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Media Literacy and Development of Human and Social Capital in the European Union

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Abstract: Together with the growing level of the digitalization in the field of multimedia, also convergence of media, information and digital literacy have been growing up. In case of the traditional mass media, it was important to have skills to use the media content in a critical, aware and selective way. Nevertheless, in the era of the Internet and extended availability of information in the digital form, the importance of information and digital technologies literacy also grows. It regards to some extent the technical ability to use particular technological solutions, but also forming aware and active consumers and authors of the media content. The main goal of this paper is researching the relation between forming the media literacy as a component of human capital, and the realization the European Union's targets in the area of building a knowledge-based economy. On the basis of

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the subject-matter literature and other source materials a hypothesis, which classifies the media education as a key process during creating a single European information space, shall be verified. In the first part of the paper, the author concentrates on presenting the dependence between human, personal and social capital. Next, on the basis of the European definition of media literacy, the author examines capabilities of achieving progress in the field of media education in terms of the present European audiovisual policy.

Introduction

A digital turning point and integration of the traditional media and the Internet are reflected by new relations with consumers. In the new information and communication reality, media users need to upgrade their human capital by analytical skills which enable better intellectual and emotional understanding of the digital media and a picture of the word presented by them. Nowadays, the key issue is distribution of knowledge about rules acc. to which the media operate in the digital environment, as well as new possibilities based on the progress in the field of information & communication technology. Challenges related to the consumption of new media are significant as well.

In the European Union, more and more attention is paid to the creative sector, which generally is deemed to be consumer-oriented creative industries operating in the information, cultural and entertainment sphere. A series of initiatives developing the competitiveness of the European creative sector include an information society idea and uniform information space, which are promoted by, apart from a progress of digitalization process, the dissemination of the access to information and communication technologies. Promotion of the media education is of utmost importance for the development of the creative sector in the European Union.

Research and Methodology

The goal of this paper is initial diagnosis of the relationship between the development of the European Union citizens' media literacy, and making a concept of the information society and knowledge-based economy real in the member states. Previous studies have proven that different practices are used in Europe, and consequently, unequal levels of media skills are achieved. Is it a factor inhibiting an increase in the competitiveness of the entire European audiovisual sector? Is it possible to break the barriers hampering the development of the media literacy at the European level? On the

basis of what principles should educational programs in the field of media, information and digital literacy be developed and what entities should actively support the process of education about the media for the citizens of the European Union? An attempt to answer the questions will be made in the course of study of literature of the subject and additionally, certain source documents – mainly legislation acts binding in the European Union containing concepts and recommendations for the member states and the media sector in the field of media education. The paper is of organizing nature and can be a starting point for empirical deep analysis of the subject in question.

Human and Individual Capital Compared to Social Capital – and Attempt of Systematization

Category of *the human capital*, as an economic theory, has already been examined many times and hence, the literature of the subject provides varied definitions. The main controversy is a result of the fact that this concept is based on the 'capital' term, which covers all the resources which generate benefits for their holders (Woźniak 2004, p. 123). The atmosphere at the beginning of the 60's of the 20th century was described by G. S. Becker in the preface to the third edition of his fundamental work: "*In this early period many people criticized this term and the analysis which made its grounds, because they believed that it treated people like slaves or machines.*" (Becker 1993, p. 6). In view of the abovementioned controversy, many authors used the terms 'capital' and 'resources' interchangeably, however, modern researchers do not agree whether these terms can be used synonymously, especially in the context of the economy of an organization. Z. Czajka believes that not all of the human resources, and not in every organization, constitute the human capital. In his opinion, the difference is not about the scope of these concepts, but in the way they are used. Resources acquire the attributes of the capital, when it is possible to process them in order to obtain measurable benefits for an organization (Czajka 2011, p. 125). From the point of view of economics, it seems that, similarly, a difference could be translated between resources and capital from the organization level into the level of an individual. The essence of the human capital is embodying it in particular individuals, who make a particular group or a society together (Przybyszewski 2007, p. 13). According to the theory of the human capital, the following attributes may be assigned to this category (Klimczak 2006, p. 127-128):

- the ability to grow up as an effect the learning process in the system of education and trainings (the human capital theory considers the choice of a level and a type of education as a choice between current and future consumption, because production of the human capital de facto constitutes a private investment in the ability to generate future incomes),
- the possibility of wearing out as a result of abandonment of (personal) education despite a progress of the general knowledge,
- transfer ability in the process of teaching or an exchange.

