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Media Education in the Polish System of Mainstream Education

Abstract

The article discusses the role of media education in the Polish system of general education, focusing on primary media literacy aimed at developing critical and conscious media consumptions skills among teenagers. The author analyzes the current legal and institutional framework of media education in Poland, its development over the years and the challenge it faces. Media education, both in its primary dimension (for children and youth) and secondary dimension (for adults), aims to prepare recipients for critical analyses of media content. The article presents the historical context of the development of media education in Poland, as well as the various stages of its evolution in response to political, cultural and technological changes. Despite numerous calls and attempts to introduce media education as a separate subject, in practice, fragmented approaches to its implementation dominate. The article also emphasises the need to prepare teachers for teaching in this area and to integrate media competences with other subjects. The challenge remains not only to shape media skills but also to protect children from the dangers associated with new media. The author points to the necessity of further developing of media education, including needs related to the changing media landscape.

Keywords: media education, media literacy, Polish education system, critical media consumption.

Edukacja medialna w polskim systemie edukacji powszechnej

Streszczenie

Artykuł omawia rolę edukacji medialnej w polskim systemie edukacji powszechnej, koncentrując się na pierwotnej alfabetyzacji medialnej, która ma na celu kształtowanie

kompetencji krytycznego i świadomego odbioru mediów wśród dzieci i młodzieży. Autorka analizuje obecny stan prawny i instytucjonalny edukacji medialnej w Polsce, jej rozwój na przestrzeni lat oraz wyzwania przed którymi stoi. Edukacja medialna, zarówno w wymiarze pierwotnym (dla dzieci i młodzieży), jak i wtórnym (dla dorosłych), ma na celu przygotowanie odbiorców do krytycznej analizy treści medialnych. W artykule przedstawiono historyczny kontekst rozwoju edukacji medialnej w Polsce a także różne etapy jej ewolucji w odpowiedzi na zmiany polityczne, kulturowe i technologiczne. Obecny stan edukacji medialnej jest wynikiem długotrwałego procesu, w którym kluczową rolę odegrały reformy systemowe, zmiany w polityce medialnej oraz wzrost znaczenia mediów elektronicznych i społecznościowych. Mimo licznych postulatów i prób wprowadzenia edukacji medialnej jako odrębnego przedmiotu, w praktyce dominują rozproszone podejścia do jej realizacji. W artykule podkreślono również potrzebę przygotowania nauczycieli do nauczania w tym zakresie. Wyzwaniem pozostaje nie tylko kształtowanie umiejętności medialnych ale także ochrona dzieci przed zagrożeniami związanymi z nowymi mediami. Autorka wskazuje na konieczność dalszego rozwoju edukacji medialnej, aby skutecznie odpowiadać na wyzwania XXI wieku, w tym na potrzeby związane z cyfryzacją i zmieniającym się krajobrazem mediów.

słowa kluczowe: edukacja medialna, umiejętność krytycznego odbioru mediów, polski system edukacji, dydaktyka medialna, rozwój edukacji medialnej w szkolnictwie.

Methodology

In the framework of social science methodology, the research subject encompasses all objects, phenomena and related processes with regard to which research questions are formulated.¹ Accordingly, it has been assumed that the subject of this research is media education within the Polish education system, with a focus on the preparation of children and adolescents for the responsible use of new media and their navigation of the virtual reality shaped by these technologies.

¹ T. Piłch, T. Bauman, *Zasady badań pedagogicznych*, Wydawnictwo Akademickie „Żak”, Warszawa 2001, p. 23.

The research subject determines the research objectives. Intuitively, the objective of any activity, including research, can be understood as the outcome intended by the person undertaking the activity. This article follows Hubert Witczak's definition of the research objective as the "establishment (scientific recognition), assessment, valuation (attribution of scientific significance and value) and attainment of a designated, future, anticipated and desirable state of affairs (scientific development of the subject).²" In the proposed research, a set of objectives has been identified, addressing various aspects of the proposed research. These are cognitive, diagnostic, explanatory and applied objectives.

As defined by Stefan Nowak, "the research method includes typical and replicable ways of collecting, describing, analysing and interpreting empirical data, aimed at obtaining the most (or optimally [...]) justified answers to the research questions posed."³ This understanding of the research method has been adopted for the purposes of this research.

The primary research method employed for the purposes of this article has been the analysis of pre-existing documents. According to E. Babbie (2003), this is a non-reactive method that involves analysing the content of pre-existing materials: various classes of documents concerning security policy (reports, expert opinions, forecasts, summaries, documents illustrating decision-making processes, etc.).⁴ The subjects of analysis as part of this method have been documents available in both traditional and digital formats, relevant to the research. More broadly, this method has involved the analysis of primary sources. When analysing data, attention is paid to their nature, form, circumstances of creation, internal dynamics, level of objectivity and place of origin:⁵

Introduction

This article aims to explore the role of media education in the Polish mainstream education system. In doing so, it will analyse the current legal and institutional framework, provide an overview of previous research and examine the changes that have occurred in this area over time. The author focuses on primary media literacy, specifically media education in schools,

² H. Witczak, *Problemy i twierdzenia naukowe*, [in:] M. Sławińska, H. Witczak (ed.), *Podstawy metodologiczne prac doktorskich*, PWE, Warsaw 2012, p. 73.

³ S. Nowak, *Metodologia nauk społecznych*, Warsaw 2011, p.22.

⁴ E. Babbie, *Badania społeczne w praktyce*, Warszawa 2006, p. 340 et seq.

