Competition vs. Collaboration: A Study on Promoting Children's, Parental and Teachers' Collaborative Roles in Twenty First Century Digital and Media Literacy Education

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SUMMARY

Sports are competitive, and mathematics is exam oriented and thus still competitive in nature. However, media literacy, in contrast, is an inherently unique and dynamic subject as it requires internal critical thinking as well as a need to be sensitive to external world reflections of media. Furthermore, media literacy involves being able to read media messages as well as being able to achieve the basic competency of attaining knowledge about useful aspects of society, thus using human interaction to harness 'the living world'.

Media literacy has evolved over the last few decades by moving away from protective policies and, instead, promoting more active policies aimed at improving individuals' competencies with a greater focus and prominence on empowerment policy. In addition, instructional, competition based, traditional teaching methods incorporating exams are now thought to be inefficient and insufficient for the twenty-first-century, active-learner students of today. According to Jay Cross, informal learning in media is the most prominent way of learning. It follows, therefore, that media literacy education should be integrated both within formal and informal learning. Education must embrace the generational life-style and learning culture. In particular, it must address the younger generation's concentration on and social application of computers, games, and mobile devices (due in part to peer pressure) which focus on fun and interactive learning, and use an inquiry based model of learning. Therefore, it is essential to create a learning environ-

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ment for media literacy education at all levels by sharing the responsibilities of collaboration amongst children, parents, teachers, and educators.
This theoretical study examines how digital media literacy education is expected to develop and evolve and what ought to be the extent of each collaborator's role in this process. The term 'collaboration' used here is parallel to L. S. Vygotsky's theoretical approach. Indeed, his 'sink or swim together' concept will be incorporated within the study.

Keywords: Media literacy, collaboration, collaborative learning, empowerment, informal learning

Introduction

Some fields of expertise are competition oriented. In one of the major competitive areas, namely athleticism in high performance sports, highly competitive athletes contend against time or competitors, to earn rank or money in a pyramid system. Much like in football and science, students compete to gain the highest level or degree.

In societies where competition is encouraged, children associated competition with greater self esteem. However, in societies where cooperation was encouraged, children tended to associate cooperation with greater self-esteem. In either case, it was not some inherent quality of the child, but rather the culture itself that most influenced self-esteem (Bevacqua, 2013).

Likewise, in education, students are also similarly positioned in an invisible ranking system. However, the field of media literacy does not incorporate this perspective. Media literacy does not encourage competition amongst students, as is the case in mathematics or sports. Many of the best practices and outcomes in media literacy result from productive collaboration between the stakeholders in media literacy education.

Main focus of this "educational policy proposal paper" is, comparison of competition and collaboration in media literacy education. Instead of competition at mathematics, statistic and positivist disciplines; collaboration is a requirement for Media literacy education's very nature. This paper evaluated this 'nature' in general perspective.

Media Literacy in Contexts

Media literacy includes aspects of disciplines such as communication and media, culture, pedagogy, health and economy in order to integrate and feed off the strengths of each academic context. More than academic efforts, teachers, parents,

peers, media professionals, and other stakeholders in media literacy have roles and responsibilities in order to achieve successful media literacy education. The term ‚media literacy' emerged as a requisite for printed and electronic formats rapidly increasing inclusion of aural, visual, virtual, and anime media formats and devices in a combined context. Mobile and digital technologies operating with computer software added the term ‚digital', and as a result, we were introduced to ‚digital and media literacy'. However, actually, whether digital or analog, old or new, printed or electronic, all media forms convey information. Therefore in a meta-context, ‚media literacy' includes ‚information literacy', ‚media and information literacy', ‚digital and media literacy', ‚social media literacy' and many more similar sub-contexts.

> Media literacy is a learning outcome, conceived in public policy terms by Ofcom as a set of inter-related competencies that enable people to access, understand and create communications in a variety of contexts. These competencies can be learned and developed throughout a person's life, and they are relevant to young and old alike. (OFCOM, 2009)

Being media literate does not only apply to printed, electronic, or digital media. Instead, it is a competency useful for understanding human interaction and for interpreting the living world too. Instruction-based, traditional teaching methods are inefficient for twenty-first-century, active learners. Media literacy should integrate transmedia stories and other new forms of reading and writing to create both formal and informal learning environments.

