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Media Competence in the Curriculum from Latin American Countries: A Systematic Review

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Abstract

The objective of this systematic review is to characterize scientific production on media competence (MC) in the curriculum of 33 countries in Latin America, starting with the analysis of four dimensions: geographical-temporal distribution, conceptual configuration, methodology, and the main curricular experiences and conclusions. After the identification and selection of the literature following the PRISMA protocol, 32 studies conducted between January, 2012, and December, 2021, were identified in the Web of Science (WoS), Scopus, ERIC (ProQuest), Dialnet (Plus) and Redalyc databases, after the application of the inclusion criteria. Among the findings, the following can be underlined: 1) there was a predominance of studies whose objective was to determine the presence of MC in the curriculum; 2) none of the countries had a course whose main objective was MC, nevertheless, the widespread presence of its dimensions suggests its inclusion as a cross-curricular component; 3) the region lacks studies centered on initial education, adult education, and the curricular basis of education for indigenous people. For this, opportunities must be offered to address future studies, projects, and curricular proposals that guarantee the development of critical, operational, and social competences, to face the socio-cultural demands and phenomena of the new media system.

Keywords: media competence, curriculum, media literacy, media education, educommunication, Latin America.

1. Introduction

The objective of media competence (MC), as a survival strategy, is to prepare future citizens, journalists, parents, politicians, and social leaders against the challenges and phenomena from media culture (De-Abreu, Mihailidis, 2014). From a political perspective, its inclusion in the curriculum does not intend to introduce concepts close to the notion of modernity among the curricular objectives, but to understand the purposes, roles, and effects of this type of education in the long term (Operti, 2009). This task must not be simply understood as the introduction of simple teaching instruments or the design of an optional course, but as a project of transformation. For this, there is a need for cooperation between the nodes of actors –makers of public policies, teachers, managers, scholars, and parents– who are responsible for their entry into the education process, and a prioritized treatment, similar to that received by the competences developed during traditional literacy (Kellner, Share, 2007; Livingstone, 2011).

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The curricular inclusion of the MC must deal with the protectionist and defensive focus that resulted in the first curricular experiences (Fedorov, 2008), the ambiguity of the concept, and the social, political, and economic interests that loom over the integration of media in the classroom (Landry, Caneva, 2020). At the same time, according to A. Fedorov et al. (Fedorov et al., 2016), it confronts the resistance of the printed and administrative culture that rules over the school, the saturation of study plans, the little teacher training in this area, and the need to conduct studies, projects, and proposals, at the curricular level.

Previous studies have explained that its inclusion at the curricular level, on the one hand, caters to the cultural gap that exists between the impositions of the education system and what occurs outside of the classroom context; and on the other, allows education reform, making it more open to creative and critical processes through more democratic learning processes (Aufderheide, 1993). Also, its presence in teacher training programs provides an opportunity to re-think the purpose of teaching and performance in the classroom, encouraging teachers to become aware of their habits and assumptions with respect to the media, technology, and information (Meehan et al., 2015). Given the above, the objective of the present review is to characterize the scientific production of Latin American countries on MC in the curriculum.

2. Materials and methods

The systematic review of the literature is a rigorous methodology that allows finding, identifying, and synthesizing all the research literature in a given field (Togerson, 2006). The review protocol of the present study was performed according to the guidelines established in PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses), that allow us to state, from an exhaustive and transparent approach, the reason behind the review, the process, and the findings obtained (Page et al., 2021). To obtain a general description of research on MC in the curricula of Latin American countries, five phases were implemented: 1) Research questions; 2) search process; 3) inclusion and exclusion criteria; 4) process of selection and extraction of data; 5) data synthesis (Ramírez-Montoya, Lugo-Ocando, 2020: 12). The dataset with the research process, and the general overview of the main variables included in the analysis sheet is available in Mendeley Data.

Research questions. The main research questions (Table 1) that the present study seeks to answer are grouped into four dimensions: 1) geographical-temporal distribution, it identifies the location of the authorship and the year of publication; 2) conceptual configuration, recognizes the use of the MC concept; 3) methodological, determines the object of study, approaches, research technique, units of analysis, and education levels addressed in the empirical studies identified; and 4) the main curricular experiences and conclusions.

Table 1. Dimensions and research questions

Dimension	Research questions
Geographical-temporal distribution	What was the geographical and temporal distribution of the literature selected?
Conceptual configuration	How is the concept of media competence defined?
Methodological	What are the predominating objects of study? What research methodologies were utilized? What levels of education were studied? What units of analysis were worked on and under what notions or dimensions?
Curricular experiences-conclusions	What curricular experiences and proposals are extracted from the literature? What are the main conclusions and what recommendations are detected?

Search process and inclusion and exclusion criteria. A search string with Boolean operators was applied. This string combined the terms: Media literacy, Media Education, Educommunication OR Media Competence; AND Curriculum, in the international databases Web of Science (WoS), Scopus and ERIC (ProQuest), and their corresponding terms in Spanish in the catalogs Dialnet (Plus) and Redalyc. The inclusion criteria were: a) theoretical or empirical articles, books, book chapters, conference proceedings, and doctoral theses; b) published between January 2012, and December, 2021 in English, Spanish, or Portuguese; c) those that included the defined terms in the title, abstract, or keywords; d) those in which the author indicates affiliation in Latin America, or research is performed in the Latin American context. On the other hand, the exclusion criteria included studies with specific topics such as the evaluation or curricular integration of digital literacy, digital knowledge, or digital competences.

