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Doctoral Thesis

Media Literacy as an Instrument for Promoting the Public Sphere

A case study in Georgia (2018-2019)

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1. INTRODUCTION

Influences of mass media on societies have been a subject of inquiry for many decades. One of the authors suggesting an original theory of interrelation of the media and the public was Jurgen Habermas, who offered a concept of the *public sphere* and analyzed the effects of the developments in media and communication technologies on public life throughout history.

Jurgen Habermas's theories of the public sphere have been a subject for diversified discussions in various disciplines since the publication of his fundamental work *The Structural Transformation of the Bourgeois Public Sphere* in 1962 (translated into English in 1989). In his work Habermas presents a concept of the *public sphere* of citizens emancipating from state domination and contributing to formulation of public opinion through rational-critical debate which eventually affirmed its place in political realm. The major role in Habermas's analysis over the rise and fall (*refeudalization*) of the public sphere play the mass media and its transformations since the early forms of the press up to the *new media*.

Habermas's analysis of the invasion of the public sphere by the political and economic interests and it's *refeudalization* found continuation in his later *Theory of Communicative Action* (1984, 1987) with the discussion over the *systemic colonization of the lifeworld*, where the author suggests a model of free and rational communicative action as basis for rebuilding the public sphere. While discussing the theories of communicative action, Habermas downplayed the role of the media and centered his analysis on the interpersonal, face-to-face communication. However, authors such as Douglas Kellner (2000) suggest that Habermas later himself recognized that in the current era of technological revolution, interaction and communication, precisely the media play the increasingly important role in the economic and politic structure which Habermas defines as the *system*.

Jurgen Habermas's analysis over the rise and *refeudalization* of the public sphere have been widely debated and criticized as well. In his later publications Habermas himself admitted certain gaps in his analysis and offered further clarifications over his discussions; however, he preserved the validity of his historical argument.

The development of mass media plays the key role in Habermas's discussions over the emergence, as well as the decline, of the public sphere. Throughout *The Structural Transformation of the Bourgeois Public Sphere* the evolution of mass media is discussed in the closest affiliation with the evolution of the public sphere. Starting from the early forms of press and through the processes leading to the establishment of journalism as *the fourth estate*, Habermas focuses his analysis on the role of print media among major arenas of public's rational-critical debate. Author further analyses the interrelations of media and the public sphere after the development of electronic media such as radio and television and directly links the decline of the public sphere with the rise of consumer-oriented mass media. In Habermas's analysis, the need for immense funds turned the media into *the gate through which privileged private interests invaded the public sphere* which turned a public critically reflecting on its culture into a manipulative publicity and resulted in the *refeudalization* of the public sphere.

As Habermas centers his analysis of the *refeudalization* of the public sphere on the issues related to media manipulation and media's influences on societies, the following thesis aims at inquiring if media literacy education could be potentially viewed as an effective instrument for the promotion of the public sphere, as suggested by Jurgen Habermas.

1.1 Objective of the study and the research question

The major objective of the following research is to inquire the potential effects of media literacy education on media's influences on a society, based on Habermas's model of the public sphere. Correspondingly, the thesis intends to suggest answers to the following research question:

How can media literacy education serve as an instrument for promoting the public sphere?

The structure of the following thesis is based on the theoretical model of consolidating Jurgen Habermas's theories of the public sphere and communicative action as well as Douglas Kellner's arguments concerning the role of the media in Habermas's analysis over the *refeudalization* of the public sphere and the *systemic colonization of the lifeworld* and to seek to understand if media literacy education could be discussed as a potential promoter of the public sphere, as defined by Habermas. For this purpose, the effects of media literacy interventions have been analyzed in relation to Habermas's theories of the public sphere and communicative action.