Connecting Interiority and Exteriority

Learning is internal, and training is external. ‚Interiority' for media literacy can be understood as internal critical thinking. ‚Exteriority' can be understood as the external world represented by media. A person who is media literate can connect internal critical thinking with the external world actively by examining information through critical questions: primarily who created this message, why, and who benefits from this information? These kinds of basic questions work to determine the quality of information within a media message.

Media literacy is concerned with the improvement of skills related to information and media. Instead of focusing on unconscious media exposure, conscious information processing skills should be developed by distinguishing good information from inaccurate, misleading, and bad information with invisible goals. In addition, meaning construction must also receive focus. This skill protects us from negative effects, and provides advantages by controlling external influential forces (Potter,

2005: 37-38). Media literacy is a skill that involves constructing a healthy connection between inner thinking and the mediatized external world. Media literacy is not passive exposure to various media messages. On the contrary, it requires critical active thinking about messages.

valedictorian, champion, winner

Very Successful

Average

UnSuccessful

Informal Learning vs. Formal Education

Whether it is accepted or not, the media shapes children's and young people's attitudes, values, and beliefs. It can teach audience how to behave, what to eat, and who to believe. It is more effective than family and school at times. Age groups vary in the ways they learn. Each age group requires specific learning conditions, materials, and environments. Children are naïve and vulnerable, and young people are easily influenced by their peers, society, popular culture, and media. As major informal learning sources, mass media and digital media are highly autocratic in mind management, but appear democratic with the illusion of selection and (basic human rights of) free access to information, and free speech or freedom of expression.

Informal learning is effective because it is personal, timely, customized, and the learner is motivated and open to receiving it. It also has greater credibility and relevance. Jay Cross (2012), who is a pioneer of informal learning concepts, empha-

sizes the terms *push* and *pull*. According to his approach, learning requires internal desire not external pressure. *"Push and Pull are more useful terms for describing learning in a formal or informal way. Push and Pull get to the heart of the matter: who's in control? Training is push; learning is pull. Training requires extrinsic motivation 'You do this'; learning relies on intrinsic motivation 'I want to do this'.* Along with education systems moving from push to pull, corporations also realize the importance of pull. *"Corporations are shifting from top-down training to self-directed learning, from 'push' to 'pull'. Learning is something you choose to do, whether you are being trained or not."* (Alexander et al., 2012: 39).

Formal education classifies and gives certificates or diplomas to students according to their level of success. It rewards successful students because of their high scores or grades in a class, school and/or education system. Only successful students can reach and remain at the top of the success pyramid, which is tiny and does not accommodate many people. For this reason, the top necessitates competition amongst the most successful people, and there is no room for average people who form a large portion of the pyramid.

Professional, high performance sports use bodies for performance and eventual competition in order to win or compete to be the first and earn money. Mass sports serve the purpose of personal health and happiness with various exercises and physical activities. Traditional formal education is similar to high performance sports. Mass education as formal education serves society, but competitive or high score education serves only the pyramid of success.

Contrary to informal learning, students are taught, assessed, and classified according to their level of success in traditional, formal education, which has many faults. The notion of the student being inured to participate in competition in the classroom and education system has been criticized with impressive ideas in the film *3 Idiots* (time code: 37' 05"):

> …. You have 30 seconds to define these terms: 'Farhanitrate', 'Prerajulisation'. You may refer to your books... Raise your hand if you get the answer. Let's see who comes first, who comes last. Your time starts... Now time up! No one got the answer? Now rewind your life by a minute when I asked this question, were you excited? Curious? Thrilled that you'd learn something new? Anyone? ... Sir? No. You all got into a frantic race... What's the use of such methods, even if you come first, will your knowledge increase?

It is almost impossible not to take part in this *'frantic race'* during our educational life, depending on economic, social, and cultural conditions.

Mass media is currently in a race with formal education by means of informal mass education. Examples include films, news reports, documentaries, cultural, economic, and competitive television programs, and life styles in magazines. Beyond formal education, mass education with digital and mass media has great advantages compared to formal education. For instance, mass media features time and place flexibility for its' 'students' with no homework, no exams, and no rigid obligations. A multitude of information comes embedded in entertainment, which is quite enjoyable when compared to boring courses in classrooms. Formal education requires much responsibility, which is quite boring for students.