Process of data selection, extraction and synthesis. In agreement with the PRISMA guidelines, two evaluation stages were performed (Figure 1) by the authors: a) On the first stage, the titles of the documents were read; b) On the second stage, the remaining documents were analyzed through the systematic and complete reading of the articles. After the application of the *snowball* technique to the references included in the 30 documents, another 2 articles were added, for a final sample of 32 publications (Scopus = 3; WoS = 3; ERIC = 1; Dialnet Plus = 13; Redalyc = 10; SB = 2). The documents found were imported to EndNote to delete the duplicated manuscripts and to ease their export into a spreadsheet. Afterwards, an analysis sheet was created with 13 categories starting with the research questions, for the data collection process.

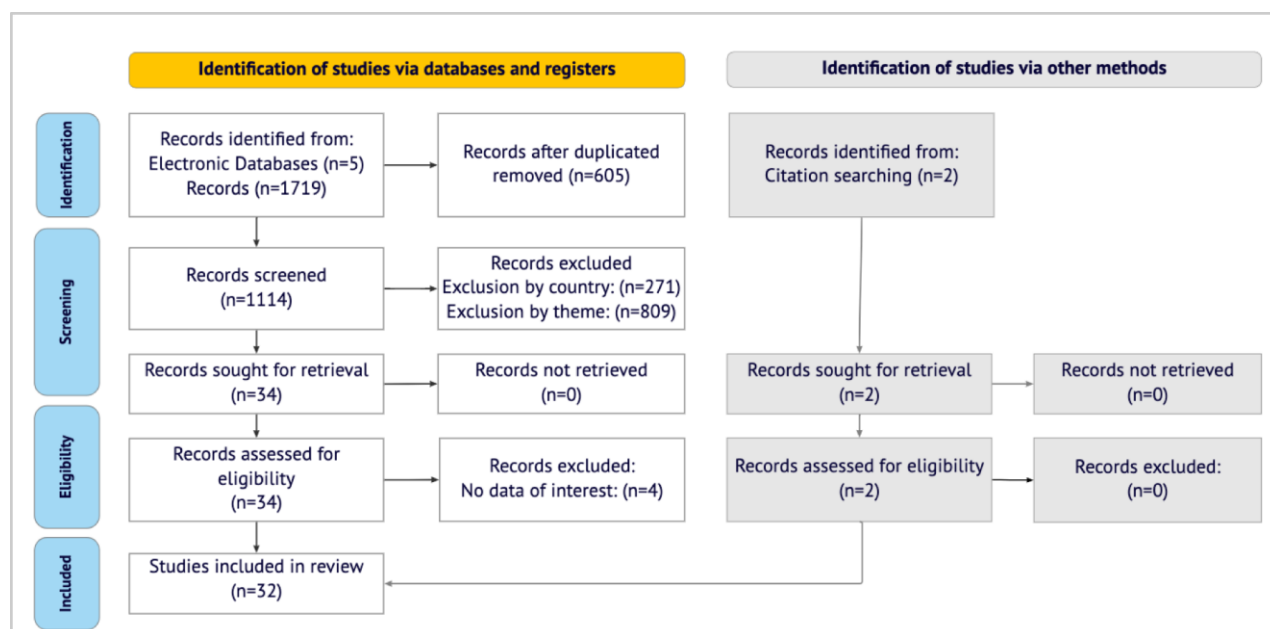


Fig. 1. Flow diagram of the search process with the PRISMA protocol

3. Discussion

The journey of the communication/education interface in Latin America began in the 1970s, with the popular education by the Brazilian Paulo Freire, rooted in the fusion of faith and the thinking of the so-called theology of liberation (Crovi, 2018). In this sense, the emancipating reflection born out of their mutual action, the understanding of the education process based on culture, and dialogue as the engine of social change, are elements from Freire's pedagogy that were directed towards communication, to forge a new field named educommunication; a field under constant tension given the interdisciplinary relationships, but always focused on the demands from the process of symbolic exchange in education and socio-community spaces (Huergo, 2010). From the viewpoint of I. Aguaded (Aguaded, 1995), the fusion between the experiences in both fields erected a field structured with political reasons, also prolific and centered on the critical and horizontal training of the receivers. This renegade movement led to the creation of theoretical approaches (e.g., see De-Oliveira-Soares, 2000; Kaplún, 2001; Martín-Barbero, 1998; Prieto-Castillo, 1998), methodologies, manuals, seminars, and situated experiences, such as the Plan de

Educación Cinematográfica para Niños [Plan DENI, Cinematographic Education for Children], which mobilized a great portion of the south.

However, despite Latin America having theoretical background that could be used to address and work on the introduction of media in the education context, it has not been able to translate into the formulation of public policies or specific practices that include their tenets, and that move away from the instrumentalist view given to the media (Trejo-Quintana, 2017). Also, this subcontinent shares social and digital divides that include deficient access with respect to information and communication technologies (Mateus et al., 2019). Thus, the present review seeks to enquire about the scientific production in this region, which is characterized by the construction of its own way of thinking. In this sense, the insertion of media education into the curriculum was one of the objectives that the Latin American countries, Spain, and Portugal, sought to consider in a systematic and collective manner with the project entitled *Hacia un Currículo Iberoamericano de Educación en Medios* [Towards an Ibero-American Curriculum in Media Education] (De-Fontcuberta, 2005). To create a framework of reference, P. Castillo-Cárdenas and L. Gastaldi (Castillo-Cárdenas, Gastaldi, 2005) reviewed the results from this project, and revealed the absence of specific courses on media education in the context of eleven Latin American countries: Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Mexico, Peru, El Salvador, Venezuela, Ecuador, and Uruguay. Nevertheless, they found cross-cutting strategies for its inclusion in different courses (language, sciences, geography, history, and technology), mainly in Brazil and Argentina. More recently, the review by L. Garro-Rojas (Garro-Rojas, 2020), which included the analysis of the conditions in which media literacy is developed from an institutional perspective, showed the persistence of the lack of legislative plans to incorporate its principles in the curricula of Latin American countries.