1.2 Justification

Jurgen Habermas's theories of the public sphere have been discussed and analyzed from various angles in various disciplines, evidently including the disciplines related to media and communication studies. On the other hand, the theories of media literacy have been intensely examined with the special focus on the role of media literacy on the modern publics precisely. However, as far as the observations suggests, not much literature can be found on the topic of the potential direct interrelation of media literacy with what Jurgen Habermas defines as the public

sphere in particular. Therefore, the major motivation behind this research is to contribute to the academic debate concerning the potential interrelation of media literacy and the public sphere, as defined by Habermas.

The field work of the research has been conducted in the author's home country Georgia, where the role of mass media in public life deserves as much examination as in other parts of the world. As the following thesis represents a case study, the findings presented in the thesis apply exclusively to the interviewed participants. The following study aims at contributing to the theoretical debate and by no means intends to generalize the findings universally.

1.3 Structure of the thesis

Considering the character of the both central theories of the thesis – the theory of the public sphere and the theory of media literacy – the research is based on a purely qualitative model with the major goal to inquire the possible points of intersection of media literacy with what Jurgen Habermas defines as the public sphere and to further analyze the potential effects of media literacy interventions in relation to Habermas's theories of the public sphere and communicative action. The effects of media literacy interventions have been inquired as a form of a case study at the author's home country Georgia through observation of the changes in learners' perceptions concerning mass media's role and effects on a society.

The following thesis comprises the following chapters:

Chapter 1 – Introduction: The introductory chapter of the thesis intends to clarify the major purpose and objectives of the research.

Chapter 2 – Literature review: The second chapter of the thesis aims at in-depth analysis of Jurgen Habermas's theories of the public sphere and communicative action as well as the definitions and various approaches of media literacy education. The possible interrelation of the two theories is carefully examined in the concluding sub-sections of chapter 2.

Chapter 3 – Methodological design: The methodological chapter intends to present the methodological tools implemented throughout the study, the purpose for the selection of the participatory methodological tools and approaches, the sampling procedures and the design of data collection and analysis. The limitations of the study are presented in chapter 3 as well.

Chapter 4 – Results and analysis: The results of the field work are presented and analyzed in chapter 4, including the interviews with the participants as well as the field notes collected throughout the process of observation.

Chapter 5 – Discussions and conclusions: The final chapter of the thesis intends to discuss the findings of the results in relation to Jurgen Habermas's theories of the public sphere and to suggest the potential answers to the research question of the thesis.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The theoretical section of this research is based on discussions over the two major theories of this thesis: media literacy and the public sphere, as suggested by German philosopher and sociologist Jurgen Habermas.

The first part of the literature review focuses on the theoretical as well as the practical aspects of media literacy education. Definitions, various approaches and practical implementations of media literacy are discussed in this section.

The second part of the literature review is based on discussions over the theories suggested by Jurgen Habermas, with special emphasis on the theories of the public sphere and the role of mass media in Habermas's analysis.

The third part of the theoretical section intends to inquire the possible points of intersection of media literacy with what Habermas describes as the public sphere. The suggestions made in this section serve as basis for the further investigations in this thesis.

2.1 Media literacy – theoretical perspective

The current section intends to analyze the theoretical aspects of media literacy. Definitions, various approaches and orientations of media literacy education are closely examined in the following sub-sections.

2.1.1 Definitions

For several decades, scholars have been debating the issues concerning the definition of media literacy. The elements of media literacy had been present in various forms of media education long before the emergence of modern media and communication systems. As early as by the first half of the twentieth century authors (such as Dench, 1917; Jackson-Wrigley, 1922; etc.) begun to publish educational materials to help readers better understand media content (Kamerer, 2013). These early works were mainly focused on cinematography discussions and analysis. With the rapid growth and change of media and communication technologies the necessity for media education became more and more evident and the scattered elements of media literacy education gradually formed the field.

Len Masterman's *Teaching the Media* published in 1985 can be considered as a breakthrough in media literacy conceptualization. In his book Masterman stresses the importance of media education stating that the education systems must follow the complexity and sophistication of the developing media and communication technologies:

"The media themselves are constantly changing, expanding and developing, frequently in the direction of an increasingly sophisticated management of their audiences, but sometimes in ways which open out more democratic possibilities. Education needs to be equally flexible and open to change" (Masterman, 1985, p. 1).

