THE ROLE OF MEDIA LITERACY DEVELOPMENT AS A PART OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION CURRICULUM

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Abstract

This contribution analyzes media literacy development as a component of education for democratic citizenship and personal development of children and youth. We analyze the features, approaches and innovative strategies of integration of media education into the religious education curriculum. Media literacy strategies can play a key role in helping teachers to fulfil their responsibility for preparing children and adolescents to use the internet, television and other media that surround them. Our approach reflects the need to educate not only in technical aspects of information and communication technologies, but also in their responsible and meaningful use. One of the important goals of current religious teaching could be to stimulate critical and creative thinking and promote digital citizenship and the ethical values. This article, showcasing the experience gathered by Slovak schools, provides insights on the inclusive and innovative educational trends within a media saturated environment of contemporary society.

Keywords: media education, media literacy strategies, religious education, ethics, curriculum

1. Introduction

Media are regarded by experts as one of the factors that determine development of an individual and contribute to personality formation. They have potential to support the process of his/her socialization, influence value orientation, and are propagators of culture and traditions. The indicated positive features balance out the negatives ones which, are usually pointed out more strongly in relation to media.

Media sphere can be justifiably regarded as an independent industrial sector; its production can be compared to industrial production. Transnational corporations produce 'media templates', i.e. – formats to be used with minimal changes within local media markets. Recipients of media contents are in the position of customers who invest their money and time into this industry; we

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speak about more than 6 trillion media consumers all over the world, but their sources are so dispersed that their power to interfere in this industry does not have the necessary go-ahead manner [1]. And media most probably realize this fact very well. Motivation of their production then is not cultivation of the audience, but the need to make further profit.

D. Buckingham talks about media as a significant, profit-making and employment-supporting industry which offers us information, ideas, pictures and statements inevitably forming our view of reality [2]. At present, media have not really given up minority recipients, but this have been possible mostly thanks to the existence of the state-owned media which have a potential to cultivate the audience. However, priority objective of commercial media is the effort to attract spectators, keep their commercials market share and be successful in the ever harder competitive fight.

The fact that media behave as if they did not realize their increased influence on actions and behaviour of the individual, should not be ignored. It is particularly serious if the individual is a child open to outside impulses, but still too immature to be able to distinguish between the beneficial and the harmful. On the other hand, taking into consideration the request that media should produce programs, which currently bring profit, the need of cultivation and education of the audience could be regarded as a rather illusory wish. Particularly in a situation when the mass audience does not expect such cultivation. By accepting mainstream productions, the audience reinforce the belief of media institutions that their program structure is adequate. We believe that the increasing appeals related to audience cultivation should be rather aimed at the activation of formal (as well as informal) education in the mentioned area. In the contemporary information, society there is definitely an increasing need of such educational activity, result of which would be the formation of an audience refusing contents aimed against morality, dishonour, primarily satisfying instincts, using emotional action to achieve required reaction.

"Media incite in the audience the processes of uncritical consumption of information and ideas processed by them with the effort to eliminate, to maximum extent, the necessity of their critical evaluation. There is also a related effort to automatize and interiorize such processes on the side of the audience to a maximum extent." [3] Also due to this, there is an increasing need of education of an individual who would be able to select media contents, identify positive behaviour patterns and implement them in his/her manifestations and actions, critically approach publicized information, refuse media production presenting undesirable forms of action and behaviour. Today, not only that is a mandatory part of the competences acquisition of which is expected as a result of a mostly formally organized educational process. Media education helps students to develop enlightening and critical understanding of media nature, to deepen their understanding how media produce statements and devise reality in them, or to increase the positive effect from receiving media statements [4].

The contribution focuses on how religious education in Slovak schools responds to the social requirement of teaching media education. It pays attention to strategies of the integration of media education into the Religion curriculum, methods and procedures of media literacy development implemented into the educational process, it focuses on the identification of objectives and topics of media education in the subject curriculum and suitability in relation to the thematic focus of a particular lesson of religious education.

We expect that the objectives of cross-curricular topics and religious education will primarily focus on values and positive value formation of an individual. It relates to the assumption that religious education will use the potential of media education mainly to reinforce its own position as an educational subject in educational process, the aim of which being to influence individual's attitudes to life, his/her natural character, lead to his/her own understanding, educate to be responsible towards oneself, others and society as a whole [5]. Religious education and media education should co-operatively lead to critical thinking development, refusal of manipulative action, acquisition of morality and moral criteria and their application in evaluation of one's actions and behaviour and in creation of the one's attitude toward sensitive social topics which often come under scrutiny of media.