At the international level, the review by L. Zhang et al. (Zhang et al., 2020) demonstrated the lack of a consensus on the manner in which to include media education in the curriculum, as different countries plan its integration from a cross-cutting approach (e.g., Austria, Finland), while others possess specific courses (e.g., Hungary, Turkey). At the same time, these authors have pointed to the scarcity of reviews on this subject, and the importance of conducting them to glimpse possible scenarios with respect to the implementation of media education in formal education. Considering this point of view, the present review seeks to bring up to date and offer researchers, teachers, and public policy makers, a general view that will help in future research, resources, materials, and curricular projects in Latin America.

4. Results

Geographical-temporal distribution. The distribution of the publications can be observed in Figure 2. The greatest number of contributions was found in Brazil, account for 21.4 % of them. It was followed by Argentina (14.3 %), and Mexico (11.9 %), and lastly, by Ecuador and Colombia (both with 9.5 %). After these, we found a number of countries with a production of less than three manuscripts: Bolivia, Venezuela, Chile, Dominican Republic, Peru, and Costa Rica.

In this study, 11.9 % of the authorships were found to be from Spain, and seven publications had co-authorships affiliated to Spain as well, corresponding to 71 % of the total collaborations with individuals outside the region. This is an indication of the existing synergy between latitudes. Another interesting finding was that in the decade analyzed, we did not find any empirical study conducted by researchers from Central American countries.

As for the temporal distribution of the publications (Figure 3), an irregular behavior was observed. The data indicated that the interest for this subject increased starting in 2016, nevertheless, the last three years analyzed concentrated 59.5 % of the literature reviewed, with 2019 having the highest production (31.3 %).

