Assessing media literacy competences: A study with Portuguese young people

# Details

## Year

2019

## DOI

10.1177/0267323118784821

## Issued

2018

## Language

English

## Volume

34

## Issue

1

## Start Page

## End Page

## Authors

Pereira S.;Moura P.

## Type

Journal article

## Journal

European Journal of Communication

## Publisher

SAGE Publications

## Topics

## Sample

The study involved administering an online questionnaire to a sample of 679 Portuguese students, mostly between the ages of 17 and 18.

# Abstract

Daily life is indelibly marked by the media, which create (or help to create) different forms of leisure, entertainment and work. Reading, analysing, decoding, understanding and interpreting the media and the content they convey, as well as creating and producing messages, are today fundamental competences required to deal with and manage the flows of communication and information that reach us through various media and platforms. The following study involved administering an online questionnaire to a sample of 679 Portuguese students, mostly between the ages of 17 and 18. The aim was to characterize their media access and use in their final year of compulsory education, to determine their knowledge of the media, as well as their analysis, interpretation and production competences, which were placed on a three-level scale of media literacy. Findings suggest that knowledge is at a basic level, in most cases at the lowest level of the scale.

# Outcome

The research makes an important contribution, particularly in terms of methodology, to studies aiming to assess media literacy competences because there is a substantial amount of research on access, uses and perceptions, but not on critical analysis and critical understanding competences, and on production/creation competences.

"The results, which were admittedly low and below the researchers’ expectations, cannot be viewed merely from the standpoint of the students’ supposed knowledge. It is also important to focus on the questionnaire and the scale and their suitability as tools for measuring competences" (Pereira, S. Moura, P., 2019: 32).

It is lacking is a framework of reference (national and/or European) for media competences which different age groups should develop and that can serve as a basis for such assessment.
The teenagers always obtain higher scores on questions about perceptions than on those assessing competences – it might be the difference between what they think is the expected right answer and what they do in fact know.

"In a group that has a strong connection to the media, the production and participation practices, in addition to being rather simple, are not recurrent. The results seem then to suggest that throughout compulsory education, the vast majority of these students did not gain knowledge pertaining to the media that would enable them to analyse their messages or to understand their role in society, or were not given the opportunity to do so. If one also considers the fact that the majority of students who obtained the highest scores (Level 3) are part of families in which the parents have a higher education level and a skilled job, a feature which is less frequent among students in Level 2 and even more so among those in Level 1, it becomes clear how important it is to offer all students equal opportunities to develop media literacy competences to ensure that it does not become an issue merely for the elites and for the young people from families with greater access and ability to analyse information" (Pereira, S. Moura, P., 2019: 33).

Other than just assessing and promoting individual levels and factors, more attention can be given to assessing the impact they have on individuals (what teenagers of this age should know about media).

"Teenagers should progressively build knowledge of different types of media, texts, genres and meanings; how messages and contents are produced and with what purposes; the techniques media use to communicate; media representations and stereotypes; and how the audiences are addressed and reached, how they receive, interact with and decode contents and how they use media and technologies for personal expression and communication. This Media Literacy work should stimulate ‘intellectual curiosity and the ability to ask 'how' and 'why' questions’ (Hobbs, 2017: 266)" (Pereira, S. Moura, P., 2019: 34).