

The Place of Media Literacy Course in TRNC Secondary Education Institutions and the Use of Technological Devices Related to the Media Literacy Curriculum

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Abstract

Today's world is equipped with media and media messages. It has become impossible to prevent all kinds of information in social life from reaching audiences of all ages. Media content attracts children and adults, especially children, who are the most open to interaction and sensitive group under the information bombardment they are exposed to, and they take the material presented to them as it is without filtering it. It is possible to control these effects of the media, reduce its harmful effects, and enable individuals to take a more active and questioning position in the face of the information they receive, rather than being a simple consumer, with media literacy education. In this context, this study aims to determine student opinions regarding the media literacy course in order to investigate the practical situation of the media literacy course in the secondary education curriculum in TRNC and to develop solution suggestions on issues such as the use of technological devices connected to the curriculum to make media literacy courses productive. The field research method was applied, and a survey was used to obtain the data. The data were interpreted by frequency and percentage analysis using the SPSS 26.0 program. The study group in which the quantitative data of the research was collected consisted of 421 eighthgrade students studying at Güzelyurt Schit Turgut Secondary School and Lefke Gazi High School in the 2023-2024 academic year. Findings obtained in the study: The level and efficiency of teaching the media literacy course in the schools in the sample are low within the framework of student opinions, and the media literacy course should be supported with new media literacy concepts and scopes within the framework of the evolving definition of media literacy. The use of technological devices connected to the curriculum should be increased, and the course contents should be integrated with technological inputs. It also revealed the need for reorganization in this direction.

Key Words: Communication, Technology, Education, Media Literacy Education, Media Literacy Education.

Introduction

Media literacy studies are gaining increasing importance around the world, including Turkey. Google's results for the keyword' media literacy' increased from 17.4 million to 139 million, while Google Academic's results for the exact keywords increased from 1.5 million to 2.4 million. This increase in numbers is valuable data showing the importance of media literacy in our daily lives and academic studies. Although media messages make a straight sense, they are shaped by many variables. Ideological elements, commercial concerns, etc., and media messages shaped by factors only sometimes present the facts as they are. In other words, the media can overshadow reality by presenting a simulated world. The media is in a position of authority that determines what is essential and what is unimportant for us. In our daily lives, we can see that headlines or subheadings that appear on the front pages of some newspapers, especially in the print media, appear on the inside pages of other newspapers. This example is a primary indicator of the power of the media in setting the agenda. In other words, the guardians of the media are the leading authority in determining our daily agenda. When considered in this context, essential factors such as the study, understanding and interpretation of media content become even more critical. Within this framework, media literacy education aims to educate individuals who criticize, research, and discuss. The ultimate goal is to create individuals who analyze the media correctly and produce media messages and content. A media literate is a person who both observes and shares while producing. That is why media literacy education is critical in today's world.

Baran, who took the word 'literacy' as a starting point when defining the concept of media literacy, defines it as the ability to understand written symbols and use them effectively and efficiently. With the development of non-printed media, this definition needs to be expanded to include the ability to understand and use all forms of communication effectively and efficiently. Regarding participation in mass communication, this ability is also called media literacy. Therefore, media literacy is understanding and using mass media effectively and efficiently (Boulianne, 2015). Potter interprets media literacy as a continuum, not as a category. It is a set of terms we actively



use to expose ourselves to the media to interpret the meaning of the messages we encounter. We build our perspectives from information structures. We need tools and raw materials to create our knowledge structures. These tools are our capabilities. According to a generally accepted definition, media literacy is the ability to reach, analyze and transmit messages in various forms (Tiede et al., 2015). Elizabeth Thoman emphasizes the importance of active participation by stating that students should read what they see as a media product and be active in creating it. Thoman, the head of the Center for Media Literacy, guides students through the production process of media messages.

After the early protectionist approach, mainstream studies in media literacy focused on critical media literacy, aimed at a society that criticizes and discusses media messages, needs to be more content with a single source and is looking for different sources. Critical media literacy, based on the work of critical pedagogy with liberating literacy skills, will recognize that gender, race, class, ethnicity and cultural definitions have been reconstructed on both a historical and social level. It provides the ability to read events worldwide, to see the construction of ideological meanings in texts, andand to understand, distinguish and solve the political nature of boundaries and possibilities (Tiede et al., 2015).