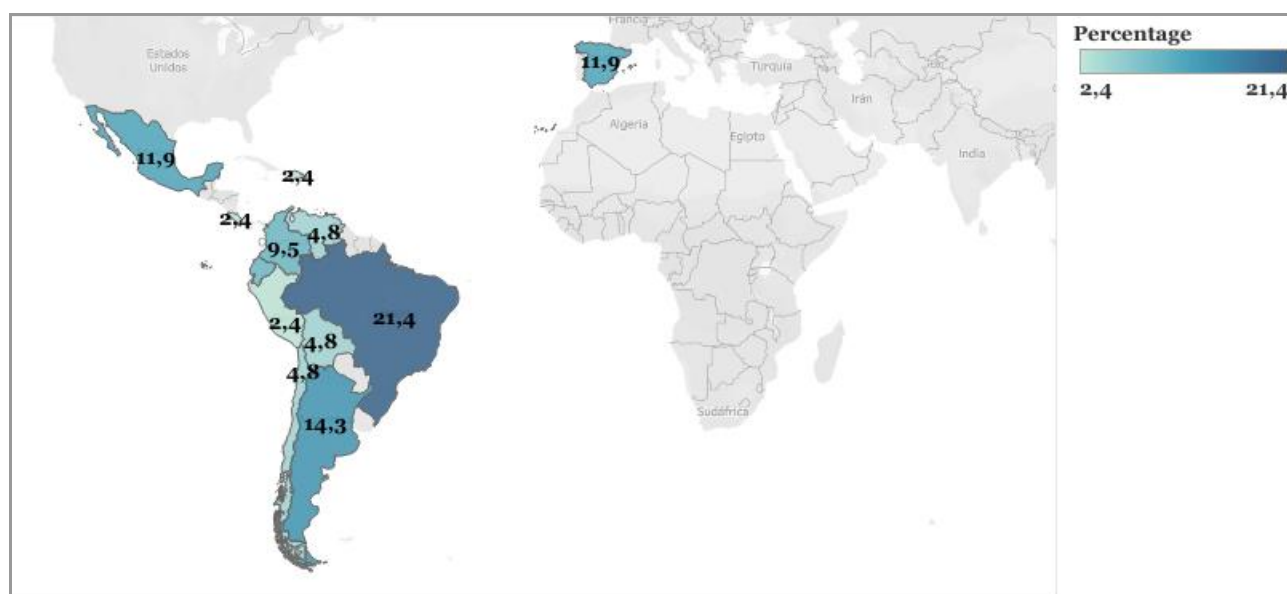


Fig. 2. Geographical distribution of the authorships

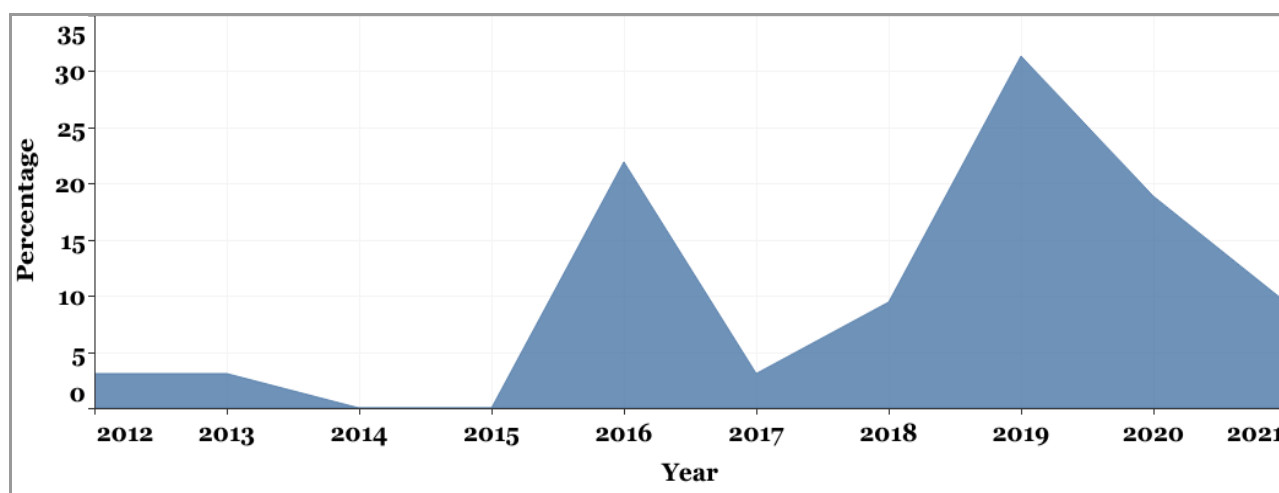


Fig. 3. Temporal distribution of the publications

Conceptual Configuration. Figure 4 shows information on the use of the MC concept according to the classification proposed by M. Spante et al. (Spante et al., 2018). Of the 32 publications analyzed, 50 % did not include its meaning, as in these studies, the theoretical frameworks were configured with the conceptualization of educommunication (e.g., see Da-Cunha-Santos, Steffenello-Ghisleni, 2019; De-Souza-Santana, Borges-Neto, 2020), media education (e.g., see De-Oliveira-Soares, 2018; Laver, Martino, 2019), and media literacy (e.g., see Zárate-Moedano, 2018). On the other hand, it was observed that the notion of MC was often defined with references to studies (37.5 % of the publications), while the less frequent categories referred to political documents (6.3 %), the definitions discussed or developed (3.1 %), and the definitions that combined references to studies and policy documents (3.1 %).

Most of the publications defined MC by referencing the research by J. Ferrés and A. Piscitelli (Ferrés, Piscitelli, 2012), highlighting three aspects:

1. MC utilizes a series of knowledge, skills, and abilities, to act in a specific context.
2. MC involves six dimensions: languages; technology; interaction processes, production and diffusion processes; ideology and values; aesthetics.
3. MC contributes towards the “development of the personal autonomy of citizens, as well as their social and cultural commitment” (Ferrés, Piscitelli, 2012: 76).

B. Toro-Castillo (Toro-Castillo, 2016) combined this view with the definition proposed by C. Wilson et al. (Wilson et al., 2011) for the UNESCO, to specify that MC “allow citizens to engage

with media and other information providers effectively and develop critical thinking and life-long learning skills” (Wilson et al., 2011: 185). This suggests that the conception of MC is based on a scaffold of perceptual, cognitive, and attitudinal structures that go beyond mere procedure. Also, it points to the education of individuals that are able to act –to have the know-how–, when facing specific situations of the new media ecosystem, such as S. De-Angelis (De-Angelis, 2019) argues in her research study. On their part, the definition developed by I. Aguaded et al. (Aguaded et al., 2021) adds an integrating character to the notion of MC, which utilizes aspects from audiovisual, digital, and informational competence.

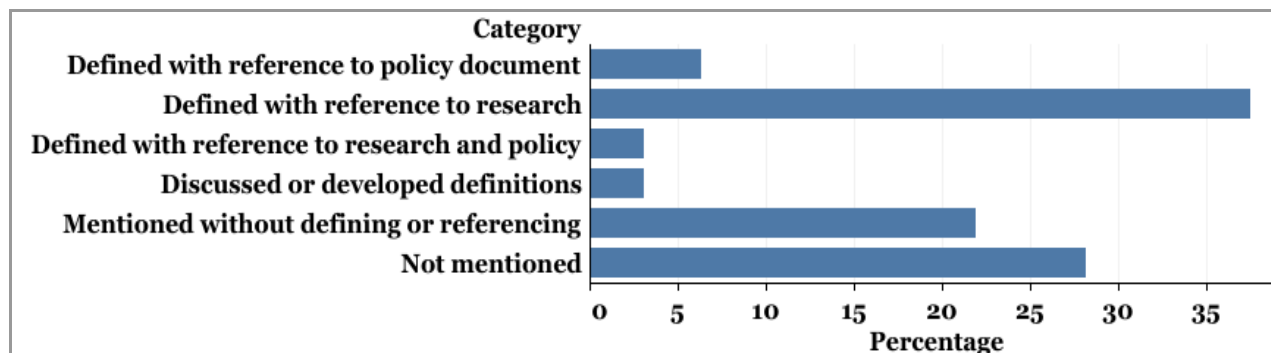


Fig. 4. Distribution of the use of the concept

Objects of study. According to our findings, the research developed in this area addresses a wide variety of objects of study:

1. In first place, we found studies that sought to determine the presence of MC in the curriculum (25 % of the publications), conducted in Bolivia, Ecuador, Peru, Colombia and Mexico (Andrade-Vargas et al., 2019; Arenas-Fernández et al., 2019; Grijalva-Verdugo, Moreno-Candil, 2016; Mateus, Suárez-Guerrero, 2017; Pérez-Ortega, 2016; Pérez-Rodríguez, Sandoval-Romero, 2013; Portugal, Aguaded, 2019; Rodríguez-Hidalgo et al., 2020).