The first part of the study is an outline of the situation in teaching media education and religious education within the formal school education in the Slovak Republic. The next part, with reference to our research findings, describes the situation in teaching media education within Religion subject curriculum. Furthermore, its interest is focused on the attitude of church to the need of media education, also with reference to a broader not only Slovak context, and on the role of religious education in the educational process in Slovak (primary) schools. The following parts of the study analyze to what extent the correlation of the objectives of media education and religious education manifests itself, what topics of media education are present in religious education curriculum, what methods and forms of work are used in teaching religion to describe media and what are the possibilities of innovation in this area. The described part of the contribution is an output of the content analysis of Curriculum of the subject Catholic Religion/Religious Education (hereinafter only Curriculum) approved by the Conference of Slovak Bishops on 28 October 2010 and the National Educational Programme ISCED 1 and 2. It is a binding document that sets the general objectives of education and key competences, which should be followed in Slovak state schools.

This document is also the key basis for creation of the publicly available school educational programme, i.e. of a binding curricular document that has to be elaborated in each state school. Apart of other things, it contains also the school specialization, the profile of its graduates, the material and technical equipment, strategies, methods and forms of the work at school, the objectives of educational process and syllabuses of the individual subjects. For the needs of the study, there were analyzed 50 school educational programmes (randomly selected) in which religious education was taught.

Study makes reference to the results of the research, carried out by the International Media Education Centre IMEC at the Faculty of Mass Media Communication of University of Ss. Cyril and Methodius Trnava in 2011–2012. The authors of the study are IMEC members. 567 primary schools took part in the research out of the total number of 660 approached schools, funded by the local self-government, Church or other legal entity. When summarizing the research results and their interpretations the type of school was considered, i.e. if it is a state, church or private school.

For the needs of this study, the methodology teachers of the Catholic Pedagogic and Catechistic Centre and ten diocesan catechistic offices working within the identical number of Slovak archdioceses, dioceses, eparchies were approached. The Catholic Pedagogic and Catechistic Centre provides further education of employees of the Catholic schools and religious education teachers at state schools. In cooperation with diocesan and monastic education offices and diocesan catechistic offices in Slovakia, the mentioned institutions provides professional, methodology-counselling and spiritual formation of catechists and religious education teachers and regulates the teaching of Catholic religious education. The mission of these institutions is also the elaboration of methodological materials, school textbooks and other publications for teaching religion.

The authors narrowed down their interest to primary school system. It is the period when from the viewpoint of specifics of his/her development the individual starts to distinguish fiction from reality and the perception of media contents gradually approaches to the perception of an individual adult. Primary school has an essential impact on his/her personality also in the critical period of pubescence – the individual fights for acknowledgement in the group of persons of the same age, part of which is also orientation in media contents, whereas respect is often won by watching media programs improper for his/her age; a child goes through the crisis of the Real Self and the Ideal Self, looks for models (he/she often lets inspired just by people who for various reasons are an interesting object for media) and identifies with them, which can mean a risk for building and forming the own identity of a pubescent. An increased inclination of adolescents to conformity is also problematic.

The selection of exclusively state primary schools was motivated by the intent to create a homogenous sample of school educational programmes, as church schools have a different concept of education. The concentration of interest on Catholic religion is motivated by the predominant religion of Slovak inhabitants. According to the data from the last census (of 2011), 62% of Slovak inhabitants (3,347,277) described themselves as Roman Catholic and 3.8% as Greek Catholic (206,871) which is totally 65.8% of Catholic religion population. The second was Evangelic Church – 5.9% of population declaring themselves as Evangelic (316,250) [*Obyvateľstvo SR podľa náboženského vyznania – sčítanie 2011, 2001, 1991*, online at http://www.scitanie2011.sk/neprehliadnite/ slovenska-republika-tabulky]. The statistical data are reflected also in the teaching of religion at primary schools – whereas the Catholic religion is usually

taught in every year of study, the teaching of evangelic religion merges not only several years, but often also several neighbouring schools.