In the light of the above attributes it could be assumed that the resources embodied in an individual constitute a capital when they are a potential source of future benefits for a human, material benefits (financial dimension) and intangible ones (such as prestige, satisfaction, a sense of safety). Hence, the category of the human capital reflects a potential of an individual. Numerous definitions of the human capital in the first place enumerate knowledge, education level, skills, experience and abilities as parts of the capital (cf. e.g. OECD 2001, p. 18; Czajka 2011, p. 6; Jabłoński 2012, p. 103; Domański 1993, p. 19). Broadly speaking, apart from the above ones, the human capital covers (the most frequently enumerated by the authors): motivation, the vital energy and health (cf. e.g. Czajka 2011, p. 6; Domański 1993, p. 19). The category of the human capital is characterized by the fact that it is not a closed system (Jabłoński 2012, p. 104). In the OECD's definition other potential human capital components have been identified as the other attributes of individuals, which promote personal, social and economic well-being (OECD 2001, p. 18). Therefore, the concept of the human capital could be extended by such individual human attributes as: approaches, system of values, creativity, imagination, intelligence, talents, personality, ability to think logically or absorb rapidly, that is such qualities that can be 'formed', stimulated, developed, trained in the process of investing in the human capital. Some authors classify most of the attributes listed above as attributes belonging to an *individual capital*, defined as the abilities and tendencies which are inborn or acquired in the early childhood. It is described to be a foundation on which the human capital and social capital are developed and which, to the some extent, is a result of the choices made by parents (Klimczak 2006, p. 131). It is beyond any questions that such components of the individual capital as: attitudes, system of values, imagination, talents, personality, the ability to memorize and learn during the childhood should be discovered, formed and developed first by parents, and later, (parallel with them) at the level of kindergartens, pre-school education and school, and finally in social groups to which an individual belongs to (e.g., scouts, sports team, interests

groups, youth subculture, chatty groups). It does not exclude, as it seems, conscious private investments in the individual capital by an individual in his/her adult life, however, it must be emphasized that any negligence in this respect in the childhood time can result in inability to make up the time. Therefore, private investments in the individual capital may take place mainly on the basis of continuation of the investments made by parents, educators, teachers and coaches at the childhood time. Social capital 'separated' by many researchers is directly correlated with the human capital. It is a separate category that includes the ability to use the institutions (legal standards and ethical/moral systems of values, customs, behavioral samples), social networks, to participate in groups and to build up skills and social image. This collection, when added to the human capital, multiplies the possibilities to achieve larger benefits by an individual (Klimczak 2006, p. 131). The social capital affects the extent to which a society is organized, and reflects the potential to solve social problems (Czajka 2011, p. 7). High social capital is based on the existence of many heavy relations among members of a particular community. These relations in question promote and help to sustain the trust, but they also enable rapid transmission of information within a group. However, a community must not form a too compact and closed group, since it could be a barrier preventing the transfer of components of the human capital from the outside, such as knowledge, skills, experience, and the effects of use of the human capital and the individual capital such as new ideas, concepts and solutions. A society comprising many such isolated groups has no chance to be innovative, since there exists too many structural gaps - that is broken connections between groups, which are necessary to enable a group to be subject of diffusion and necessary to promote an innovation. Structural gaps can be filled by a broker, a connecting element which is capable of connecting and keeping relations with many groups (cf. Burt 2005). Concluding, the human capital is a set of components of a specific potential, embodied in an individual who invests in himself/herself and consciously resigns from something in order gain future benefits. In turn, the social capital is formed by certain attributes of social life, namely formal and informal institutions, networks, relations and the trust which promote cooperation and coordination of efforts aimed at achieving mutual benefits. Both, the human capital and the social capital are based on the grounds of personal capital.