⁵ M. Markowska (ed.), *Analiza danych zastanych. Przewodnik dla studentów*, Warsaw 2013, p.12.

and highlights the significance of fostering critical and informed media consumption skills among children and adolescents. The article also discusses the historical context of how media education has developed in Poland and how it has evolved in response to political, cultural and technological shifts. In this context, it pays attention to the challenges associated with the implementation of media education in school practice. The article is of a review nature. The desk research is the main method used in this article.

The primary goal of media education is to promote informed and critical engagement with media content. It encompasses both a didactic (cognitive) and an educational (formative) aspect. The literature identifies two distinct dimensions of media education: 1) primary media literacy (targeted at children and adolescents, primarily within the educational system); 2) secondary media literacy (targeted at adults, who have already developed their media consumption habits). In general, media education, as defined above, should seek to foster specific competencies in media usage, emphasising the critical analysis and consumption of media content.⁶ This article focuses on primary media literacy, or media education in schools. However, secondary media literacy, pertaining to adults, remains an essential consideration.

Media Education in the Polish System of Mainstream Education – origins, evolution, current state

The current legal and institutional framework for media education within the Polish mainstream education system has been shaped by a prolonged transformation process, with its origins dating back to the 1970s. This evolution has been influenced by political factors (such as media policy during the communist era, the transition era and Poland's accession to the EU), cultural factors (the rationale for integrating media education into the mainstream education system) and technological factors (the evolution of the media, particularly the rise of electronic media and social media). Several stages can be identified in this process. For the purposes of this article, the following stages are distinguished:

1. The period of the Polish People's Republic – spanning from the 1970s until the collapse of the regime, during which the media was fully subordinated to the state apparatus.

⁶ W. Smył, *Szkolna edukacja medialna*, "Media, Kultura, Społeczeństwo" 2007, No. 1, pp. 96-97. Cf. L. Dyczewski, *Konieczność kompetencji medialnej w rodzinie*, [in:] L. Dyczewski (ed.), *Rodzina, dziecko, media*, Wydawnictwo KUL, Lublin 2005, pp. 332-349; W. Strykowski, *Kompetencje medialne: pojęcie, obszary, formy kształcenia*, [in:] W. Strykowski, W. Skrzydlewski (ed.), *Kompetencje medialne społeczeństwa wiedzy*, Wydawnictwo eMPI², Poznań 2007, pp. 214-216.

2. The 1990s – a period marked by political transformation and the introduction of media pluralism, which eliminated political control over media issues; this era also saw the rapid development of advanced ICT technologies, triggering a gradual shift away from traditional mass media (printed and audiovisual) towards electronic media.
3. 1998 – 2003. Unsuccessful attempt to introduce media education into mainstream schools, coinciding with a major reform of the education system.
4. 2003 – 2008. During that time, the institutional emphasis in the field of mainstream education shifted towards the Polish National Broadcasting Council (Krajowa Rada Radiofonii i Telewizji), supported by leading media scholars and non-governmental organisations. This period also witnessed significant development in media studies. Furthermore, the influence of EU regulations concerning media policy became increasingly evident, serving as a source of inspiration.
5. 2008 – 2017. A period of stagnation accompanied by increasing grassroots pressure for the integration of media education into mainstream schooling. The period saw the emergence of a model of distributed media education that is still in use today, as reflected in the new core curriculum for general education (2017).
6. Post-2017 developments. The distributed media education model has remained in place despite qualitative changes in its broader context, driven by the expansion of electronic media and social media, along with the associated risks. The challenge at this stage is not only to develop media competencies, currently framed as digital skills, but also to safeguard children and adolescents from these threats. It appears justified to assert that a new paradigm of media education has emerged. This paradigm should serve as the foundation for developing an educational model spanning all levels of mainstream schooling.⁷

The concept of media education, understood as media literacy for children and adolescents, can be traced back to the 1970s. However, as scholars have noted, a systematic approach to media education was not feasible in the Polish People's Republic, primarily due to structural constraints. At the time, the media functioned as a component of the state's propaganda apparatus, more specifically of the hegemonic party, a tool for imposing the official ideology on society and maintaining "cultural and social hegemony." Media professionals were integral to this system, representing the perspectives and interests of the

⁷ Cf. M. Jaakkola, *Media re-education and the need to be constantly updated. Interview with Grzegorz Ptaszek*, "Central European Journal Of Communication" 2020, No. 2, p. 290.

ruling elite.⁸ The media of that period strictly adhered strictly to Stalin's concept of the media as "the party's transmission belt to the masses."⁹

Embedded within the ruling authorities' domain of power, such a media system could not become the subject of formal education. Indeed, the media system during the communist era in Poland implicitly assumed that only the state-sanctioned media narrative was legitimate, and consequently, that there was only one correct model of media consumption.

