the pre-requisite that media today is very visual, we even conclude that Arts is the most important media literacy-subject in the Swedish curriculum, for example reflecting on the statement in the arts strand saving that "Art bears the main responsibility for developing the pupils' visual language..." and the statement in the Music subject saying that "...music and text are integrated, often in combination with pictures, into new means of expression which reflect and influence..." This type of statement, including other similar statements, clearly connects to the overall objective of the school to impart a cultural heritage, influence construction of identity, and knowledge. Nevertheless, media literacy has explicit connections to reach overall goals for the school. This is further indicated by stating the importance of pictures and visual communication as an important pre-requisite for active participation in society, and "the way in which the media world represents class, ethnicity and gender."

New media, as well as information and communication technologies (ICTs) play an important role in concerning issues of education and citizenship. ICTs have a huge potential to train and educate communities that have limited or no access to formal education. Community-based multimedia centers are one such example of how the media can serve as a hub for knowledge and learning. While the Internet offers an opportunity for empowerment, as well as digital integration. the dissemination of information and knowledge will only be fruitful if the vast majority of people have access to these technologies.

The UK curriculum documents are, as stated previously, very explicit and comprehensive with respect to ICTknowledge and skills. Since all subjects include excerpts from the ICT curriculum, aspects of access to is widely covered, including access to media (Weninger, 2018). The UK curriculum includes initial statements about the range of texts that should be studied, "The range should include...", and then there is an increasing level of complexity depending on what stage the pupils are at (See Table 4).

Key Stage 1	opportunities for pupils to listen to recordings (eg. radio, television)
	print and ICT-based information texts
Key Stage 2	opportunities for pupils to listen to recordings (eg. radio, television, film) print and ICT-based reference and information materials (eg, CD-ROMs, internet), newspapers, magazines, articles, leaflets, brochures, advertisements

Table 4. status of MLE in UK

#### 3.3 Assessment of Media Literacy Education

To identify the quality, effectiveness of the program, process and product of the curriculum, assessment has been considered as an important role in improving curriculum. In analysis of data, it is evident that the assessment of projects from the media literacy context have been neglected in the past. The results of these projects will have to be analyzed in depth to gain knowledge that will be helpful for further activities and make planning for policy easier. It will be the task of researchers and experts from different disciplines to develop helpful and effective methods and tools that can be applied for the assessment of media literacy education projects (Ptaszek, 2019). Media literacy education assessment should take into account students as well as teachers in training. These programs could be compiled and analyzed in a comparative study that would highlight their common features and differences; they would help to structure media literacy education and improve the relevance and effectiveness of its curricula.

#### 4. Discussion and Conclusion

With the rapid development of information and technology, raising awareness is very important for children and adolescents to gain consciousness against the bombardment of mass media in order to properly understand the information in the media and develop critical thinking skills. In this respect, our review emphasizes the most common dimensions of MLE objectives: the knowledge of media, create media product and develop the understanding of mass media. The content of these dimensions covers the most important areas and topics. Specific types of media literacy education are derived from these areas and topics. The MLE are subject to the highest developmental emphasis in the individual EU countries.

We approach media literacy in the same way as the results of media education, that is, gaining media-related abilities, knowledge, and skills. These abilities include user skills, communication skills, and the ability to critically evaluate and create media content (Kafai, Fields, & Searle, 2019). Training programs or organized courses can be provided according to these aims, and the MLE should be skill-oriented.

Media literacy in the school-based education is implemented as a comprehensive course (Petranová et al., 2017). When compared media literacy education in several European Union member countries, such as in Hungary and in Austria, some differences are encountered. Implement media literacy education in a cross-curricular or subject-specific way and presenting it in only one course is one of these differences. These initiatives are responsible for extracurricular media literacy education in specific countries. Moreover, their activities focus on developing media literacy and other (similar and specific) literacy. It is difficult to find an explicit model of media literacy education, in most countries, media literacy education in some extent is teacher initiatives. For instance, teachers in Finland are free to choose their method in media literacy education (Kupiainen, 2019; Yeh & Wan, 2019). Successful implementation of media literacy education depends on high standard teacher training. In this sense, teacher training on media literacy education is uttermost importance in the progress of media literacy education. Initial training of teachers is an essential element of the system and must include theoretical dimensions and practical skills, it needs to be based on a good knowledge of young people's media uses. In times of rapid change, the training must rely on institutional actions and self-training, using teaching aids that have been tested and validated by teachers and students.

The status of media literacy education in various European Union members and the rest of the world naturally reflects the historical, social and cultural background of each country. There are differences in the legislative definitions of this type of education. The Foundation of media literacy education-formal and extracurricular forms- is not identical in different education systems. It's not easy to measure the quality of media education, such as the aspects of critical attitudes and creativity. The methods and techniques suggested in MLE are student-oriented and try to make students active participants in the course. In addition, the course evaluation and assessment tools used in the reviewed countries focused on the process and the result.

The study offers a thorough analysis of the areas of media literacy education (MLE) in the countries of the EU and non-EU. The analysis includes a summary of MLE objectives, initiatives and assessment in these countries with respect to the identified areas of school education. Details of the existing initiatives of these countries supporting the development of media literacy and media education are provided through information on projects that strive to further develop and improve the MLE. In addition, the appropriate evaluation instruments of media literacy education must be developed.

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