Media Literacy as a Component of the Human Capital

The variety of ways, literacy is defined as results from numerous ways general abilities and skills are defined; in English the situation is reflected by two words: *competency* and *competence*. The American origin of the first term implies a way of measure of the competency, focusing on how people must behave in order to effectively carry out the tasks entrusted to them. In accordance with this approach, the *competency* shall be understood as the specific attributes of an individual which, in the form of behaviors, 'decide' about the quality of performed actions. One of the authors of the '*competency*' term - R. Boyatzis- suggests motivation, character traits, self-image & social role and skills as the determinants of the extent of competency of an individual (Boyatzis 1982). A different interpretation of the term regards the *competence* term originating from the British area. This approach focuses on the standardized results of operations assigned to a specific profession or a place of work. Therefore, in this meaning the competence shall be a minimum range of skills, knowledge and attitude necessary to perform professional tasks which shall result in an expected output. In Poland, such a definition of the competence is frequently replaced by the *qualifications* term (Dobrzyńska, Strzebońska 2011, p. 27).

In case of the ability to use the media, the key issue is the meaning of 'literacy'. The word 'literacy' originally described the ability to read and write, but in combination with other nouns or adjectives it gains a broader meaning. Therefore the *media literacy* term refers to broad meaning of the efficiency of media users. In order to achieve a certain level of proficiency, a complex process of media education is required; therefore it could be concluded that *media literacy* is the goal of media education. The definition of the European media literacy includes their following degrees (*A European approach to media literacy...* 2007, p. 4):

- easiness of use of all existing media, (starting) from newspapers and ending with the virtual communities,
- active use of media – among others, the interactive television, use of web browsers or participation in virtual communities and better exploiting of the media potential in the field of entertainment, access to culture, inter-cultural dialog, learning and everyday applications (use of libraries, sub-casting),
- having a critical approach to the media quality and content (e.g., the ability to assess information, approach to ads in varied media, smart use of search engines),
- creative use of the media – the evolution of media technology and the growing presence of the Internet as a distribution channel enables

constantly increasing number of Europeans to create and distribute images, information and content,

- understanding of the economy of the media and the difference between the pluralism and the ownership rights to the media,
- awareness of the issues related to copyright, which are necessary for the ‘culture of legality’, especially among the younger generation in form of both, consumers and producers of content.

The European Commission also uses a concise definition of media literacy, where it appears as the ability to use the media, understand and a critically evaluate the different aspects of the media and their content, and to communicate within a variety of contexts (*A European approach to media literacy... 2007*, p. 3):

Due to the serious technological development and consequent media digitalization and convergence processes, the traditional model of media consumption has been transforming all over the world. Contents are available in many ways and via different and modern devices, therefore content is available for a consumer everywhere. Technological modifications result in re-organization of the media market on which the ‘power’ has been gradually handed over to a recipient, who has larger and larger choice and the offer is more and more extended; actually the offer is overwhelming. The trends observed in the field of the contemporary model of media consumption show gradual fading of a border between consumption and production of the content. Some consumers create and distribute texts, pictures and sounds at the same time while other group of consumers re-distributes the content sharing it with a particular society. Thus, previous skills in the field of use of the media content must be extended by a set of new abilities enabling safe and skillful familiarization with serious quantity of information, and the ability to generate and distribute content individually. A user needs technical and substantial skills. Knowledge of the rules of the contemporary media is the key factor. Convergence in the field of the rules enforces *convergence of the media, information and digital literacy*.