2. Religious education and media education: possibilities of integration

A conceptual approach to media education within the formal education in the Slovak conditions can be mentioned only from the school year 2008/09. Such a late interest in media education (which in Western countries can be observed from the 1970th) cannot be convincingly excused by social and political backgrounds. Since the democratic changes, through which the Slovak society went from the turn of the 80th and 90th, the institutional education has not used many opportunities of reform processes to start working seriously on the issue of media education. In 1999, S. Brečka stated that: "The current situation in media education in Slovakia is rather unclear and ambiguous. In the first place, there is missing relevant information about its development and the current status. We only know that the Ministry of Education of the Slovak Republic 'is considering' possible the integration of media education in the curriculum. On one hand, we cannot talk about institutionalization of media education in Slovakia, because up to now there were no serious attempts to integrate it in the curriculum. On the other hand, it cannot be stated that pupils and students at Slovak primary and secondary schools learn absolutely nothing about media." [6]

Media education gained the statute of a fully-fledged component of the education at Slovak schools only after the adoption of the Education Act in September 2008. Currently, media education is included in the National Educational Programme as a compulsory cross-curricular topic. The above mentioned implies an obligation for the schools on the territory of the Slovak republic to implement in their school educational programmes the topic of media education, which means that in various forms it should be an integral part of various subjects curricula. The National Educational Programme defines media education through objectives at which the teaching should be aimed. Besides other things, there is emphasized the need of a meaningful, critical and selective use of media and their products, the ability to find valuable contents in media, to evaluate media messages, to distinguish positive and negative media influences, to eliminate negative effects of media, to acquire an ability to handle various types of media in a competent way [*Štátny vzdelávací program pre 2. stupeň základnej školy v Slovenskej republike. ISCED 2 – nižšie sekundárne vzdelávanie*, online at http://www.statpedu.sk/sk/Statny-vzdelavaci-program/Statny-vzdelavaci-program-pre-2-stupen-zakladnych-skol-ISCED-2.alej].

However, the National Educational Programme contains a certain incongruity – the state allows the schools to teach media education either as a separate subject, or in the form of a project or as a part of syllabus of another subject. With reference to the results of our research, it can be argued that out of the set of 567 primary state schools, media education is taught as a separate

subject in 187 schools (33%), the form of a project is preferred by 130 schools (23%) and an integral part of syllabus of another subject was reported by 245 schools (44%).

After the mentioned reform of education in Slovakia, religious education is a part of the educational area Human Being and Values. At state schools, this subject alternated with Ethical education. Its curriculum is approved by the Conference of Slovak Bishops in accordance with the Slovak-Vatican agreement. "The subject Religious Education forms in a human being religious thinking, conscience, religious profession and personal faith as a personal manifestation of religious thinking and an integral part of man's identity." [*Štátny vzdelávací program pre prvý stupeň ZŠ, Človek a hodnoty*, online at http://www.statpedu.sk/sk/Statny-vzdelavaci-program/Statny-vzdelavaci-program-pre-1-stupen-zakladnych-skol-ISCED-1/Clovek-a-hodnoty.alej]

In the religious area, an obvious interest in media education and consciousness of potential risks related to an unprecedented explosion of media contents of low quality level, which often attack dignity of individual and human values, can be observed. Herein should be mentioned several of church's documents pointing out the need to pay special attention to the increasing media influence (either in positive or negative sense) and the need of media education itself.

The Church called on media education already during the second Vatican Council in 1963 in the Decree on the Media of Social Communications Inter Mirifica. The very Catechism of Catholic Church points out the significant role of the media in social communications in modern society, it emphasizes that mass media themselves can influence the audience to passive consumption of media contents, and it appeals to responsibility when spreading information, for an effort to act upon public opinion with the intent of moral formation [*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, online at http://www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/what-we-believe/catechism/catechism-of-the-catholic-church/epub/index.cfm].

An implicitly defined role of media education can be noticed in the message of Pope Benedict XVI to the 41th World Communications Day. It includes an appeal for a positive conception of media education in the sense of the need to acquaint young generation with what it is aesthetically and morally high-level, thus enabling children and youth to develop the ability to evaluate, deliberate and be able to distinguish [*Message of the Holy Father Benedict XVI for the 41st World Communications Day. Children and the Media: A Challenge for Education*, online at http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/messages/communications/documents/hf_ben-xvi_mes_20070124_41st-world-communications-day_en.html]. It is obvious that media education in cooperation with religious education have a significant potential to contribute to the formation of a morally thinking individual who is not only capable of distinguishing good from evil, but also of contributing to the very spreading of good within the process of the socialization.

With reference to Church's interest in this issue, but also to the proclaimed intent to efficiently utilize media channels to spread the word of God, it was expected that Catholic Church would use the reform process of Slovak schools, and an adequate attention when creating Curriculum of the subject Catholic Religion/Religious Education would be paid just to the possibility (and at the same time obligation) to implement the compulsory cross-curricular topic of media education into the religious education curriculum.