With the same percentage, we found publications whose objective was to determine the presence of media education in the curriculum, conducted in Brazil, Argentina, Chile and Venezuela (Carvalho-De-Araújo et al., 2020; Da-Cunha-Santos, Steffenello-Ghisleni, 2019; De-Oliveira-Soares, 2018; Duarte et al., 2019; Saez, 2019a; Saez, 2019b; Seoane, 2012; Toro-Castillo, 2016).

2. In second place, the find the curricular proposals and experiences on media education centered on teacher’s education (12.5 % of the publications), designed in Argentina, Brazil with the cooperation between Europe and Latin America (Aguaded et al., 2021; De-Angelis, 2019; De-Souza-Santana, Borges-Neto, 2020; Saez et al., 2019).

3. In third place, we find studies on the presence of media and information literacy in the curriculum (9.4 % of the publications), from Mexico, Chile, and at the region level (Arévalo-Martínez et al., 2016; Catrilef-Lerchundi, Carias-Pérez, 2020; Durán-Becerra, 2016).

And from this point on, we found categories that were less than 7 % of the total: the pertinence of curricular inclusion of media education (De-Oliveira-Soares, 2016; García-Leguizamón, 2012); the curricular proposals and experiences on media education oriented towards the education of students (Cuervo-Sánchez, Foronda-Rojo, 2020; Regis, Timponi, 2016); the perception of teachers with respect to the media competences present in the curriculum (Llaver, Martino, 2019; Mateus, Quiroz, 2021); the experiences of media education that are parallel to curricular activities (Badillo-Mendoza et al., 2021; Zárate-Moedano, 2018); and the relationship between the official curriculum and the conceptual advances in the area of media education (Silva, Borges, 2020).

Level of education. The distribution of the levels of education (Figure 5) showed that research in this area was mainly focused on basic education (24.3 %), and that at this level, specific studies were found about primary education (10.8 %) and secondary education (21.6 %). These were followed behind by studies that addressed higher education (18.9 %), high school (13.5 %), postgraduate studies (2.7 %), and teacher training (8.1 %). It is interesting to note that lack of interest for initial education and education for older adults.

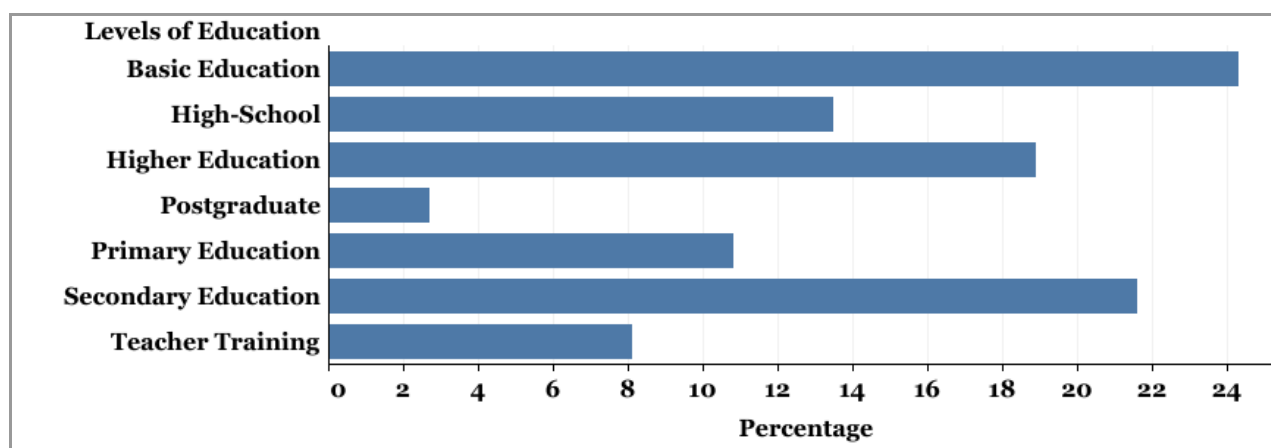


Fig. 5. Levels of education addressed

Next, [Table 2](#) shows the levels of education studied according to object of study and country referred to in the study. The studies on the presence of MC and media literacy in the curriculum, mainly focused on high school and higher education, while most of the studies on the presence of media education on the curriculum dealt with the levels of education found within basic education.

Table 2. Levels of education addressed according to object of study and country

Object of study	Country studied	Levels of education studied	Short citation
To determine the presence of MC in the curriculum	Bolivia	Primary Education	(Portugal, Aguaded, 2019)
		Higher Education	(Rodríguez-Hidalgo et al., 2020)
	Colombia	Basic Education	(Pérez-Rodríguez, Sandoval-Romero, 2013)
		Primary Education; High School	(Arenas-Fernández et al., 2019)
		Higher Education	(Rodríguez-Hidalgo et al., 2020)
	Ecuador	High School	(Andrade-Vargas et al., 2019)
		Higher Education	(Rodríguez-Hidalgo et al., 2020)
	Peru	Basic Education	(Mateus, Suárez-Guerrero, 2017)
		Higher Education	(Rodríguez-Hidalgo et al., 2020)
	Mexico	Basic Education	(Pérez-Ortega, 2016)
Higher Education		(Grijalva-Verdugo, Moreno-Candil, 2016)	
To determine the presence of media education in	Venezuela	Basic Education	(Seoane, 2012)
	Chile	High School; Teacher Education	(Toro-Castillo, 2016)