Media literacy, together with the information literacy and digital literacy, are a component of the human capital. Today, it would be difficult for an individual to function without knowledge, skills and experience in the following areas:

- search for information,
- assessment of the reliability of information sources,
- storing of the information,
- transfer (transfer, distribution, redistribution) of information,
- information processing,
- selection (choice, elimination, suitability) of information,

- weighting of information,
- interpretation of information (conscious understanding, comprehension, critical view),
- application of information,
- production and distribution of content in the network (Internet, intranet, extranet) in the form of both, text and audiovisual materials,
- assurance of information security,
- safe use of the network (Internet, intranet, extranet),
- protection of privacy, as well as personal and intellectual property.

The phenomenon of the digital exclusion affects the individuals who, due to lack of access or lack of technical skills of use of the digital technology and lack of motivation to gain new skills, and finally in connection with no above literacy (also partially due to a lack of motivation), are on a hiding to nothing in all areas of their lives, starting from the labor market and their participation in society and culture, including keeping social relationships, and ending with personal life (Batorski 2011, p. 18).

Because of complexity of the media literacy, information literacy and digital literacy, the media education process must be conducted by many entities, such as educational bodies (different levels of education), media, non-governmental organizations and national organs as well as many social groups from among which a key role must be assigned to a family (mainly in the field of forming approaches, systems of values, stimulation of creativity and imagination, shaping and forming of personality; in turn, a family is not always able to support a younger generation in the field of acquisition of technical skills of using particular technological solutions, since many times parents or grandparents have problems to follow the quickly changing technologies).

Media Education as Part of the European Union's Audiovisual Policy

In respective EU countries, actions related to media education are performed with a varying intensity. The need for creating and developing media literacy of citizens is strictly connected with an opinion-making role of the media and dynamic technological changes in that area (Borkowska et al. 2010, p. 1).

Audiovisual Media Services Directive (2007/65/EC) of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 December 2007 points out at the need for popularization of media literacy in all social groups, and the necessity for an attentive monitoring of development of media literacy (motive 37 of

the Preamble). This directive specifies media literacy as related to abilities, knowledge and judgment which help the consumers to use them in an efficient and safe manner. Article 26 of the Directive refers to the reporting duties arising out of the use of the Directive considering (among others) the extent of media literacy in each Member State. Legitimizing a periodical reporting is a motivating factor for a careful and methodical monitoring of the condition and effects of media education in respective EU countries. It must be added that, due to the necessity of transposition of the Directive's provisions to national legislation, the need for media education has become a subject of the public debate in Member States.

The recommendation of the European Commission (2009/625/EC) from 20 August 2009 specifies in Point (6) that a higher level of literacy would to a great extent contribute to approaching the objectives of the European Union enacted during the meeting of the European Council in Lisbon and in the i2010 initiative, which particularly refer to a more competitive knowledge-based economy, and consequently would contribute to the creation of a more integrative information society. In Point (8), this document refers to the previously diagnosed obstacles which hamper the development of media competences at the European level, such as the lack of a common vision, lack of visibility of national, regional and local initiatives at the European level, lack of European networks and the coordination between the interested parties. The European Commission assigns the responsibility for supporting the process of developing media literacy in the European Union to Member States and recommends that Member States initiate a public debate on the inclusion of media literacy in the curriculum and classify it as the key competence in the lifetime learning process (point I 3). In addition, the Commission appeals to Member States to raise the awareness of the threats connected with personal data processing in information and communication networks by the means of training, informative days and distribution of informative materials and through education of users, in particular, students, parents and teachers (point I 5). The Commission recommends that the media methodically popularize by the means of information campaigns the knowledge on how information and creative contents are produced, edited and distributed in the digital environment, including the knowledge on how search engines work and methods of a more effective use thereof (point II 1).

Within the framework of European policy on the information society and the media, the European Commission has defined three priorities (*i2010 – A European Information Society... 2005*, p. 4):

- completion of a **uniform European information space** which support an open and competitive internal market in the field of the information society and the media,
- consolidate **innovation and investments** in ICT research which aim at supporting the growth and creating new and more attractive jobs,
- establishing an **integrative European information society** which can contribute to economic growth and create new jobs in a manner consistent with the rules of sustainable development, prioritizing an improved quality level of social services and higher standards of living.