Mass education provides both informal learning and formal education. Formal education has been established, developed, standardized, and strengthened for centuries. However informal learning has been understood and flourished for only a few decades. For years, researchers started comparing cooperative learning contexts with competitive and individualized ones. As shown Johnsons' analysis of hundreds of studies and his conclusions, cooperative learning situations foster more intrinsic and continuing motivation, committed achievement, great persistence. On the other hand competitive learning situations show the opposite (Smith & MacGregor 1992: 16).

Integration of Formal Education and Informal Learning for Media Literacy

There is a real problem to overcome: the gap between school and informal learning contexts. Teachers are presently trying to teach a standard curriculum to students who are accustomed to passively consuming media content. Learning in the classroom requires concentration, but media attracts attention more than formal education.

> Education is beginning to fail due to the establishment's unwillingness to bend with this fact, and the drug companies are making a fortune on Ritalin. Pediatricians are denying this evolvement because it is not in their textbooks or past experience; or being drugged due to a 100-year-old education system that is not addressing an obvious new consciousness (Carroll, 2008: 11).

After school, television programs, online games, and social media receive attention from students, all of which are more enjoyable than studying at home. There is entertainment via media outlets instead of the responsibilities and exams at school. It is necessary to teach students that outdoor playing is useful for mental and physical development and motor functions. Students should be encouraged to go out and play; otherwise, they entertain themselves mainly by watching professionals, (role models) or playing games on the television or computer.

Traditional ways of teaching do not demand much from students. Students are used to digital and mobile media, group working is more attractive to them than traditional teaching. Some students value group work in learning (Ashton-Hay & Pillay, 2010: 355): There might be ‚*friendly competition*' for better learning: "...*More fun compared to self-learning; lectures are too boring but group activities are more enjoyable, more challenging and students learn more; working in groups motivates them to perform better and be more hard working...*" All progress in education and learning centralizes the learner in twenty-first-century learning.

Collaboration for Media Literacy Movement

Media literacy education has more stakeholders than the general educational sector. Parents' and other major stakeholders' joint collaboration is very crucial. This education overflows the classroom and spreads across all areas of life. Therefore, it should be shaped with a participatory culture for collaborative efforts and collective action that is far beyond an individual initiative.

Media literacy is the result of work by many different professional and organizational stakeholders. Collaboration among teachers, children, parents, and administrators is necessary as well as among associations, institutions, research centers, the entire education system, and the media system as stakeholders in order to achieve and sustain the best media literacy education initiatives. *To succeed, a curricular program of media literacy must be developed through collaboration among teachers, school administrators, media specialist, and parents, who together must build it into the systematic education program* (Potter, 2005: 321).

The term ‚*collaboration*' is defined by L. S. Vygotsky's theoretical approach with an emphasis on collective action among all education professionals. Indeed, in his 'sink or swim together' concept, all stakeholders in media literacy must be successful or unsuccessful all together (Hobbs, 2011: 98). Educators and psychologists must collaborate in the internal developmental processes (Vygotsky, 1978: 131) so that more visible learning outcomes result than from traditional education systems.

Collective efforts have arisen with online collaborative works called ‚crowd-sourcing'. This is a practice of obtaining ideas or content by contributions and criticism from a large group of people and especially from the online community. A well-known example of crowd-sourcing is Wikipedia. Wikipedia, one of the most popular websites on the internet, is a very good example of an innovation network manifesting distributed collaborative intelligence. In fact, most of the open source content on the internet is the result of collaborative efforts. Wikipedia is a success story of humanity's major collective work, and almost all of its information for free.

Media literacy initiatives require creating awareness first. Thanks to the play called *"Meet or Eat?" Competition vs. Collaboration* prepared by Jared R. Curhan (1996), this kind of in-class applications provide both having good time and an awareness of the importance of collaboration. If stakeholders and concerned people realize that media literacy is an important necessity for the students and elders of the future, they will claim and accept media literacy as an issue worth spending time, money, and effort on. After creating an awareness, we can expect the media literacy movement to become organized and to realize this goal. Well organized people can establish and develop media literacy education with enthusiasm.