the curriculum	Argentina	Secondary Education	(Saez, 2019a; Saez, 2019b)
	Brazil	Basic Education	(Da-Cunha-Santos, Steffenello-Ghisleni, 2019; De-Oliveira-Soares, 2018; Carvalho-De-Araújo et al., 2020)
		Primary Education	(Duarte et al., 2019)
Curricular experiences and proposals on media education centered on teacher education	Argentina	Teacher Education	(De-Angelis, 2019; Saez et al., 2019)
	Brazil	Teacher Education	(De-Souza-Santana, Borges-Neto, 2020)
	Europe and Latin America	Teacher Education	(Aguaded et al., 2021)
To determine the presence of media and information literacy in the curriculum	Argentina; Chile; Colombia; Costa Rica; Ecuador; Mexico; Panama; Peru; Dominican Republic; Uruguay; Venezuela	Primary Education; Secondary Education	(Durán-Becerra, 2016)
	Mexico	Postgraduate	(Arévalo-Martínez et al., 2016)
	Chile	Higher Education	(Catrilef-Lerchundi, Carias-Pérez, 2020)
Pertinence of curricular inclusion of media education	Dominican Republic	Basic Education	(García-Leguizamón, 2012)
	Brazil	Basic Education	(De-Oliveira-Soares, 2016)
Relationship between the official curricular proposals and the conceptual advances in the area of media education	Brazil	High School	(Silva, Borges, 2020)
Curricular proposals	Brazil;	Secondary Education	(Regis, Timponi, 2016)

on media education oriented towards student education	Ecuador; Colombia	Secondary Education	(Cuervo-Sánchez, Foronda-Rojo, 2020)
Study of experiences about media education that are parallel to curricular activities	Mexico	Higher Education	(Zárate-Moedano, 2018)
	Colombia	Secondary Education; High School	(Badillo-Mendoza et al., 2021)
The perception of the teachers on competences in media present in the curriculum	Argentina	Secondary Education	(Llaver, Martino, 2019)
	Peru	Secondary Education	(Mateus, Quiroz, 2021)

Methodological approach and research technique. More than half of the studies reviewed utilized a qualitative methodology (61.3 %), followed by articles that utilized a mixed approach (12.9 %), and lastly by articles that did not have a rigorous methodological design, but that instead argued their point of view under the category of theoretical reflection (9.7 %). Along the same line, it is important to note that 14.3 % of the techniques found in the empirical studies corresponded to tools and strategies that did not fit into the previously-established categories, and that were also different amongst themselves. Some examples of these techniques were: media biography, research action, hermeneutical analysis, socio-educational diagnosis, among others. Thus, the influence of other disciplines such as psychology, sociology, and linguistics, were observed. Figure 6 shows that within 66.7 % of the research techniques, we can identify the predominance of the documentary analysis (16.6 %), interviews (14.3 %), and content analysis (11.9 %). Nevertheless, it was interesting to observe the existence of studies that did not specify the methodological approach (16.1 %), or the research technique utilized (16.7 %).

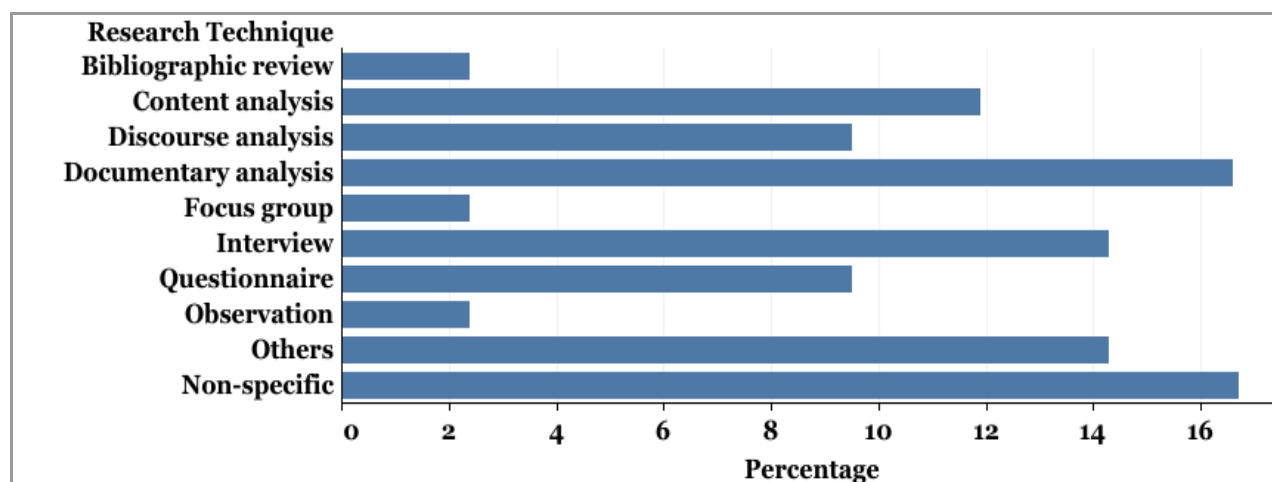


Fig. 6. Research techniques

Level of curricular analysis and units of analysis. There was a great number of studies that addressed the curriculum at the macro level (65.4 %), studying all the courses or areas present. The other publications analyzed specific courses (micro level): language (Arenas-Fernández et al., 2019; De-Oliveira-Soares, 2016; Pérez-Rodríguez, Sandoval-Romero, 2013; Portugal, Aguaded, 2019; Toro-Castillo, 2016) and physical education (Carvalho-De-Araújo et al., 2020). The study of the curriculum was complemented with the analysis of other units such as: textbooks (e.g., see Seoane, 2012), standardized international tests, documents published by international organizations about media literacy (e.g., see Toro-Castillo, 2016) and national education policies (e.g., see Durán-Becerra, 2016). As well as interviews and questionnaires given to different profiles: students (e.g., see Grijalva-Verdugo, Moreno-Candil, 2016), managers (e.g., see Duarte et al., 2019), government workers (e.g., see Seoane, 2012), journalists (e.g., see Andrade-Vargas et al., 2019), communication researchers (e.g., see Arévalo-Martínez et al., 2016) and experts in media education (e.g., see Durán-Becerra, 2016).