Nonetheless, it should be noted that elements of media education were introduced into mainstream school curricula as early as the 1970s. One such initiative was the inclusion of film education within the Polish language curriculum. Beyond enhancing students' knowledge of cinematic art, film education aimed to equip students with the skills to critically evaluate films based on their ideological content, conveyed values and aesthetic merits.¹⁰

The political transformation of 1989 triggered a fundamental shift, replacing the state-controlled media monopoly with a competitive media market. In response, calls emerged for the introduction of a new school subject, referred to variously as "media didactics", "education through media," "learning about the media" or "media education," designed to provide students with knowledge about media while fostering a critical approach to media content. By the late 1990s, one of the first textbooks for teachers in this field was published: *Pedagogika mass mediów (Mass Media Pedagogy)*.¹¹ The publication came as an attempt to respond in that context to the "call for pedagogy, first and foremost, to serve as the cornerstone for preparing children, adolescents and adults to engage with the media and creatively participate in mass culture."¹² Several scholars emerged as key figures in media education research, including Wacław Strykowski,¹³ Bronisław Siemieniecki¹⁴ and Janusz

⁸ M. Kot, *Edukacja medialna a przemiana ustrojowa w Polsce*, "Kultura – Media – Teologia" 2020, No. 41, p. 89. For a broader discussion, see: M. Polaczek-Bigaj, *System medialny w PRL a współczesny system mediów masowych – podstawowe zasady funkcjonowania*, [in:] P. Borowiec, R. Kłosowicz, P. Ścigaj, *Odmiany współczesnej nauki o polityce*, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego, Kraków 2014, pp. 105-110.

⁹ T. Goban-Klas, *Media i komunikowanie masowe. Teorie i analizy prasy, radia, telewizji i Internetu*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, Warszawa–Kraków 2002, p. 168.

¹⁰ P. Drzewiecki, *Media Aktywni. Dlaczego i jak uczyć edukacji medialnej?*, Otwock – Warsaw 2010, p. 36.

¹¹ A. Lepa, *Pedagogika mass mediów*, Wydawnictwo Archidiecezji Łódzkiej, Łódź 1998.

¹² P. Kowolik, "Pedagogika mass mediów", Adam Lepa, Łódź 1998: [review], "Nauczyciel i Szkoła" 2000, No. 1, p.193.

¹³ Cf., inter alia, W. Strykowski (ed.), *Media a edukacja: międzynarodowa konferencja naukowa, Poznań, 7-9 kwietnia 1997 r.: program i tezy*, Wydawnictwo eMPI² Mariana Pietraszewskiego, Poznań 1997; *II Międzynarodowa Konferencja, Poznań, 18-21 kwietnia 1998: program i tezy*, Poznań, Wydawnictwo eMPI², Poznań 1998; *Media a edukacja: III międzynarodowa konferencja, Poznań 8-11 kwietnia 2000 r.*, Wydawnictwo eMPI², Poznań 1998.

¹⁴ Cf. B. Siemieniecki, *Perspektywy edukacji z komputerem*, Wyd. A. Marszałek, Toruń – Płock 1995; B. Siemieniecki, *Edukacja informatyczna i edukacja medialna jako jeden przedmiot kształcenia w szkole podstawowej i gimnazjum*, "Chowanna" 2003, No. 1, pp.123-131; co-ed. (J. Gajda, S. Juszczak, K. Wenta),

Gajda.¹⁵ Grzegorz Ptaszek, an outstanding media education expert, notes that he was among the first researchers in Poland to emphasise in the early 21 century that critical understanding of media and its broader environment is far more important than mere media usage or the improvement of technical skills.¹⁶ This observation reflects the dominant approach to the goals and principles of media education at the turn of the century, an approach that, despite qualitative shifts in the broader context, remains relevant to this day.

Research on media education was conducted simultaneously in numerous academic centres, including those in Toruń, Katowice, Rzeszów, Gdańsk, Szczecin, Zielona Góra, Lublin and Warsaw. One centre that was particularly active was in Poznań, where the Polish Society for Educational Technology and Media was established in 1996 within the Department of Learning Technology at the Adam Mickiewicz University. A key figure in this initiative was the previously mentioned Waław Strykowski. The society organised “Media and Education” conferences between 1998 and 2000. Since 2003, it has published the “Edukacja Medialna” quarterly.¹⁷

It is legitimate to assert that a turning point in primary media literacy came with the introduction of a cross-curricular reading and media education path as part of the fundamental education reform in 1998.¹⁸ Mandatory starting from the second stage of education (grades 4-6), the path had the following objectives: 1) teaching students to retrieve necessary information and materials on their own, 2) preparing students for engagement with media content; 3) preparing students for the informed and responsible use of mass media (television, computers, press, etc.); 4) fostering respect for Polish cultural heritage in the context of

Edukacja medialna, Wyd. A. Marszałek, Toruń 2000; co-ed. (with T. Lewowicki), *Współczesna technologia informacyjna i edukacja medialna*, Wyd. A. Marszałek, Toruń 2005.

¹⁵ Co-ed. (with: S. Juszczyk, K. Wenta, B. Siemieniecki), *Edukacja...*, passim.

¹⁶ M. Jaakkola, *Media re-education...*, p. 290.

¹⁷ P. Drzewiecki, *Media Aktywni...*, pp. 36-37.

¹⁸ Regulation of the Minister of National Education of 15 February 1999 on the core curriculum for general education, Journal of Laws of 1999, No. 14, item 129, Annex 1 (hereinafter referred to as the “1999 Core Curriculum”). This curriculum was amended multiple times. In 2009, a new regulation took effect (Regulation of the Minister of National Education of 23 December 2008 on the core curriculum for general education, Journal of Laws of 2008, No. 4, item 17, as amended) (hereinafter referred to as the “2009 Core Curriculum”). In 2012, today’s version came into law (Regulation of the Minister of National Education of 27 August 2012 on the core curriculum for pre-school education and general education in various types of schools, Journal of Laws of 2012, item 977, as amended) (hereinafter referred to as the “2012 Core Curriculum 2012”). As a result, media education was removed as cross-curricular path from the mainstream education system. Despite calls from specialists and social organisations, media education was not introduced as a standalone subject. Today, the core curriculum for mainstream schools is governed by the Regulation of the Minister of National Education of 14 February 2017 on the core curriculum for pre-school education and the core curriculum for general education in primary schools, including for students with moderate or severe intellectual disabilities, general education for first-degree vocational schools, general education for special schools preparing for employments and general education for post-secondary schools, Journal of Laws of 2017, item 356, as amended (hereinafter referred to as the “2017 Core Curriculum”, with the latest amendment in Journal of Laws 2024, item 996).

globalised mass culture. At the secondary school level (Stage III of education), the objectives of media education became more advanced, encompassing the following: 1) preparing students to make use of various sources of information; 2) developing the ability to organise and critically assess information; 3) fostering a passion for reading; 4) preparing students for self-education and use of media as tools of intellectual work; 5) fostering respect for Polish cultural heritage in the context of the globalisation of mass culture.