Leading Stakeholders in Media Literacy Education

Teachers

Media literacy ought to be a new exploration of media for teachers themselves. Teachers should be guides for students for their daily journey in information and images of media. They do not need to be in the center of information to produce media literate children. Teachers should navigate in the deep and endless media sea and explore useful and harmful information and images together with students.

Media literacy requires passionate teachers coming together to work collaboratively towards accomplishing the best media literacy assessment. *"Teachers need to be confident and skillful in managing dialog, inspiring and motivating participation, bringing out quiet voices, toning down the loud ones, addressing conflict, and promoting critical thinking in ways that support and promote learning,"* (Hobbs, 2011: 176).

Today, new-generation students live in a media saturated world where they know and experience digital and social media content more than their teachers on some occasions. Accordingly, literacy learning is most powerful when it stems from their real-life experiences with media. *"As teachers we present ourselves to open space in our curriculums with ‚expert' status,"* (Gainer, Valdez-Gainer, Kinard 2009: 675).

It should be noted that new-generation students are easily influenced, adapted and can become addicted to digital media technology. They know a lot about the details and practices of media. Student-teacher positions concerning media literacy field experience are not found in any other courses. On the other hand, teachers should always respect students' interest and concerns. Students need to be encouraged to express their ideas and expectations. "When media literacy educators began to see themselves as a learning community, it became obvious that there was a set of shared ideas that unified their interest in teaching and learning," (Hobbs, 2011: 55).

Students

Students are more naïve and vulnerable than adults during childhood. They do not have enough theoretical background and practical experience about the living world to distinguish healthy information from bad information. They are easily deceived, and they behave accordingly. Youth hate being patronized and subjected to paternalistic dominance because they give importance to their freedom. These features of the childhood disposition should be considered with primary significance. Adolescents also affect one another. Peers actively use digital devices and social media together. Children, adolescents, or younger generations' media use generally overlaps with their study time and sleep. Therefore, this lowers their academic achievement (Potter, 2005: 12). Student-centered learning is a necessity for their micro culture of living and learning. If the general characteristics of students and media are considered as mentioned above, student-media relationships should be accepted as a primary issue and challenge. In any case, students should grow up both understanding responsibilities and developing self-confidence.

Parents

Parents need to acquire basic media literacy skills through adequate theoretical background accumulation and practical experience via parental education seminars provided by schools and media. Otherwise, media illiterate parents cannot help their children in the pursuit of their desired achievements.

The parents' primary responsibility is involvement. Parents should be involved in their children's media relationship. Also they need to monitor their children's media exposures. They should *empower* their children against professional media content prepared by media professionals. However, if necessary, they should also *protect* them..

Parents are in the center of out-of-school time with their children. They should ensure that children are not always alone with the television, mobile, and digital media. Parents should discuss and comment about the advantages and risks of the cyber world. They should warn their children never to share any identifying information with unknown people online. Parents are responsible for teaching the social risks associated with media use concerning both strangers and also people known to their children. There is a stereotypical misstatement: *Stranger is danger. Watch yourself and keep away from strangers.* Actually people we know can be more dangerous.

Role Models: The first role models for children are their parents. Mothers are the first models for learning the first steps of life, especially speaking language. This

is why a person's first language is called the ‚mother tongue'. A person can learn many languages but his/her mother tongue is a constant invariant. In a family, generally fathers are the role models for boys and mothers for girls. Parents transmit culture, and grandparents transmit tradition. Children are ready to follow, emulate, and imitate good role models. Parents should always watch their language and behavior because kids are perfect observers and learners who model parental behaviors during the learning age. Primarily, parents should be aware of their role model position, and they should help their children to select good role models for good life orientation.

Parents need to direct questions to media and media messages during listening, reading and watching mass media. Questions can make media easier to understand. Asking questions provides a chance to see various aspects of a media message. Questions are the most effective tool to consume media for parents.

Parents need to set rules and limits for themselves as well. If they obey their own rules first, then it is possible to expect the same from children because, as the saying goes *Children do not care about lips, they care about hands.* Children generally do not care about warnings, but they care about parental behaviors very much and model them in a desired fashion. Children's media consumption should be set by parents. Parents should restrict and regulate media time and content for themselves and their children. They should limit or prohibit certain programs and the viewing of violent content. They should care for their children by applying some rules. They should not allow media time until study or homework is finished. However imposing very strict rules and dominance over children can instigate bypassing rules, a negative attitude toward parents, and a positive attitude toward unwanted media consumption. Children might secretly turn to consuming more media content with friends.

