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Development of media-education and digital competencies using children and teen newspapers and magazines

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Abstract

This paper presents the authors research about the opportunity to develop digital and media competencies of future teachers using contemporary children and teen press. Short historical review of the impact of the periodic press on education is done. New digital environment gives new opportunities for both teachers and students to develop their ways of communication and to enrich the teaching and learning process. The teachers could proceed the education process outside the classroom, developing critical, logical, creative and analytical thinking. Students by themselves could create variety digitally based media to express knowledge and positions. In such a way, together with implication of media education, we have natural impact on the level of students’ digital skills. Some results from a survey of 160 students—future primary school teachers concerning their attitude to children and teen press as educational tool are presented. Some tendencies are outlined, and conclusions are formulated.

Keywords: Media education, primary school, children and teen press as educational tool.

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1. Bulgarian children's and youth's periodic press—a historical review

The first printed periodic press for kids appears in 1871 when in Constantinople, the writer Petko Slaveykov started publishing the magazine named 'Pchelitsa' (Ivanov, 1992). Only six issues from this magazine appeared. Becker (1999) defines three kinds of teachers who are expected to have high levels of Internet (in broader terms, it can be taken as digital technology) use: '(1) younger teachers, (2) teachers who are leaders in their profession and (3) teachers with constructivist pedagogies. There is a link between technology competence and self-directed learning (Sert & Boynuegri, 2017). Technology enables students to have technology competence, and technology-enhanced instruction supports student-centred classrooms in which discovery learning and autonomous learners arise (Erben, Ban & Castaneda, 2009). As a result, extended knowledge of digital technology and pedagogy as well as the ability to evaluate digital technology activities becomes basic requirements of today's foreign language professionals, and technology enables those professionals to understand the strategies that individual learners apply when they are learning through technology (Fotos & Browne, 2004).

Some years later, when the Bulgaria is back again as European country on the map of Europa, new kids' and youth's periodic press started. One could outline the following periods (Tsanev, 1976):

- periodic press in the form of textbooks—from 1878 to 1918. In this period, publications are mainly like didactic materials, mostly poems and short stories;
- blooming of the periodicals for children—between the two world wars—publications are operated by the most popular names in children's and teen's Bulgarian literature. These people today are recognised as national literature classics;
- a period of spiritual censorship—from 1946 to 1989—under the Law of Children's Literature, adopted in 1946, some publications disappear from the book market. They were mostly of a religious and nationalistic thematic. Others were subordinated and modified and started publishing works comfortable for the ruling communist regime.
- a period of 'missed chances'—after 1989. Instead of trying to regain its position, the kids' and teens' periodic press began to lose its national character by copying mechanically foreign examples. In this period, some comic books and advertising publications appeared, some adaptations of popular European publications, newspapers with fun leisure content and so on. Most of these new children's magazine and newspapers did not survive and disappeared from the national press market.

Nowadays, children's and teen's periodic press is on a way of change, looking for electronic/digital variants to restore the confidence of the young audience. As researchers, we are interested in analysing the present educational potential of the Bulgarian kids' and teens' periodicals.

2. Ways of implementation of children's and teens' periodic press in Bulgarian pedagogy practice

During the past decades, the following methods and techniques, concerning the implementation of the kids' newspapers and magazines into education, have been used (mainly at the primary school level, within Bulgarian language and literature school subject):

A. Traditional ones:

- Writing a story, based on a series of illustrations.
- Reading of literary work, recommended by the teacher and creating a new final.
- Choosing a character from a literary work and creating a new story, related to him.
- Creating of crosswords and puzzles like the ones discussed at the class.
- Writing a review for a publication from kids' periodic press.
- Participating in editorial competitions.
- Creating class's or school's newspapers/magazines, following examples of popular editions.

B. Innovative ones:

- Creating a comic with the adventures of a popular hero.
- Developing digital newspaper of the class or school.
- Creating a website of the kids' periodic press.
- Announcing competitions for original rubrics.
- Designing the newspaper or magazine of issue.
- Accepting of proposals for the most original titling of photographic material.

Children's magazines and newspapers are not only for leisure time but also they provoke young students to read more and to do research work. With magazines, one could form better puzzle-solving skills as well as reading skills (Harding, 2004). Investigating ways on how to update the methodological approaches listed above, the authors conducted a survey concerning university students' attitude to children's and teen's newspapers and magazines as educational tool and environment. The authors work is part from a bigger project-work aiming in development of Primary school teacher's competencies about media education and digital skills at early ages.

3. Methodology of research

To investigate the potential and applicability of children's and teens' press at school, a survey with 160 students—future preschool and primary school teachers—was conducted. The respondents are 93% women and 7% men distributed in age as follows: below 25 years old—50%, between 26- and 40-year old—36% and above 40-year old—14%. The questionnaire developed consists of four sections: A—demographic module (question concerning gender, age and the hometown's size), B—personal attitude and experience module (access to kids' periodicals in childhood), C—cognitive module (knowledge about kinds of children's and teens' newspapers and magazines, about their content, styles and way of access) and D—pedagogy module (attitude to implementation of the periodical press in education—opportunities and ways for implementation). The survey is conducted in a controlled environment—students answer to the questionnaire during university lectures and seminars. Students respond individually and independently. Each student fills in the separate questionnaire.