While literacy in written media is practically the ability to read and write text, digital literacy has also come to the agenda with the development of new communication technologies. A new digital society has emerged with new communication technologies, and digital culture has also been formed. In this context, the concept of literacy has expanded; new media messages have emerged from written media to electronic and digital media. Digital literacy is necessary in audio, video, virtual media and multimedia. Speed and momentariness work with properties such as decreasing boundaries between materials, interaction and hypersexuality (Wiseman, 2012). In this context, media education is becoming increasingly important. New media literacy is a new understanding of literacy in which students can interpret media messages with a more selective, critical eye by perceiving and evaluating them and gaining literacy skills in the digital age we are in with the development of technology.

Today, the media is among the most influential institutions with its agenda-setting power and manipulation skills. Dec. Baudrillard emphasizes that all media are fictional worlds. Everything we see in living spaces is a simulation. Communication is everywhere and everything. In our world, which Baudrillard calls the "world of objects", there are simulacra focused on the capitalist system. Baudrillard focuses on social reading codes and gives importance to changing these codes. They emphasize eliminating the line between the illustrative and the indicated and the indicated, Decrying it as not submitting to the symbolic order. According to the theorist, the most important disease of today's society is the production of truth. He defends the claim that material production has become hyper-reality (Lee et al., 2010). The number of news stories in today's world has increased, but the meaning ratio has decreased. News does not produce meaning; instead, it disappears in the production of meaning that it puts on the stage. It is part of the simulation process (Carr, 2010). In this context, the reality under the appearance must be determined correctly and analyzed successfully. Another issue that should be emphasized in creating media messages is the "political Economy Approach." According to the liberal, pluralistic theory, the media acts on behalf of the people to control governments within the framework of public responsibility. However, as a result of the capitalist order, the media appear as institutions that serve the interests of a capitalist group that legitimizes itself only by controlling it (Wiseman, 2012).

Globalization and neoliberal policies formed together to create a new understanding of Sunday. In this system, it is seen that media organizations also move forward in a monopolistic structure with a single demand. Since media messages are naturally structured in such a system, the uniqueness, mediocrity and uniformity assumed by the system are also present in these messages. Media publications with different views are disappearing in such a way as to lead to a monolithic structure. This point reveals the need to differentiate and analyze the ideological structure through different publications in analysing media messages. Media literacy has emerged today as a defence mechanism against the adverse effects of the media. It guides the individual to correctly analyze media messages formed in the context of the issues discussed above.

Development of Media Literacy in TRNC, Use of Technological Devices Related to Media Literacy Curriculum

With the support of academics in the TRNC and the initiatives of the Supreme Board of Broadcasting, the media literacy course was included in the curriculum as an elective course in secondary education institutions in the 2012-2013 Academic Year by the Ministry of National Education and Sports, as it was called at that time. In 2012, the 'Media Literacy Teaching Program' was prepared by a commission established by the TRNC Department of Education and Discipline. As a result of the dedication of stakeholders, the media literacy course, which was included in the curriculum in secondary education institutions, was included as an elective course. The media literacy course, which started at the primary school level in many countries, aims to help young children understand the functioning of the media or mass media. In the TRNC, this practice started to be taught in secondary education institutions covering the older age group. It came to the fore again as an essential problem in that it was late correcting some habits until that age, and students had little interest in these courses due to their lack of knowledge of the content and importance of the course, and within the same academic year. It became a compulsory course



in the curriculum of 6th, 7th and 8th grade students with the cooperation and initiatives of the Ministry of National Education, Youth and Sports and the High Council of Broadcasting. With these initiatives, a media literacy course entered the curriculum as a compulsory course at the high school level in TRNC; Primary education was excluded from this education (Ersoy, 2013). Today, the media literacy course is a 'compulsory elective' for 8th graders in secondary education institutions.

With the media literacy course included in the curriculum of the Ministry of National Education in the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, it is aimed that students in our country, as well as all over the world, are generally equipped to perceive media messages correctly and acquire the ability to produce messages over time. "With the rapidly developing new communication technologies, the nature of media literacy education has changed and media literacy has moved to a different dimension. "The one-sided information flow of traditional media has ceased to be one-sided with the development of digital communication technologies, and the existence of a target audience that can intervene in the media and determine the content has become possible" (Solmaz et al., 2017: 967). In this context, the existence of technological devices connected to the media literacy curriculum and their effective use within the curriculum has become an extremely important issue. In this context, although various regulations have been made for innovation in primary and secondary education programs in the TRNC, the existence of technological devices connected to the curriculum and their effective use in the curriculum and no notable arrangements have been made in teacher training programs in this field, "Since 2007, Although it has been stated that this course will be taught compulsorily by graduates of the Faculty of Communication, and although the communication faculties of universities produce thousands of graduates with pedagogical formation every year, the fact that graduates of other fields still hold the control of the media literacy course remains a vital problem (Bayraktar, 2018). Educational institutions, which will play important roles in raising individuals who will have a say in the future of their countries, should aim to initiate and support comprehensive media education programs from preschool to university and adult education. However, the media literacy course, an elective course in the Ministry of National Education curriculum in TRNC, must receive the necessary attention in schools. The fact that most teachers teaching the course must be trained in the field remains a significant problem.