As part of the major educational reform, the general education curriculum was expanded to include computer science, a subject that shares a number of commonalities with media education. Experts expressed concerns that separating media education from strictly computer science topics (such as computer construction and operation or basic programming) might shift the focus of teaching and upbringing in the area of media education towards a more technocratic mindset.¹⁹ This issue remains relevant to this day. There are ongoing arguments that the primary focus of Polish education should be on the humanities, and that where “computers disrupt personal teacher-student interaction,” they should be removed from the classroom. Media education itself should inspire to “make students cautious towards the media.”²⁰

The introduction of media and reading education into the core curriculum of Polish schools generated considerable interest among teachers, offering them the opportunity to collaborate with colleagues teaching other subjects to achieve the goals of media and reading education. This development also acted as a catalyst for creating methodological resources (such as teaching guides with ready-made lesson plans).²¹ The responsibility for implementing the objectives of media and reading education was entrusted to Polish language teachers and librarians.²² Grants provided by the Ministry of National Education of Poland facilitated the establishment of postgraduate studies in media and reading education, in cities such as Rzeszów, Kalisz, Olsztyn, and Poznań. This provided a new, strong impulse for the development of research into media education.²³ Bronisław Siemieniecki, one of the most active researchers in this area at the time, emphasised that the success of media education in schools depends on the fulfilment of certain conditions, including the following: 1) making

¹⁹ B. Siemieniecki, *Edukacja informatyczna...*, p. 129.

²⁰ N. M. Ruman, *Media in 21st Century Education – in the Teacher's Practical Thought*, [in:] E. Smyrnowa-Trybulska, *Effective Development of Teachers' Skills in the Area of ICT and E-learning*, Studio Noa for University of Silesia, Katowice - Cieszyn 2017, p. 219.

²¹ P. Drzewiecki, *Media Aktywni...*, pp. 36-37.

²² A. Ogonowska, *Współczesna edukacja medialna: teoria i rzeczywistość*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe Uniwersytetu Pedagogicznego, Kraków 2013, p. 214.

²³ P. Drzewiecki, *Media Aktywni...*, pp. 36-37.

systemic changes in the core curriculum with a view to strengthening the humanistic tasks of the school, specifically combining media education with computer science education and creating a separate subject taught through a project-based method; 2) establishing school knowledge bases (particularly virtual libraries); 3) integrating primary media literacy with secondary literacy in practice (as part of parent education); 4) developing research on the risks posed by advances in information technology and new media (electronic media) and using it in teaching and educational practices; 5) increasing the number of teaching hours allocated to media education; 6); training competent teaching staff capable of combining media education and computer science education, with an emphasis on humanistic values; 7) publishing information and materials on the Ministry of Education's server to assist schools and teachers in developing and refining their media education methodology.²⁴

As outlined above, media education in schools failed to deliver the expected results. The key factors contributing to this failure included the absence of a comprehensive media education concept and the "dispersal of responsibility" for its implementation, caused by the involvement of multiple ministries: education, culture, national heritage, and digital administration.²⁵ In practice, the objectives of the cross-curricular media and reading education path, as laid down in the core curriculum, were not implemented. Little attention was paid to the path at the integrated education stage (grades 1-3), where it was essentially limited to the use of media as multimedia teaching tools, although some proposals for the curriculum did emerge in this area.²⁶

While the concept of school-based media education was by no means abandoned, it reached an impasse following the failure of the cross-curricular approach to media and reading education. The institutional responsibility for its implementation shifted towards the National Broadcasting Council (KRRiTV), which had previously cooperated with the Ministry of Education in this domain. In 2000, a team led by Wiesław Godzic, a distinguished media scholar, published a report on the state of media education (*Raport o stanie edukacji medialnej*).²⁷ The report recommended a shift in approach to media education, emphasising that media education should be understood, as A. Ogonowska put it, a lifelong process of

²⁴ B. Siemieniecki, *Edukacja informatyczna i edukacja medialna...*, p. 129.

²⁵ A. Ogonowska, *Współczesna edukacja medialna...*, p. 214.

²⁶ Cf., inter alia, *Edukacja medialna w nauczaniu zintegrowanym. Modyfikacja Programu "Z Ekoludkiem w szkole"* by H. Kitlińska-Pięta, DKW-4014-166/99, <https://www.sportosporto.pl/obrazy/naucza/49.pdf> [accessed: 5.2.25].

²⁷ P. Drzewiecki, *Edukacja medialna w Polsce w latach 2008 – 2011. Najważniejsze inicjatywy, główne problemy, perspektywa rozwoju*, "Biuletyn Edukacji Medialnej" 2011, No. 1, p. 64; J. Juszczak-Rygałto, *O potrzebie rewitalizacji edukacji medialnej*, "Prace Naukowe Akademii i im. Jana Długosza w Częstochowie" – "Pedagogika" 2016, Vol. XXV, No. 2, p.135.