4. Results

Most of the students (85.5%) used to read newspapers and magazines in their childhood. The students have a positive attitude to kids' periodic. They determine children's newspapers and magazines as funny, interesting and useful media. Answering the question where today we could see kid's newspapers and magazines, most of the students show post boxes, newsstands and school and city libraries (Figure 1). It is obvious that still more popular form of this periodic press is the paper form, not the digital one. Only 3.3% of the surveyed students mention the online way of access.

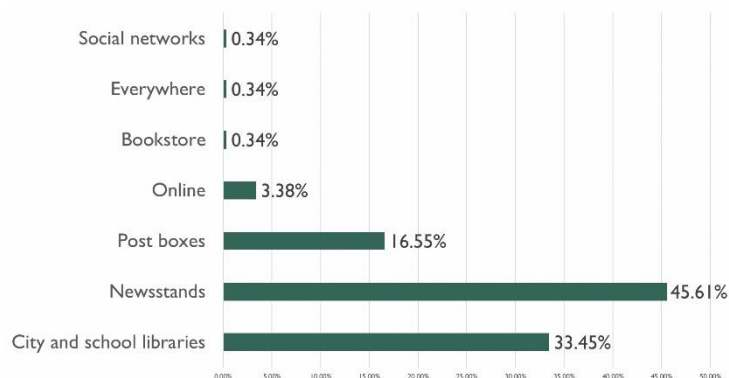


Figure 1. Today, we can see kid's newspapers and magazines at...

Answering the question ‘Why a kid will take a children’s magazine?’ students give the following suggestions (Figure 2): *To read it; To view illustrations and photos; To play with puzzles and games; To search for information; To check results for some competitions published there; To find something useful for his/her homework; She/He is interested in ...; Will not take a magazine—will look at the phone; To enrich his/her skills.*

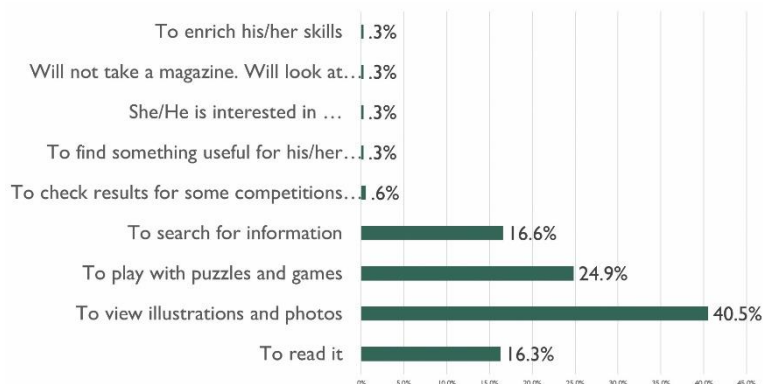


Figure 2. Why a kid will take a children’s magazine?

The results show some split of the opinion of the students surveyed. Almost half believe that children will only open the magazine to view the pictures and illustrations published inside. The other half sees an educational element in the child’s interaction with the magazine—to search for information, to read interesting stories, to solve puzzles and puzzle games.

Answering the question ‘What is the theme (topic) choice of modern children in a children’s newspaper or magazine?’ students give the following suggestions (Figure 3): *Chronological—about the past, the present, the future; Related to the arts—cinema, theatre, music, fine art; Related to religion—Orthodox, Catholic, Protestant; Comics—newspapers and magazines with more images and less text; Readings with adventure storyline; Readings about sport; Readings about famous people.*

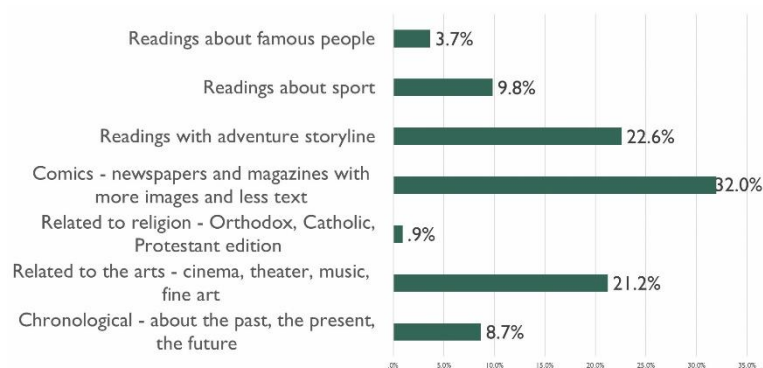


Figure 3. Favorite kids’ topics

If we summarise, more than 50% of students suggest that children use magazines mainly to read stories—comics and adventure ones. Other 50% prefer reading interesting facts and stories about famous people, sport, art and so on.

5. Conclusions

Using children’s media, the teachers could proceed with the education process outside the classroom, developing critical, logical, creative and analytical thinking. Students by themselves could create variety digitally based media to express knowledge and positions. In such a way, together with

the implication of media education, we have a natural impact on the level of young students' digital skills. Media education gives opportunities to realise education 24/7 in and outside the classrooms

According to students' responds, working with children's magazines is a way to increase students' knowledge in different school subjects. Media tools are a rich source of information, as well and a tool for satisfying specific interests. Kids' periodic, not at the last, is amazing and entertaining learning environment. The implementation of children's newspapers and magazines into the work of the preschool and primary school teacher amplifies application of innovative research methods, which enriches the pedagogy practice.

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