Parents and children should consume media together with no conversation required. However, if there is conversation about the media content, this is called active mediation. Active mediation involves conversations with background, comments, evaluations of content, and it is especially important when watching television together (Potter, 2005: 311-313).

Instead of watching television quietly or even sometimes with a hypnotized look, parents' and children's dialogue can be useful for remaining outside the fictitious world of television. Talking and evaluating while watching provides children with the skill to distinguish fact from fiction (reality check), true from false (reality check), and good from bad (values check). These binary oppositions facilitate comprehension.

During watching or any media time, parents should criticize the media from different aspects including the ownership of media companies, where money comes

from and where it goes, the advantages and interests of stakeholders and media professionals, and critical issues of sex, crime, violence, unhealthy nutrition, bad language, desensitization, addictions, and many other issues and effects caused by or related to media.

Parents should learn program ratings and then discuss why we need them. They should also discuss the meaning and advantages of a rating system with their children. Instead of using television as a babysitter, by directing kids to television cartoons and digital games to allow parents free time, they should stimulate and direct them to outdoor playing to improve their physical and mental development. Many years ago, suburban and rural area children used to make toys for themselves. In this way their motor-functions, dreams, and imagination were coordinated all together. However, nowadays, cartoons and various video games limit or shrink children's imagination.

Parents should talk with their children about media forms and genres to distinguish the types and quality of information. When they have understanding and self-confidence, children can choose whatever they wish, and they can make wise choices in accordance with their own free will. Otherwise, it is almost impossible to prevent them from accessing bad information.

Administrations

True collaboration for efficient implementation of media literacy requires a long-term process; it is not a fast procedure. In order to collaborate successfully, policy-makers and officials, administrators, principals, and teachers need to have team spirit with the determination to accomplish the goal, and certain interpersonal skills, as well as establishing a collaborative environment. Media literacy education can be successful only if the stakeholders learn and understand the nature of media literacy, then actively support it and implement it in schools as it is required. Therefore, all administration systems from top to bottom need to operate in harmony just like an orchestra with the conductor's management.

Peers

Peers are the most similar and comparable people around children and students. They grow up together. They model one another. Children mature by learning from their peers. Peers affect each other. Here, the main word is peer pressure: children want to do anything that is popular, even if it is wrong. Media embodies an effective and persuasive position called ‚superpeer' for adolescents (Hobbs, 2011: 106). Popular

media characters, celebrities with perfect bodies, and influential figures, shape young people's understanding of life, especially with regard to sexual content, power, and glamor. The superpeer (media) stimulates and constitutes normative behavior and functions as a major role model. It has more influence than age-mates and other peer groups. The superpeer media serves as a substitute, sexual peer, which is a source of information and model about sexuality and sexual desirability that is unavailable in detail in their peer groups (Brown, Halpern, &Engle, 2005: 421).

Media Professionals

Media professionals should be trained with regard to media literacy and the effects of media on children. They should be aware of ethical and moral codes, and the positive and negative effects of the content produced by them from a media literacy perspective. Media professionals should also attend some media literacy classes with their field expert status. As a major source of information and a socialization agent, media can take precedence over the information and training provided by family and teachers.

Children are in position to view media messages produced for adults. Therefore, they might misunderstand adult content that potentially has negative effects on children. They passively look at what is going on in mainstream media. Media cultivates and trains children from the cradle to the grave. Media professionals should be aware of this position and align their content accordingly.

UNESCO also emphasized media professionals' collaborative role as stakeholders in media education in the seventh of the ,*12 Recommendations for Media Education'* (p. 3):

> Media education should be integrated in the professional training of journalists and all media professionals, include legal and ethical knowledge. Efforts have to be made in order to encourage the production and broadcasting of good quality programmes, without stereotypes.

Media professionals should promote dialogue and collective action.

Researchers

Media literacy scholars have diverse backgrounds in communication, education, information sciences, and public health, but they have a shared goal: to grow media literate generations. Academic research can help to develop a media literacy curriculum to shed light on the existing situation and the results of media literacy education. It is necessary to organize and direct the stakeholders in media literacy education.