“developing and disseminating the skills necessary for the informed and critical use of mass media across all social and age groups.”²⁸ The rationale for adopting this perspective on media education stemmed from the assumption that the media have a lifelong impact on people, but that the forms and underlying technologies are in continuous evolution, similar to the social needs in this area. As part of its commitment to promoting media education and fostering research in the field, the National Broadcasting Council organised two academic conferences: “Pedagogy of the Media” (Kielce, 18 April 2000) and “Media Education: A Necessity and a Challenge for the Future” (Warsaw, 18 October 2000). Furthermore, a panel of experts on media education was established under the auspices of the National Broadcasting Council.²⁹

As the role of media education within the school system was diminishing,³⁰ the National Broadcasting Council of Poland assumed a key role as its principal advocate and promoter. In 2008, five meetings were held under its auspices, as part of the Media Education Forum, with the overarching objective of establishing media education as a distinct and compulsory school subject. In response to signals from the European Union, the National Broadcasting Council launched the Media Education Forum, which convened seven times between 2008 and 2010 (until the conclusion of its term on 4 August 2010) at the Council’s headquarters. The meetings were chaired by Piotr Boroń, then a member of the Council. Participants included representatives from the ministries of culture, education, labour and science, as well as academics, representatives of institutions, members of associations, experts, and delegates from different Council departments.³¹ Piotr Boroń came forward with the initiative to establish the National Programme for Media Education (NPEM), which aligned with the Ministry of National Education’s efforts to develop a new curriculum reform in 2008. Efforts were made to secure endorsement from the President of Poland, Lech Kaczyński. The central mission of the National Programme for Media Education was to introduce media education into Polish schools as a distinct and compulsory subject.³²

The actions taken by the EU, of which Poland became a member in 2004, inspired grassroots activities. The EU perspective on media literacy was defined in two documents

²⁸ A. Ogonowska, *Współczesna edukacja medialna...*, p. 215. Cf. also: P. Drzewiecki, *Edukacja medialna...*, p. 64; J. Juszczak-Rygałto, *O potrzebie rewitalizacji...*, p. 135

²⁹ P. Drzewiecki, *Edukacja medialna w Polsce w latach 2008 – 2011...*, p. 64; J. Juszczak-Rygałto, *O potrzebie rewitalizacji...*, p. 135.

³⁰ Between 2003 and 2008, so Piotr Drzewiecki notes, media education in Poland had evolved into “more of a social movement.” P. Drzewiecki, *Edukacja medialna w Polsce w latach 2008 – 2011...*, p. 65.

³¹ P. Drzewiecki, *Edukacja medialna w Polsce w latach 2008 – 2011...*, p. 60.

³² P. Drzewiecki, *Edukacja medialna w Polsce w latach 2008 – 2011...*, p. 61.

published in late 2007: 1) the new Audiovisual Media Services Directive of 11 December 2007, which requires Member States to regulate media education;³³ 2) the Communication from the Commission of the European Communities of 20 December 2007 on approach to media literacy in the digital environment.³⁴ Both these documents essentially made it mandatory for member states to develop media education while also imposing related reporting obligations. A year later, the European Parliament also addressed this matter by issuing a resolution on media literacy in the digital world.³⁵ Under the resolution, media education should encompass all citizens. In particular, it should constitute an integral part of the mainstream education system.³⁶

In the work undertaken by the Ministry of National Education of Poland in 2008 to develop a new core curriculum, the issue of introducing media education as a distinct and compulsory subject in Polish schools resurfaced, in line with the recommendations formulated by the National Programme for Media Education. As part of the ensuing discussion, one of the key topics that gained attention, alongside the aforementioned issues, was the preparation of teaching staff capable of achieving the following goals: 1) fostering critical engagement with media content among students; 2) equipping them with the skills to effectively use media in cognitive activities and creative endeavours.³⁷

Once again, the key proposals from media studies communities were not implemented. Introduced on 23 December 2008, the new general education curriculum did not incorporate media education as a cross-curricular path. Instead, its creators provided a vague directive stating that “since mass media play an increasingly significant role in both social and individual life, every teacher should devote considerable attention to media education, which involves educating students to engage with and use the media in an appropriate way.”³⁸ This

³³ Directive 2007/65/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 December 2007 amending Council Directive 89/552/EEC on the coordination of certain provisions laid down by law, regulation or administrative action in Member States concerning the pursuit of television broadcasting activities, OJ L 332, 18.12.2007.

³⁴ Commission of the European Communities, Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions – A European approach to media literacy in the digital environment, Brussels, 20.12.2007, COM(2007) 833 final.

³⁵ European Parliament resolution of 16 December 2008 on media literacy in a digital world, OJ 23.2.2010, C 45 E /9.

³⁶ P. Drzewiecki, *Edukacja medialna w Polsce w latach 2008 – 2011...*, p. 64.

³⁷ E. Nowicka, *Nauczyciel edukacji...*, p. 187. Cf. also W. Strykowski, W. Kąkolewicz, M. Ubermanowicz, *Kompetencje nauczyciela edukacji medialnej*, “Neodidagmata” 2008, No. 29/30, pp. 55-75.