3. Discussion

The diocesan catechistic centres approached within the research stated that media education is a compulsory part of teaching within cross-curricular topics at church schools in Slovakia. Based on this information about compulsory inclusion of media education in teaching we could assume that schools pay adequate attention to this issue. Nevertheless, our research brought the finding that only 12% out of the total number of 567 schools integrate media education into religious education. Moreover, this data can be distorted, as the experience of the authors of study indicates a remarkable terminological ambiguity. Many teachers and school principals incorrectly understand the term 'teaching media education' as 'using media as teaching tools'. These are cases when an interactive board, data projector, notebook and alike are used in class. However, using media technologies as teaching tools/instruments is not media education.

We found out that the disproportion between the declared intent to integrate media education into the educational content of religious education and the real status of the integration is mainly related to insufficient education of Religion teachers in the area of media education. In most cases, the religious education teachers, as teachers of other subjects, did not attend any education in the area of media education, not only in terms of theoretical, but also didactic learning of the topic. The IMEC research shows that only 39 schools (7%) stated that their teachers attended educational forms focused on the issue of media education. The diocesan catechistic centres and Catholic accredited educational programme focused on how to integrate media education into the religious education subject or some of other subjects. For religious education teachers there are organized seminars on methodology that have a rather general orientation and do not pay special attention to media education. It results from our research that lectures or seminars that do not have a thematic orientation on media literacy enhancement, cannot most probably guarantee a relevant methodological and didactic support for the teaching of media education within religion, which would aim at an efficient fulfilment of the objectives of educational process.

The task of religious education is to develop child's competences for personal and society life; this subject encourages him/her to adopt good attitudes and values. One of the intents of media education is undoubtedly also "the formation of such qualities and skills in contact with media that allow an

individual versatile development of human personality; an example of such formation is the correct selection of media contents so they serve the development of the personality. Another objective is to point out the threats that come from media in relation to human personality." [7] It is obvious from the mentioned that religious education can, in case of thought-out and conceptual procedure of media education implementation into its curriculum, influence positive formation of an individual. A young person with a certain level of media literacy is aware of his/her dignity, and responsibility towards himself and his surroundings. From this postulate he would critically approach media contents attacking moral and universal human values. The knowledge gained during the analysis of our research's results indicates the need to innovate the objectives and the content of teaching religion towards the media-educational action.

The methodology teachers of diocesan catechistic centres approached in the research, in relation to the objectives of media education as a part of the religion curriculum, gave their general opinion – the objectives display a moral value and a religious nature. In this context, it is necessary to add that the analyzed school educational programmes transform the objectives of media education into the form of so-called performance standards. The performance standards determine at what minimum level should be the issue of media education mastered by pupils, on a cognitive or skilful way.

However, the performance standards of media education – as a part of religious education – were adopted by many schools only formally. They often did not take into consideration the thematic orientation and the objectives of the Religion curriculum. However, our analysis of the performance standards indicated a clear interest of teachers toward the objectives of religious education and media education.

Some examples of specific performance standards of media education, corresponding to the nature and objectives of religious education, can be presented.

The pupil:
- identifies methods of news spreading in a model example of the biblical event about the death of Jesus;
- identifies the importance of news as message;
- identifies artworks growing from Christianity;
- develops sensitivity to prejudice and media manipulation;
- is able to critically judge liberalism as relativization of values;
- is capable of an independent reflexion about positive and negative influences of media;
- learns to have critical approach to information;
- starts to understand the rules of media world and, adequately to age, is well oriented in it;
- distinguishes between fiction and reality;
- learns criteria for evaluation of media genres [*Kurikulum predmetu katolícke náboženstvo/náboženská výchova. ISCED 1, 2*, online at

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http://www.kpkc.sk/data/reforma/kurikulum-ZS-SS.php].

Some of the mentioned standards are predominantly oriented toward acquisition of cognitive competences and are more appropriate for theoretically oriented subjects. The general nature of other standards delegates responsibility to the teacher who should specify the objective of the cross-curricular topic compatible with the objectives of the subject. It is true that in such performance standards there are usually contained objectives of media education (and other cross-curricular topics). Apparently, that cannot be considered sufficient, particularly in the context of the insufficient education of religion teachers in the area of media education.

The religious education curriculum is based on an advantageous principle of spiral structure, which means that the acquired knowledge and competences and the acquired skills are further deepened and consolidated by a pupil each year. This principle is passed on also to the cross-curricular topic.