Including the media literacy course in elective courses. Reasons such as the fact that this course does not affect the student's final grades at the end of the year and that the majority of the teachers teaching the course are not trained in the field; These factors stand out as factors that prevent the quality of media literacy education and its internalization by students. In schools, The 130-page course booklet used in the secondary education program is used as the 'sole resource'. Many of them have special technologically equipped laboratories, studios, etc. The need for more areas and equipment is noteworthy. Instead of graduates of the Faculty of Communication who receive pedagogical training in schools, the relevant course is taught by teachers with different areas of expertise, such as guidance counsellors and computer teachers, who do not even have the opportunity to receive in-service training related to the course. Media literacy courses should be taught by educators who are experts in their fields, and schools should be provided with computers, smart boards, etc., that should be used depending on the content of the course. Providing the necessary technological tools and equipment and creating resources to create areas will effectively achieve the goals of the media literacy course.

Method

The Purpose of the Research and the Data Collection Tools

In the TRNC, in order to investigate the practical status of the media literacy course included in the secondary education curriculum and to provide solutions on issues such as the use of technological equipment related to the curriculum to make media literacy courses efficient, the field research method was applied in this study, which aims to determine student views on the media literacy course. The survey technique was used to obtain the data. The questionnaire form was created after a detailed literature review on media literacy education, an examination of previous research conducted in the field, and the research. The questionnaire form first tried in the control group, was implemented after the necessary corrections. The obtained data were analyzed using the IBM SPSS 26.0 program. Descriptive statistical methods (number, percentage, frequency, average) were used to evaluate the data. The questionnaire applied within the scope of the study was formed from closed-ended questions. the first part of the survey consisted of 14 questions: 3 questions about students' information about age, gender and distribution by class; in the second part, who/who is influential in choosing the media literacy course, topics mainly covered in the media literacy course, opinions about what the media literacy course provides to students, reasoned opinions about whether the media literacy course should be mandatory, opinions about the difference of the media literacy course from other courses, 11 questions were asked, including opinions about the processing method of the media literacy course, opinions about the methods, techniques and media used in the media literacy course, opinions about providing media literacy education to parents, opinions about the contribution of media literacy to separating fact and fiction. In the survey, the questions included in Kutlu's (2018) study, which discussed the approaches and practices adopted within the scope of the media literacy course, were used.

In order to document the suitability of the research to scientific research and publication ethics, an application was made to the Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Communication of the American University of Kyrenia. The



application was evaluated at the Board's decision numbered 2023-3 dated 07.12.2023, and it was decided that the research does not contain ethical violations. Within the scope of the research, students who took a media literacy course were given information about the purpose of the research and the questions.

Universe and sampling

The study universe comprises students taking the media literacy course in the TRNC. The sample consists of students taking media literacy courses in selected schools in Lefke and Güzelyurt districts. In the TRNC, Nicosia (38 settlements), Famagusta (62 settlements), Kyrenia (45 settlements), Iskele (28 settlements), Guzelyurt (10 settlements) and Lefke (17 settlements), including the fact have characteristics of two districts with the fewest settlements among six districts, and the fact that Nicosia has the peripheral characteristics, Lefke and Guzelyurt districts were taken into account in the inclusion of the sample Dec. In the study, according to the information received from the Ministry of National Education of the TRNC, media literacy in the districts of Guzelyurt and Lefke was 8. students who have taken the media literacy course at least two semesters in the schools where it is given in the classroom have formed students.

The study group in which the quantitative data of the research were collected consists of 475 eighth graders who took the media literacy course of the two schools where the media literacy course is given in the districts of Guzelyurt and Lefke in the TRNC in the academic year 2023-2024. A total of 475 students participated in the research. However, the number of data that can be used statistically has been determined as 421. Two hundred thirty-eightThe survey included girls, 183 boys and 421 students studying at Güzelyurt Şehit Turgut Secondary School and Lefke Gazi High School. The validity and reliability of the survey have been tested; Cronbach's Alpha value, which is the reliability coefficient, was found to be 0.881. The study is essential in providing information about the implementation of media literacy education in the TRNC and providing data for the studies to be conducted on the subject, as well as the findings it will reach.