³⁸ Regulation of the Minister of National Education of 23 December 2008 on the core curriculum for general education, Journal of Laws of 2009, No. 4, item 17, Appendix 4, p. 207. For a broader discussion, see: M.E. Frania, *Wybrane dylematy...*, p. 83; K. Biedrzycki, *Elementy edukacji medialnej w podstawie programowej kształcenia ogólnego obowiązującej w polskiej szkole od 2009 roku. Jak w świetle zapisów podstawy programowej mogą i powinny być kształtowane kompetencje medialne ucznia?*, [in:] M. Federowicz, S. Ratajski (ed.), *O potrzebie edukacji medialnej w Polsce*, Krajowa Rada Radiofonii i Telewizji, Warsaw 2015, pp. 241-266.

approach effectively established the model of distributed media education, which is still in use today³⁹.

Despite this, after 2009, a number of social organisations persisted in advocating for the introduction of media education as a distinct and compulsory subject in mainstream schools.⁴⁰ To support the efforts of those organisation and schoolteachers aimed at achieving the goals and tasks of media education, a methodological guidebook titled *Media audiowizualne na rozdrożu*⁴¹ (*Audiovisual Media at a Crossroads*) was prepared by a team under the direction of W. Godzic. At the turn of the second decade of this century, a new generation of researchers specialising in media education also emerged, including Agnieszka Ogonowska⁴², Grzegorz Stunża⁴³ and Mirosław Filiciak⁴⁴, who began collaborating on a systematic basis with non-governmental organisations promoting and implementing media education in schools.⁴⁵

During this period, the ongoing discourse on media education in schools incorporated, alongside EU recommendations, the contributions of UNESCO. During meetings held on 9 February and 8 June 2011, the Polish IFAP UNESCO Committee announced that a document would be prepared under the direction of B. Siemieniecki. Based on the so-called Belgian Declaration, the document would include a definition of media education and justify the need

³⁹ P. Drzewiecki, *Edukacja medialna w Polsce w latach 2008 – 2011...*, p. 71.

⁴⁰ For instance, it is worth mentioning the following organisations: The John Paul II Polish Association for Media and Journalism Education, the New Media Foundation (organiser of competitions in the field of the media for students and provider of tools for creating online magazines such as “Mam Media”), the ABC XXI Foundation (initiator of the “The Whole Poland Reads to Children” campaign), and the Good Media Foundation – Media Without Violence (initiator of the law prohibiting violence in the media). Cf. P. Drzewiecki, *Media Aktywni...*, p. 39; P. Drzewiecki, *Edukacja medialna w Polsce w latach 2008 – 2011...*, p. 66.

⁴¹ P. Drzewiecki, *Edukacja medialna w Polsce w latach 2008 – 2011...*, pp. 65-66.

⁴² Inter alia, A. Ogonowska, *Szkolny słownik mediów elektronicznych*, Wydawnictwo Edukacyjne, Kraków 2006; *Telewizja w edukacji medialnej*, Kraków 2009, Wyd. Universitas; *Współczesna edukacja medialna...*, passim.

⁴³ M.in., G. Stunża, *Pedagogiczna luka uczestnictwa. Edukacja medialna studentów na przykładzie serwisu www.edukatormedialny.pl*, „Kultura i Historia” 2011, No. 20; *Kształtowanie kompetencji medialnych i informacyjnych w podstawach programowych* (with: A.J. Dąbrowska, P. Drzewiecki, Justyna Jasiewicz and J. Lipszyc), [in:] J. Lipszyc (ed.), *Cyfrowa przyszłość: edukacja medialna i informacyjna w Polsce: raport otwarcia*, Fundacja Nowoczesna Polska, Warsaw 2012, pp.192-201. *Edukacja zaangażowana: (nowe) media w projektach kulturalnych*, [in:] A. Stańczuk, I. Żerek, M. Adamiec Maria et al., *Nowe media + animacja kultury*, Narodowe Centrum Kultury, Warsaw 2012, pp.10-16.

⁴⁴ M. Filiciak (with A. Tarkowski and J. Hofmokl), *Obiegi kultury. Społeczna cyrkulacja treści. Raport z badań*, Centrum Cyfrowe: Projekt Polska, Warsaw 2012; *Media, wersja beta. Film i telewizja w czasach gier komputerowych i Internetu*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe Katedra, Gdańsk 2013; (with P. Mazurek and K. Growiec), *Korzystanie z mediów a podziały społeczne. Kompetencje medialne Polaków w ujęciu relacyjnym*, Centrum Cyfrowe: Projekt Polska, Warsaw 2013.

⁴⁵For a review of more recent studies on the transformations in media education in Poland during the period under discussion, see: A. Pacewicz, G. Ptaszek (ed.), *Model Edukacji Medialnej, Informacyjnej i Cyfrowej (MEMIC)*, Centrum Edukacji Obywatelskiej, FilMOTEKA Narodowa - Instytut Audiowizualny, Fundacja Nowoczesna Polska, Fundacja Szkoła z Klasą, Polski Komitet do spraw UNESCO, Polskie Towarzystwo Edukacji Medialnej, Stowarzyszenie Cyfrowy Dialog, Kraków – Warsaw 2019, pp. 22-26

to introduce it into Polish schools as a compulsory subject. The Committee planned to present this document to Polish educational authorities by the end of 2011.⁴⁶ Furthermore, the Polish debate on media education was enriched by the 2012 Moscow Declaration.⁴⁷ Signed by representatives of 40 countries at a conference dedicated to this issue, this document called, *inter alia*, for the inclusion of media and information literacy in schools at all educational levels, including life-long education.⁴⁸