Notion-dimensions of analysis. If the notions and dimensions are analyzed as a function of the object of study, the data showed that in order to determine the presence of the dimensions of the MC in the curriculum, the researchers opted for using the following:

1. Languages; technology; interaction processes; production and dissemination processes; ideology and values; and aesthetics (Ferrés, Piscitelli, 2012).
2. Media policy and industry; production processes; technology; language; access and acquisition of information; reception and comprehension; ideology and values; communication; creation and citizen participation (Pérez-Rodríguez, Delgado-Ponce, 2012).
3. Access and use; critical and communicative comprehension; and creative production (Pérez-Tornero, Varis, 2012).

As for the presence of media education in the curriculum, the studies resorted to the distinction between teaching *through* the media (as an educational medium), and *about* the media (as expression and communication tools), under the conceptualizations by M. De-Fontcuberta and C. Guerrero (De-Fontcuberta, Guerrero, 2007), M. Fantin (Fantin, 2006), and P.C. Rivoltella (Rivoltella, 2002). On other hand, a smaller number of researchers decided to discuss the concept of media education following the tenets from different authors, among them, Len Masterman, David Buckingham and Alexander Fedorov. In the case of media and information literacy, the authors utilized the framework of skills offered by the UNESCO: “read, analyze, evaluate, and produce” (Wilson et al., 2011: 188).

Experiences and curricular proposals. Knowing about the experiences in media education provides us with an interesting view on the possible scenarios that could occur if it is included in the formal curriculum. In the publications analyzed, eight specific experiences were found, which were categorized under three objectives:

1. The development of content from the official curricula through the creation of media objects: along this line, we underline the projects that conceived MC as a cross-sectional component, and whose teaching in courses such as history (Badillo-Mendoza et al., 2021) and production of texts (Regis, Timponi, 2016) was promoted through the creation of videos and radio programs.
2. Performing critical reflection processes around the use of media and its effects, with practical sessions parallel to the curriculum: in this category, we find workshops on cybernetic dangers in social networks in Colombia (Badillo-Mendoza et al., 2021), and the identification of media narratives that manifest racism in Mexico (Zárate-Moedano, 2018).
3. The promotion of teacher training in media education involving three experiences: cycles of curricular complementation, and spaces for obtaining advice at the University of Buenos Aires, which led to the design of a virtual platform for the dissemination of media education content (Saez et al., 2019); the CRID project, which presents an educational experience under an educative context, which involves the production of videos and images (De-Souza-Santana, Borges-Neto, 2020); and the EDI III Workshop, which seeks to recognize the pedagogic potential of the media from a critical perspective (De-Angelis, 2019).

Likewise, two curricular proposals were identified: the objective of the first is the acquisition of MC, centered on the student, through nine sessions that encompass subjects ranging from technological appropriation to critical awareness, developed by L. Cuervo-Sánchez and A. Foronda-Rojo (Cuervo-Sánchez, Foronda-Rojo, 2020). The second proposal is the *Alfamed curriculum for the training of teachers on media education*, a curricular project shaped by ten progressive

modules that offer teachers, at any level or course, didactic units with resources and enhancement activities to freely move in the new media system (Aguaded et al., 2021).

Main conclusions and recommendations. The studies underline that the official curricula analyzed recognized: a) the influence of the media and technology in society; b) the need to grant new meanings to media objects and narratives; and c) the potential possessed by the collective interaction and participation through them. This, according to I. De-Oliveira-Soares (De-Oliveira-Soares, 2018), reflects the political interest and public relevance of the subject. For R. Duarte et al. (Duarte et al., 2019) it provides an answer to the evident influence of the principles and initiatives promoted by organisms such as the UNESCO. This has also been addressed by T. Durán-Becerra (Durán-Becerra, 2016), who believes that thanks to this supranational character, the reflections on MIL are coming closer to other fundamental rights. Along this line, the link between the initiatives of international organizations, and the association between the different local actors is recommended: parents, civil society, scholars, communication media, and governments (Grijalva-Verdugo, Moreno-Candil, 2016; Llaver, Martino, 2019).

Despite the increasing number of narratives centered on the possibilities offered by media and technology in the curriculum, it is not common to see them as objects of analysis (Da-Cunha-Santos, Steffenello-Ghisleni, 2019; Mateus, Quiroz, 2021; Portugal, Aguaded, 2019). Also, this technological dimension is mainly found oriented towards the radio, press, and television (Duarte et al., 2019; Saez, 2019b), an aspect that leaves vacant the work on critical competences and the challenges that are found in digital environment and social networks. For B. Toro-Castillo (Toro-Castillo, 2016), this scenario explains that the presence of media education in the curriculum points towards teaching *through* media and *with* media, that is, towards their addition as didactic or auxiliary materials. The recommendations urge monitoring to ensure that education policies include programs that strengthen the critical skills for their use, especially of teachers (Durán-Becerra, 2016; Mateus, Quiroz, 2021; Portugal, Aguaded, 2019).