Based on the analysis of Curriculum it is stated that media education can be advantageously implemented into the religious education curriculum in each year of primary school. At least one topic of religion in each year has an explicit reference to media education – it happens through reference to performance standard. However, the results of our research show that the potential of some topics to implement media education into their content remained unutilized in Slovak schools. For example, let us state the topic 'Who am I?' (for 8-year-old children) within which it should be explained to children, *inter alia*, the terms self-esteem, self-acceptance, complexes. This topic related to media education seems to be suitable for work with youth magazines presenting an ideal appearance of a girl and a boy. Regarding the fact that in pubescence there is a collision of Real and Ideal Self, cooperation of those two topics could be useful for elimination of a disparaging self-image. Older pupils of primary school go through a complicated development stage for which changes in the identity of an individual are characteristic. Typical is an increased interest in their appearance. As the authority of parents and teachers decreases, pubescents seek a new authority – a role model with whom they could identify. A significant value for them becomes the acknowledgement from persons of the same age, particularly regarding their external appearance and often the behaviour. It is obvious that, in this period a pubescent is more sensitive to the pressure of media that introduce to him/her various models and patterns of behaviour and action in given situations. Therefore we consider necessary that religious education should not ignore media education and in cooperation with it should lead an individual to critical thinking, refusal of manipulation and subordination to undesirable social (and also media) pressure.

Not all school educational programmes include the topics of media education into the religious education curriculum. Almost half of the analysed school educational programmes restrict themselves to a reference to the cross-curricular topic and its relation to the topical unit of individual subjects, or they choose a different approach, i.e. within the religious education curriculum in some topics they make a reference to media education, however, without any

specification of the topic or at least its performance standard. It often results in an incomprehensible assigning of media education to a topic of religion. For illustration of such procedure let us state the topic titled The Gift of Love in the 1st year of primary school. As a performance standard in relation to this topic is the child's ability to describe the event of Annunciation using pictures, to reproduce the prayer with teacher's help, to describe goodness of Saint Nicholas or to name at least four disciples [*Školský vzdelávací program. 1. ročník*, online at http://www.jakubany.bross.sk/?skvp, 39]. In the mentioned approach to the specification of an interconnection of the carrier subject and the cross-curricular topic, but also in the illustrative case, it seems that it is a rather formal fulfilment of the requirement to implement media education into the subject curriculum.

In other school educational programmes, topics of media education implemented into the religion curriculum can be noticed. However, not all mentioned topics are relevant in relation to media education and they rather confirm an insufficient ability of teachers to distinguish between media education (as education in competent handling of media and their contents) and use of media as teaching aids. A frequent topic in this context is projection of films with religious themes. However, the explicitly stated topics of media education include also such topics which can be considered relevant, adequately complementing subject orientation of religious education and its objectives:

- media and real heroes;
- abuse of authority by media;
- my role models;
- reality show outside reality;
- (media) good and evil – distinguishing between good and evil;
- violent media contents;
- media and values;
- festive day with TV and without TV;
- pseudo reality of a film character;
- truth and media;
- church and media;
- the world of good and evil;
- truth or lie;
- quest for truth about oneself and others.

If media education is accepted as a relevant component of another subject curriculum and its teaching are efficient, it assumes a suitable choice of strategies, methods and forms of work – those are determined by the defined objectives. All the analyzed documents mention teaching methods and forms and teaching aids and materials only very generally, at the beginning of the document, without any further specification in relation to the particular topic.

Exclusively based on the described means of education it can be argued that religious education reflects the requirement of 'humanization' of a school system, where a pupil is not any more a passive object of an educational action, but actively participates in educational process. The educational process is

conducted using methods such as discussions, role plays, cases study and cooperative learning. Besides them, problem solving methods, particularly the heuristic method, have a significant representation.

The declared intent of religious education is to teach pupils to critically think critically which "means distinguishing between what is accepted by society and what is really the moral good for an individual as well as for the whole society" [J. Hurajtová, *Začlenenie výchovy k manželstvu a rodičovstvu do projektu nových učebných osnov*, online at http://www.kpkc.sk/data/reforma/kurikulum-ZS-SS.php]. In relation to this intent, in the analyzed documents, there are recommended some methodological procedures supporting critical thinking development (most often dramatization, brainstorming and cooperative learning), but their application does not seem to be conceptual, as there is no mention of the three-phase ERR (Evocation-Realization of Meaning-Reflection) teaching model as the key strategy for critical thinking development.