In 2012, the Ministry of Education intensified its activities in the field of media education. This came, first and foremost, in the context of the government's work on a long-term plan for the implementation of digital technologies in education and related consulting efforts. Based on an Ordinance from the Minister of Education, the Council for the Computerisation of Education was established. The body was tasked with coordinating efforts across government and local government institutions, local authorities, academics, expert groups, and teacher organisations. It replaced the Council for Computer Education, which had served as an advisory body to the Ministry since July 2008.⁴⁹ In 2012, the government also launched the "Digital School" programme, designed to support the comprehensive introduction of information technologies into schools and improve students' access to digital tools, initially targeting grades 4 to 6, and later expanding to other levels.⁵⁰ The programme ran from 4 April 2012 to 31 August 2013, covering 402 primary schools. These institutions received a total of PLN 44 million in funding for the acquisition of modern multimedia equipment.⁵¹ Notably, the focus of the Ministry of Education shifted towards improving access to information technologies, while the original objectives of media and literacy education, first introduced in 1999, were sidelined.

The 2012 Core Curriculum reinforced the aforementioned model of distributed media education. One of the key tasks of the school, as envisaged by the authors of the curriculum, was to "prepare students for life in an information society."⁵² The core curriculum required all

⁴⁶ P. Drzewiecki, *Edukacja medialna w Polsce w latach 2008 – 2011...*, p. 66.

⁴⁷ *Moscow Declaration on Media and Information Literacy*, Moscow, 28 June 2012, https://old.sbp.pl/repository/SBP/sekcje_komisje/komisja_ds_educacji_informacyjnej/Deklaracja_Moskiewska.pdf [accessed: 5.2.25].

⁴⁸ Cf. M. E. Frania, *Wybrane dylematy współczesnej edukacji w kontekście „zmediatyzowanej” rzeczywistości*, "Colloquium" 2012, No. 3, p. 85.

⁴⁹ A. Ogonowska, *Współczesna edukacja medialna...*, p. 217. For a broader discussion, see: J. Łysek, *Program „Cyfrowa Szkoła”, "Nauczyciel i Szkoła"* 2013, No. 1, pp. 213-225.

⁵⁰ A. Ogonowska, *Współczesna edukacja medialna...*, p. 215.

⁵¹ J. Łysek, *Program...*, p. 214.

⁵² For a broader discussion on the origin and further interpretation of this concept, see: M. Skibińska, *Ocena kompetencji informacyjnych uczniów liceum – przykład toruński, „e-mentor"* 2024, No. 1, p. 64 et seq., <https://doi.org/10.15219/em103.1648>

teachers to attach considerable importance to preparing students for proper engagement with and use of media content. At the same time, however, the “media and information literacy” (MIL) programme was strongly advocated. This initiative was adopted in several countries, where it was vigorously championed by national UNESCO committees.⁵³ After 2015, the influence of political factors on media education became evident once again. The Ministry of Culture and National Heritage abandoned the MIL programme, and the National Broadcasting Council, previously strongly committed to its promotion, entirely discontinued its support.⁵⁴

The requirements for media education in schools were retained, as mentioned above, with some modifications in the new 2017 Core Curriculum. Although, according to experts, the core curriculum defined the objectives of media education in an accurate and extensive manner, it simultaneously maintained the requirement that all teachers pursue these objectives within their respective subjects.⁵⁵

By no means does this signify that the debate about the objectives and tasks of media education has come to a close. The rapid development of electronic media and social media, accompanied by the simultaneous decline of traditional media, has rendered the call for the introduction of media education into schools more pertinent than ever. These phenomena have heightened concerns about the risks associated with deficiencies in media literacy among children and adolescents, particularly in their use of electronic media. These concerns are all the more acute as young people increasingly not only acquire knowledge from the Internet, but also derive behavioural patterns and social norms from it.⁵⁶ They should acquire these competencies from adults, preferably in a structured and institutionalised form: namely, at school.⁵⁷ Consequently, a new paradigm in media education has emerged, rooted in the widely acknowledged fact that “our entire culture is dominated by audiovisual messages; that these messages wield power and authority; that it is a responsibility (or even a civic duty) for all age groups to engage with the critical analysis of these messages; that, essentially, the relationship

⁵³ M. Jaakkola, *Media re-education...*, p.285.

⁵⁴ M. Jaakkola, *Media re-education...*, p.285.

⁵⁵ Regulation of the Minister of National Education of 14 February 2017 on the core curriculum for pre-school education and the core curriculum for general education in primary schools, including for students with moderate or severe intellectual disabilities, general education for first-degree vocational schools, general education for special schools preparing for employments and general education for post-secondary schools, Journal of Laws of 2017, item 356, as amended, with the last amendment on 28 June 2024 (Journal of Laws of 2024, item 996).

⁵⁶ For a broader discussion, see: A. Adamski, M. Gosek, B. Przywara, *Kompetencje medialne uczniów i nauczycieli kluczem do edukacji w społeczeństwie zmediatyzowanym – prezentacja rezultatów projektu*, “Roczniki Kulturoznawcze” 2024, No. 2, 12146.

⁵⁷ I. Bondar, *Co dalej z mediami...*, p. 54; E. Nowicka, *Edukacja medialna w zmieniającym się społeczeństwie informacyjnym*, “Rocznik Lubuski” 2022, Vol. 48, part 2, pp. 185-194. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.34768/rl.2022.v482.13>.

between us as media consumers and media content is ever-shifting, resembling a battlefield; that our interactions with the media can enhance cognitive functions, offer therapeutic benefits and represent one of the most pressing challenges of our time.”⁵⁸ The debates on media education in this kind of environment encompass a wide array of issues, being embedded in multiple contexts, both national and international.⁵⁹ Particular attention should be paid to the issue of adequate teacher training, which should take place, as in most countries, as part of a dedicated course of study.⁶⁰ The quality of teacher training is fundamental not only to improving students’ media literacy but also to mitigating the risks associated with the improper use and uncritical consumption of the omnipresent digital media and the tools through which they are accessed.