Among the legislation of the European Parliament referring to media education, it seems that the most valuable document is the Resolution of the European Parliament of 16 December 2008 on media literacy in a digital world (2008/2129(INI)). This document categorizes groups of people who should be subject to media literacy education. These groups are children, adults, older people and the disabled. The Resolution takes into consideration the role of family environment, where media literacy skills are first obtained, and where parents play a key role in developing media-use habits of their children. In addition, this document emphasizes that media education should become part of the curriculum and recommends that it should be focused on practical skills and linked to economic, political, literary, social, artistic and IT-related subjects. It also recommends that media education should shed some light on copyright aspects when using media and respecting intellectual property rights especially with regard to the Internet, as well as data security and privacy protection and the right of informational self-determination. The Resolution pays extra attention to media education of older people and emphasizes that such education should be done at the places where they are to be found including old people's homes, nursing homes and societies. This document takes a position that big digital networks enable older people to communicate in every-day life and remain independent as long as possible.

Media education is a complex process which is defined by continuously changing technological, institutional, economic, social and cultural realities. In the light of the audiovisual policy of the European Union, media education is perceived as a continuous education aimed at the whole society (all age and social groups at all stages of life). The European Union's policy in the field of media education is carried out through the legislative and conceptual activity (drawing up secondary legislation of a non-binding character which contains concepts and recommendations for Member

States and the media sector). From the European perspective, media literacy has a multi-level dimension, and it should be taken into consideration in the process of media education, whose forms, methods and tools must be adjusted to the level and the needs of a target group). Education programs should be constructed with a holistic approach and based on a complex analysis of the present level of media competences and prospective models of improvement of such competences. When analyzing the aspects of the European Union's policy in the field of media education, there is a surfeit in the legal and contextual dimension (creating consciousness and attitudes), and on the other hand, an evident deficit when it comes to the direct involvement of the European Union in a practical promotion and popularization of media education.

Conclusions

It would be reckless to underrate the role of media, information and digital competences in today's world in every aspect of life, beginning with private aspects of life through professional and civic ones. When analyzing the influence of this element of human resources on the development of the knowledge-based economy, it can be claimed that it has got an obvious impact on the creation of innovativeness, an information society and human capital.

Traditional media in the new digital reality have to evolve into increasing interactivity. Previous theories of mass communication refer to a situation when there is a limited choice, but nowadays we can talk about a very differentiated set of more or less creatively active and willing to interact consumers of various information services. Unlike mass consumers, they are more aware, independent and able to defend against the propaganda or manipulation as well as to spontaneously organize themselves online or for the benefit of a particular initiative. Of course, it does not mean that media, information and digital literacy will enrich human capital and favor the development of social capital without a proper support from the family and other social groups as well as school, media, NGOs and administrative (governmental) powers.

Among the European Union's documents, an act of secondary law (with a binding effect) which directly refers to the issues related to media education is the Audiovisual Media Services Directive. Apart from defining media literacy and appealing for its popularization and a close observation of the development of media competences, this Directive obliges all Member States to periodical reporting on the application of the Directive's provi-

sions. It must be pointed out that the directives are only binding with respect to their results. Member States have a freedom of choice in terms of the forms and means of the implementation of the directive. It must also be remembered that the function of directives is not to standardize a national legislation of Member States, but to harmonize it.

The European Commission appeals to Member States and the industry (in a non-binding manner) to promote ideas for developing media literacy, take initiatives to facilitate the access to the media for all citizens, understand the rules of their functioning in the era of the digital revolution and critically assess the information provided by the mass media throughout Europe.

Due to convergence of media, information and digital literacy, educational programs in this domain must be constructed with a holistic approach and should be based upon a complex analysis of the present level of these competences, social needs in the specified field and, in addition, models of increasing these competences. In order to make the media education process contribute to the creation of information society, it should last for the whole life of the people included in the process, because the changes in the fields of information technology and telecommunications are becoming more dynamic and, as a result, it is not just an intensified technical transformation of media, but also their functional, economic and social transformation.

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