The type of teaching tools recommended for class are not mentioned in the analyzed documents. However, the answers of methodology teachers of the diocesan catechistic centres show that the use of teaching tools for media education depends mainly on the infrastructure of schools. If a school is equipped with modern information and communication tools, teachers of religious education are instructed to use them. It should be also important that a pupil within religious education acquires a competence to use information and communication technologies with the intent of high-quality, beneficial and efficient communication [*Profil absolventa nižšieho sekundárneho vzdelávania*, online at: http://www.kpkc.sk/data/reforma/kurikulum-ZS-SS.php]. Another goal of media education is fulfilled in this way.

4. Conclusion

Religious education belongs among the subjects that primarily participate in the formation process of moral values of a young person. Therefore, it is expected that religious education will not give up the opportunity to implement media education into its curriculum. Particularly (the current) production of daily series or reality shows, but ultimately also (commercial) news service focused on negativism and emotionality are a certain reflection of the changed value systems of the whole society. And just there is a space for an advantageous but also necessary cooperation of media education and religious education.

Based on analyses of the Curriculum and school educational programmes it can be argued that in spite of occasional lapses into generalizing level, religious education shows an obvious ambition to adapt media education as a cross-curricular topic to its priority intents – i.e. goal-directed formation of values of an individual, and his personality development in the spirit of Christian values and principles.

The topics of media education implemented by the analyzed documents into the curriculum of the subject have an ambition to eliminate the negative impact of media on the moral and spiritual development of a child and an

adolescent; at the same time to lead him to select and receive valuable media contents and to refuse any contents deceiving and belittling human dignity. On the other hand, it should be noted that some school educational programmes took over the topics of media education from its teaching contents mechanically, shallowly, without having in view their mutual correspondence with the topics of religious education and disregarding the defined objectives of the subject.

The analysis of binding curricular documents, supported by the answers of methodology teachers of the Catholic Pedagogic and Catechistic Centre, indicate that religious education is interested in those topics and objectives primarily pursuing the intent to regulate mental attitudes of an individual, create his value orientation in the spirit of respecting human values and encourage him to think about the issues of his own and broader social good. However, the analysis confirmed also the ambition of religious education to incite an individual to acquire competences of responsible orientation in the information world and to identify manipulative actions. Within this effort it is particularly important to also take into consideration, apart from orientation on traditions and values, changes in the lives of children and young people related to modernization and technological progress. "We are surrounded by digital artefacts, accumulating an astonishing quantity of data and information of every kind." [8] The communication possibilities alone are completely different nowadays compared to the past, not mentioning the information availability through the Internet. "The principal question of the on-line identity of young people is whether their 'obsession' by virtual communication influences also their face-to-face relationships. The on-line generation do not perceive communication through social networks and chatting as an additional activity or entertainment, but rather as a necessary part of their social existence." [9]

If religious education with the cross-curricular topic does really head towards achievement of the declared intents, then it should, within its own curriculum, pay more attention to media education, and consider it only as another compulsory cross-curricular topic. However, the (current) offer of Catholic Catechistic Centres does not include any trainings and education focused primarily on the mentioned area. The integration of media education into school practice often remains at formal level. There is missing a specification of conceptually conceived strategies and methods supporting development of a critical approach to media contents. Organization, forms and methods of teaching are not a mandatory part of the general part of school educational programmes and are not formulated in relation to the needs of media education. The insufficient preparation of teachers in the area of media education, it is considered to be a critical issue for the successfulness media literacy at Slovak schools.

In the above mentioned context, we recommend to elaborate a series of methodological materials into which media education can be integrated, to formulate the objectives of media education compatible with the objectives of the subject. We propose to proceed identically when formulating the content and performance standard of the school curriculum with the aim to recommend

suitable methodical procedures focused on critical thinking development within the three-phase ERR teaching model. At the same time, we recommend to propose suitable media communicators and tools as the basis for teaching media education as a cross-curricular topic integrated in other subjects.

The findings of our research will be used to formulate didactic and methodological recommendations for implementing media education into the religion curriculum and also to specify the themes of educational activities of religion teachers. Based on the up-to-now performed activities we can express an assumption that teaching of media education will not show signs of success in the absence of conceptual approaches, strategies and methods which would support media literacy development in the context of various subjects. As the key success factor, we regard the interest of teachers to lead children to a responsible and meaningful use of media, stressing the need to develop their positive value potential, and the resulting interest of teachers to master didactic procedures stimulating critical thinking and failure-free orientation in media contents.

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