Data Analysis and Findings

Under this heading, the answers given by eighth-grade students studying at Güzelyurt Şehit Turgut Secondary School and Lefke Gazi High School and taking media literacy courses are presented in the tables below.

238	56.53	
	50.55	
183	43.46	
421	100	

Table 1. Distribution of Students by Gender

Of the students participating in the research, 238 were female, and 183 were male.

Table 2. Distribution of Who/Who Is Influential in Students' Choice of Media Literacy Course

	Frekans	Yüzde (%)
Teacher	411	97.62
None	10	2.37
Total	421	100

In Table 2, it is seen that 411 of the students participating in the survey answered the question of who/who is influential in students choosing the media literacy course as teachers and 10 as none. No student was found to have selected the option of parents and friends, among the other answers.

Table 3. Distribution of Topics Mainly Covered in Media Literacy Course

	Frekans	Yüzde (%)
Computer/Internet	421	100
Total	421	100,0

Table 3 shows the distribution of answers to the topics mainly covered in the media literacy course. Accordingly, the students participating in the survey; It can be seen that among the TV, Radio, Computer/Internet and Newspaper options, only the computer/internet option is selected. All students who participated in the survey selected the Computer/Internet option.



	Frekans	Yüzde (%)
Observation Skill	40	9.5
Critical Thinking	92	21.8
Creative Thinking	70	16.6
None	219	52.0
Total	421	100

Table 4. Distribution of Answers Regarding the Gains of Media Literacy

Table 4 shows the distribution of students' answers to the question about the benefits of the media literacy course. Accordingly, 40 students answered observation skills, 92 answered critical thinking skills, 70 answered creative thinking skills, and 219 answered none.

Table 5. Distribution of Answers Reg	garding Media Literacy Cou	arse Being a Compulsory Course
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	Frekans	Yüzde (%)
1	20	4,7
2	11	2.6
3	33	7.8
5	210	49.8
6	147	34.9
Total	421	100

Table 5 shows the distribution of the responses of the students who participated in the survey, justifying the media literacy course as a compulsory course. Accordingly, of the students participating in the survey, 20 (1) of them I think it gives me critical thinking skills towards media messages, 11 (2) of them say: Media Literacy Lesson Increases My General Knowledge, 33 (3) of them say: I find Media Literacy Lessons More Enjoyable Compared to Other Lessons, 210 of (5) of them:) Media Literacy Course Satisfies My Curiosity and 147 of them answered (6) I Like the Media Literacy Course Because It Contains Current Information. (4) Media Literacy is a Necessary and Important Course for Everyone, (7) I Want the Media Literacy Course to Be Compulsory Because I Believe It is Useful, (8) I Like the Application Projects in the Media Literacy Course, (9) I Enjoy Sharing the Information I Learned in the Media Literacy Course with Others, (10) The answers "Using the Information I Learned in the Media Literacy Course in Daily Life Makes Me Want to Learn New Things About Media Literacy" were not marked by any student.

	Frekans	Yüzde (%)
1	9	2.1
3	32	7.6
4	67	15.9
5	54	12.8
6	219	52.0
7	8	1.9
8	32	7.6
Total	421	100

Table 6 shows the distribution of the responses of the students who participated in the survey, in which they justified the media literacy course as not compulsory. Accordingly, 9 of the students participating in the survey (1) I find the course boring, 32 (3) I am not interested in the Media Literacy Course, 67 (4) I do not like the Media Literacy Course because it is memorized, 54 (5) It is seen that the incompetence of my Literacy Lesson Teacher makes me alienate from the lesson, 219 (6) of them answered "I do not find the Media Literacy Course Books Sufficient" and 32 of them (8) answered "I do not feel like studying because I easily forget the Media Literacy Course Topics". The answers such as (2) I get low grades in the media literacy course even Though I study, (7) I need help understanding the subjects of the media literacy course were not marked by any students.



Table 7. Distribution of Media Literacy Course Achievements

	Frekans	Yüzde (%)
3	380	90.2
4	41	9.7
Total	421	100

Table 7 shows the distribution of the answers given by the students who participated in the survey to the question, "Which of the following was the media literacy course effective for you?" Accordingly, 380 (3) of the students who participated in the survey marked the answer "It Had No Effect", while 41 (4) answered "I Examine Media Tools with a Different Perspective Since Taking This Course". The answers include (1) I started to watch the programs I watched/listened to/read more selectively and consciously, (2) My ability to analyze the programs I watched improved, was not marked by any students.