The results revealed that there was no single course that focused on MC as the central object in the different curricula analyzed. Nevertheless, the results showed that its presence was widely spread in the curriculum, with a greater intensity in some specific courses: language, civic education, arts, and physical education. Thus, its inclusion in a cross-curricular manner has been proposed (see Grijalva-Verdugo, Moreno-Candil, 2016; Pérez-Rodríguez, Sandoval-Romero, 2013; Saez, 2019a; Saez et al., 2019). However, the courses, skills, and curricular objectives that include MC have a low mean with respect to the competences and areas that comprise the curriculum (e.g., see Andrade-Vargas et al., 2019; Arenas-Fernández et al., 2019; Durán-Becerra, 2016). In light of this, the recommendation is to broaden the notion of literacy –beyond reading and writing–, and the media –beyond the functionalist view– in the curriculum. This implies explicitly and clearly incorporating the purpose, principles, and dimensions of MC (García-Leguizamón, 2018; Silva, Borges, 2020; Toro-Castillo, 2016).

On the other hand, the studies reviewed also coincided in that the experiences in this area allow contextualizing the content of the curriculum and making it more attractive. R. Arévalo-Martínez et al. (Arévalo-Martínez et al., 2016) mentions that its implementation in the classroom promotes research skills and an effective approach towards the socio-cultural phenomena that emanate from media convergence, such as digital threats (e.g., see Badillo-Mendoza et al., 2021) and the narratives of hate (e.g., see Zárate-Moedano, 2018). For L. Cuervo-Sánchez and A. Foronda-Rojo (Cuervo-Sánchez, Foronda-Rojo, 2020) their contribution is that the transformation of dynamics of participation and communication in contexts closest to schools. Nevertheless, there is still a need for greater systematization of experiences, which have been developed from the commitment of the teachers and social organizations (Duarte et al., 2021). Likewise, V. Catrilef-Lerchundi and F. Carias-Pérez (Catrilef-Lerchundi, Carias-Pérez, 2020) consider it necessary to take advantage of the attitudes and learning acquired during the virtualization of education, within the frame of the Covid-19 pandemic, with respect to the need to introduce media literacy in the classrooms.

5. Conclusion

The present systematic review selected and analyzed publications on MC in the curricula from Latin American countries. One of the main contributions of this work was to characterize the scientific production reviewed around four dimensions: geographical-temporal distribution,

conceptual configuration, methodology, and curricular experiences-conclusions detected. After the analysis, some of the results that must be underlined are:

- *At the geographical-temporal level.* Despite the literature recognizing the importance of including critical, social, and operational competences associated with media and information in the curriculum, the studies that addressed their analysis were scarce in the region, and have decreased in the last two years. This is an inconvenience, when considering that this research line is part of other objectives, such as the measurement of the degree of MC in the population (e.g., see [Bobrowicz-Campos et al., 2021](#); [Ramírez-García et al., 2016](#)).

Another subject was the comparative studies between countries. At the regional level, it is necessary for curricular projects and proposals to be based on strategies that begin from systematic studies, and to understand different realities; these strategies must contemplate the collaboration between institutions from different countries as an essential component. In this sense, it is necessary to maintain and strengthen the existing cooperation networks that seek to consolidate a common project at the level of Iberoamerica.

- *At the conceptual level:* It is recommended that future studies pay more attention to their use of the concept of MC, with respect to: (1) the origin of the reference; (2) the description of its principles, purposes, dimensions, and levels of action; and (3) its relationship with media literacy, media education, and educommunication.

- *At the methodological level:* A key aspect, after the analysis of the levels of education and the units of analysis addressed, is that research in this area must consider the lack of studies centered on initial education, education for adults, and the curricular basis of education of indigenous populations in countries such as Mexico and Chile. Also, when reviewing the table of the methodological dimension, another recommendation is to ensure that the research designs and techniques, are specific, to guarantee the validity of the studies, and to facilitate the analysis of scientific production.

Likewise, the present study revealed the existence of multiple objects of study on this subject. It is now evident that the evaluation of the presence of MC and the curricular proposals to promote its development in teachers, are two predominant research lines. Also, this systematic review showed differences with respect to the dimensions utilized to evaluate the presence of MC, media education, and media literacy in the curriculum.

- *At the level of curricular experiences and conclusions detected:* One of the aspects that could be highlighted is that after more than fifteen years since the study by P. Castillo-Cárdenas and L. Gastaldi ([Castillo-Cárdenas, Gastaldi, 2005](#)), the Latin American curricula neither included any specific course in this area, nor explicitly mentioned it. Nevertheless, the widespread presence of its dimensions in the curriculum must be understood as an opportunity to address its inclusion as a cross-sectional component, to make the teachers aware about the possibilities offered by this new way of teaching. The analysis of the existing bibliography also showed the functionalist view that persists about the media, as well as the need to overcome it to guarantee education experiences that can deal with the new demands from the media system, starting with the curriculum.

With respect to the limitations of the systematic review, we can underline that the search was limited to five databases, excluding Google Scholar, Scielo, Latindex, and the institutional repositories from the Latin American universities, which could be used to detect more postgraduate theses on the subject. Another of the limitations was that an analysis of the historical dimension was not included, to record the year of publication of the different curricula examined, as well as the education policies and initiatives about media and information described by authors as the background. Lastly, a recommendation is made to conduct more research, experiences, and projects along this line, to discover the factors that could affect the inclusion of MC in the curriculum, and specific tasks that each of the social actors must perform (e.g., teachers, managers, school supervisors, local governments, parents), as part of the media literacy ecosystem. On the other hand, it is important for education institutions and government organizations to evaluate the importance of this type of studies, to provide more support.

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