Other key topics in the debate on the proposed model of media education in schools include the following: 1) the need to develop digital literacy (integration of media, information and digital literacy); 2) the inclusion of media education in the core curriculum of general education and its prioritisation; 3) the incorporation of the EU perspective in the implementation of this task, as reflected in, inter alia, national documents, such as the *2030 Integrated Skills Strategy*,⁶¹ which emphasises that skills, including digital skills, are essential

⁵⁸ W. Godzic (in cooperation with L. Rudzińska, M. Kowalewska, *Świat, który potrzebuje edukacji medialnej. Poznanie, terapia i wyzwanie*, [in:] M. Federowicz, S. Ratajski (ed.), *O potrzebie edukacji medialnej...*, pp. 31-32. For a broader discussion of the need for media education in the face of the risks posed by the rapid development of electronic media, see also: S. Ratajski, [Introduction to:], M. Federowicz, S. Ratajski (ed.), *O potrzebie edukacji medialnej...*, pp.14-16. E. Nowicka, *Edukacja medialna w rodzinie a zapobieganie zagrożeniom medialnym*, „Dyskursy Młodych Andragogów” 2019, No. 20, pp. 317-327; M. Bereźnicka, *Media – szanse, wyzwania i zagrożenia a potrzeba edukacji medialnej*, „Annales Universitatis Paedagogicae Cracoviensis” – “Studia ad Bibliothecarum Scientiam Pertinentia” 2022, No. 20, pp. [641] – [660]. DOI 10.24917/20811861.20.40; I. Bondar, *Co dalej z mediami...*, pp. 52-55; E. Nowicka, *Edukacja medialna wobec zagrożeń w cyfrowym świecie dziecka*, “Wychowanie w Rodzinie” 2023, No. 4, pp. 197-208. As artificial intelligence (AI) technology continues to evolve, ever more attention is being paid to the risks it poses. This is accompanied by calls for incorporating this issue in the framework of media education. Cf. M. Maziarz, *Edukacja medialna X.0 – kształtowanie myślącego człowieka*, [in:] J. Pyżalski, A. Łuczyńska, *Sztuczna inteligencja. Prawdziwe zmiany w edukacji?*, Fundacja Szkoła z Klasą 2024, pp.14-23; M. Przybyś, *Edukacja medialna i kompetencje cyfrowe młodzieży*, “Homini”, Kraków 2023, p. 59

⁵⁹ For a broader discussion, see: E. Murawska-Najmiec, *Edukacja medialna w Polsce: krajowe podejście instytucjonalne w kontekście polityki europejskiej oraz dorobku społeczności i organizacji międzynarodowych*, [in:] M. Federowicz, S. Ratajski (ed.), *O potrzebie edukacji medialnej...*, pp. 415-448.

⁶⁰ W. Strykowski, J. Strykowska-Nowakowska, *Kompetencje medialno-informatyczne...*, p. 47.

⁶¹ *Zintegrowana Strategia Umiejętności 2030* (general section), MEN 2019; *Zintegrowana Strategia Umiejętności 2030* (detailed section). *Polityka na rzecz rozwijania umiejętności zgodnie z ideą uczenia się przez całe życie*, MEN, Warsaw 2020. In the detailed section of the publication (p. 11), digital skills are defined as “a set of knowledge, skills and attitudes essential for functioning in today’s digital world, extending beyond purely technical or IT-related skills. At the core of these skills lies “the responsible use of media and digital technologies, which encompasses, among other aspects, the ability to use information (including the ability to assess source credibility and awareness of the risks of disinformation), communication and collaboration through ICT, the creation of digital content and tools, compliance with digital security principles and the application of ICT methods and techniques in both learning and teaching.”

for individuals to be able to face the challenges of the modern world.⁶² Therefore, there is no way back to the original concepts of media education. It is necessary to develop new ones that reflect the contemporary nature of the media and the power of their social influence, including their destructive effect on contemporary consciousness, especially among the younger generation.

Summary

Media education plays a crucial role in shaping critical thinking skills among young people. In the Polish system of Mainstream education, its importance is growing as the influence of media on students' daily lives increases. The article presents the current state of media education in Poland, taking into account both legal and institutional aspects.

In the legal context the analysis highlights existing regulations that support the incorporation of media education into curricula. Changes in educational policy over the years reflect the growing understanding of the importance of media literacy skills in the digital age. It is worth noticing that initial initiatives in media education in Poland emerged in response to social and technological needs and their development was often linked to political and cultural changes.

The article also discusses the challenges facing media education in school practice. These include the diversity of teaching approaches and the need for continuous improvement of curricula to respond to the rapidly changing media landscape. Emphasizing the significance of foundational media literacy, the author points out the need to develop competencies that will enable students to consciously and critically analyze media content. Supporting young people in developing these skills not only contributes to their better functioning in society but also reinforces values nurtured in the family environment.

The conclusion drawn from the analysis indicates the necessity for further development of media education in Poland, both in institutional and practical context to effectively address the challenges of the 21st century.

⁶² A. Pacewicz, G. Ptaszek (ed.), *Model Edukacji Medialnej...*, pp. 6-7.

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