All students who participated in the survey answered yes to the question, "Do you think the media literacy course is different from other courses?"

Table 8. Distribution of Answers Regarding the Method of Teaching the Media Literacy Course

	Frekans	Yüzde (%)
1	101	23.9
2	101	23.9
4	219	52.0
Total	421	100

Table 8 shows the distribution of the answers given by the students who participated in the survey to the question 'How do you find the method of teaching the media literacy course?' According to this, It is seen that 101 of the students who participated in the survey answered (1) I find the tools and equipment used in the course sufficient, 101 (2) I find the activities carried out in the class related to the media sufficient, and 219 (4) I do not find the inclass discussions about the media sufficient. (3) The answer "I think the teaching methods used in the course (student-centered) are correct" was not marked by any student.

	Frekans	Yüzde (%)
4	25	5.9
5	396	94.0
Total	421	100

In Table 9, in the question investigating the methods and techniques used in the media literacy course, The distribution of the answers given by the survey students is included. According to this, 25 students responded as (4) Expression and 396 responded as (5) Test Solving. None of the students marked the options of (1) discussion/debate, (2) production and (3) homework/research.

Table 10. Distribution of Media Used in Media Literacy Course

	Frekans	Yüzde (%)
1	421	100
Total	421	100,0

In Table 10, in the question investigating the media used in the media literacy course, all students who participated in the survey answered (1) Computer/projection. (2) No student-marked newspaper, (3) TV options.

While 207 of the students answered yes to the question "Should parents be given media literacy training?" one of the questions asked of the students participating in the survey, 214 students selected no. In addition to the question "Do you think media literacy contributes to distinguishing reality and fiction in terms of content in the media?", it was observed that 24 students answered yes, 223 students answered no, and 174 answered partially.

Conclusions And Recommendations

The results obtained as a result of this study, which aims to determine the student opinions regarding the media literacy course within the framework of investigating the practical situation of the media literacy course in the secondary education curriculum in TRNC and offering solution suggestions on issues such as the use of



technological devices connected to the curriculum in order to make media literacy courses more efficient. Based on the findings, The level and efficiency of teaching the media literacy course in schools affiliated with the TRNC Ministry of Education is low within the framework of student opinions, and the media literacy course should be supported with new media literacy concepts and scopes within the framework of the evolving definition of media literacy. The use of technological devices connected to the curriculum should be increased and the course should be integrated with technological inputs. There is a need to rearrange the contents accordingly.

Including the media literacy course in elective courses. Reasons such as the fact that this course does not affect the students' final grades at the end of the year and that the majority of the teachers teaching the course are not trained in the field; The quality of media literacy education and the factors that prevent its internalization by students are among the results of the study. In the schools included in the sample, In addition to the inadequacy of the methods and techniques used in the media literacy course in the secondary education program and the media used in the relevant course, it is also essential that the majority of the teachers teaching the course are not teachers trained in the field, and that it is taught by teachers with different areas of expertise, who cannot even provide inservice training related to the course. Stand out as problems.

With the study conducted within this framework, In order to achieve the goals of the media literacy course in the TRNC and ensure its sustainability in today's world, the media literacy course should be included in the category of compulsory courses such as mathematics and mother tongue, the employment of teachers who are experts in their fields, the necessary training should be given to teachers within the scope of new media literacy skills. The schools should be taught the necessary methods that should be used depending on the content of the course. It also becomes clear that national state policies are needed to provide resources for the supply of technological tools and equipment and the creation of areas.

In light of all these results, Considering the necessity and vital importance of media literacy education in today's world, it is essential to raise awareness about its importance for society and emphasize the necessity of evaluating it as a compulsory course in schools. Based on the fact that media literacy is a critical educational issue that will be given not from a narrow perspective, such as creating an employment alternative for Communication faculty graduates, but for the real purpose of raising the awareness of children, young people and adults who are vulnerable to new media; Media literacy education in TRNC should be handled more comprehensively and systematically. Considering the limited scientific research conducted in this field in TRNC, The study will contribute to the field by serving as a source and reference for future studies. There is a need for more comprehensive research in the field, and it is envisaged that media literacy education, as a lifelong education issue starting from the family, will be addressed at all levels of education; more comprehensive studies will gain importance, and the number of related studies will increase.

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