Conclusion

It is necessary to design and propose better media literacy education for the twenty-first century's digital learner. Each pattern of media effects should be handled by an official organization for ‚developing countries at media literacy'. They should regulate the content of media literacy integrated in special fields.

Separate commissions specialized in the quality of information concerning major issues like violence, sexuality, bad nutrition, health, sports, advertisements, and more should be formed. Each issue should be researched, and a policy should be planned in the national education system. As an example, the commission specializing on sexuality may be titled as the *National Commission of Sexual Education*. It should be founded to generate curricula, moderate both education and media, and promote media literacy for public support.

Teachers should undertake their work in collaboration with peers and competent professionals in order to create synergy. The work should be based on trust and should help teachers identify their professional development needs. Combining civil actors and educational actors to help each other, it should be a culturally accepted grace and its generosity can assist in gaining the overall happiness of society.

Thus, media literacy will not exist in a vacuum. It will be affected by a variety of dynamic factors, and it will facilitate interdependent skills and competencies in order to allow individuals to fully participate in the new digital world and to become active learners of the twenty-first century. As a consequence, it is assumed that environmental influences (education, institutions, industry, etc.) will affect all social surroundings in which individual skills develop.

Rapidly developing media technologies have opened up a new era that is moving formal education towards informal learning environments. Perhaps formal education will be completely abandoned within the next century. Therefore, before going any further, it is necessary to ask ourselves the following questions first: Who are the major stakeholders in media literacy? How should we collaborate with them? Who are the key players promoting media literacy across the country?

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Natjecanje nasuprot suradnji: istraživanje promicanja kolaborativnih uloga djece, roditelja i nastavnika u digitalnom obrazovanju 21. stoljeća i u obrazovanju medijske pismenosti

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SAŽETAK

Duh sporta je natjecateljski, matematika okrenuta prema ispitima i stoga također natjecateljskog duha, ali nasuprot tomu medijska je pismenost inherentno jedinstven i dinamičan obrazovni predmet jer zahtijeva interno kritično razmišljanje i osjetljivost prema odražavanjima medija u vanjskom svijetu. Zbog toga medijska pismenost uključuje sposobnost čitanja medijskih poruka, kao i sposobnost usvajanja vještine temeljnih kompetencija za usvajanje znanja o korisnim aspektima društva uporabom ljudske interakcije da bi se upregnuo ‚živi svijet'. Metode poučavanja koje su tradicionalne, instruktivne i utemeljene na natjecanju i uključuju ispitivanja sada se smatraju neučinkovitima i nedostatnima za današnje učenike 21. stoljeća koji nastavu usvajaju aktivno. Stoga je bitno stvoriti okruženje za učenje prikladno obrazovanju medijske pismenosti na svim razinama kroz suradnju djece, roditelja, nastavnika i edukatora u odnosima i odgojiteljima koja bi bila nalik sudjelovanju dionika. Medijska je pismenost evoluirala tijekom posljednjih nekoliko desetljeća udaljavanjem od zaštitničkih politika i, umjesto toga, promicanjem aktivnijih politika usmjerenih na poboljšanje sposobnosti građana s većim fokusom na politiku osnaživanja i njezino isticanje. Ovo, teorijsko istraživanje bavi se time Kako se može očekivati da će se poduka medijske pismenosti razvijati i evoluirati i dokle bi trebala sezati uloga svakog od suradnika u tom procesu. Pojam ‚suradnja' definiran je teorijskim pristupom L. S. Vygotskyja. Uistinu, njegov koncept ‚zajedno potonuti ili plivati' bit će ugrađen u ovo istraživanje. Jay Cross navodi da je neformalno učenje u medijima najistaknutiji način učenja. Iz toga slijedi da je podučavanje medijske pismenosti potrebno integrirati i u formalno i neformalno učenje. Stoga podučavanje mora prihvatiti generacijski životni stil i kulture učenja, posebno koncentraciju mlade generacije na računala i njihovu društvenu primjenu, na igre i mobilne uređaje (dijelom i

zbog pritiska vršnjaka) koji se fokusira na zabavu i interaktivno učenje i modele učenja zasnovane na propitivanju.

Ključne riječi: medijska pismenost, kritično razmišljanje, suradnja djece, roditelja, nastavnika i edukatora, poduka medijske pismenosti, suradnja, formalno i neformalno učenje