Len Masterman suggests seven reasons for his argument over the importance of media education:

1. The high rate of media consumption and *the saturation of contemporary societies by the media*.

2. The ideological importance of the media, and *their influence as consciousness industries*.

3. The growth in the *management and manufacture of information,* and its dissemination by the media.

4. The increasing *penetration of media into our central democratic processes*.

5. The increasing *importance of visual communication and information* in all areas.

6. The importance of *educating students to meet the demands of the future*.

7. The fast-growing national and international pressures to *privatize information*. (original emphasis) (Masterman, 1985, p. 2).

Masterman believes that each of these tendencies demand "a commensurate expansion in critical consciousness, and the coherent development of educational programmes which will encourage critical autonomy" (Masterman, 1985, p.2).

Even before the development of modern telecommunication technologies such as the world wide web and the digital media Masterman urged the educators to take into account media saturation and the constantly increasing amount of time public spent facing media. He called for questioning the belief that media were merely providers of news and entertainment. Instead, Masterman suggested to view media as the *Consciousness Industries*.

Another remarkable notion of Masterman's work was his discussion over the relationship between media, advertising and audience. It should be noted that after more than thirty years since the publishing of *Teaching the media* his discussions still find place in curriculums and media literacy lesson plans suggested by the modern institutions (*see section* 1.2.3). While analyzing the

role of advertisement in media, Masterman quotes an Australian critic Humphrey McQueen (1977):

> "To make sense of… media… it is essential to get the relationship between the media and advertising the right way around: commercial mass media are not news and features backed up by advertising; on the contrary, *the commercial mass media are advertisements which carry news, features and entertainment in order to capture audiences for the advertisers…* It is a complete mistake to analyse the relationship between media and advertising by supposing that the media's prime function is to sell advertised products to audiences. On the contrary, the media's job is to sell audiences to advertisers." (original emphasis) (p. 4).

Masterman suggests that the *consciousness industry* influences the public in a similar way whether the *commodity* they are promoting is a product or a political concern:

> "The prime item on the agenda of Consciousness Industry is producing *people…* who are ready to support a particular policy, rather than some other policy, be it buying brand X rather than brand Y of automobile, or "supporting" one or another political candidate… or supporting Israel or the Arabs in their long struggle in the Middle East" (Smythe, 1981, *cited in* Masterman, 1985, p. 4).

Masterman further emphasizes the similarities between commercial advertising and politics delivered to public through media. He suggests that the public relations industry and lobby systems of political parties operate the same way as advertising companies while promoting their *product.* He argues that "PR game demands and feeds upon public ignorance" (Masterman, 1985, p. 10). Masterman believes that the information received through media, may it be a commercial

advertisement of a certain product or a PR campaign of a political party, are often received by public as mere *true, natural and objective* facts and that it is the responsibility of education institutions to raise awareness on the techniques of media manipulation and propaganda through media education:

> "Media education… is one of the few instruments which teachers and students possess for beginning to challenge the great inequalities in knowledge and power which exists between those who manufacture information in their own interests and those who consume it innocently as news or entertainment" (Masterman, 1985, p. 10).

Finally, Masterman suggests that media education is an essential step on the way to a truly participatory democracy. He believes that widespread media literacy is essential for promotion of active and engaged citizenship and that media education can play the most significant role in *education for democracy*. According to Masterman, the transformation of media and communication systems transform politics and public engagement correspondingly and this requires the transformation in media education as well in order to ensure public's awareness and capability to safeguard democracy:

> "In a world in which images are fast becoming of greater significance than policies, in which slogans often count for more than rational argument, and in which we will all make some of our most important democratic decisions on the basis of media evidence, media education is both essential to the exercising of our democratic rights and a necessary safeguard against the worst excesses of media manipulation for political purposes" (Masterman, 1985, p. 11).

In 1992 The Aspen Institute Media literacy Conference proposed a fundamental definition of media literacy which became widely accepted among researchers in the field. According to the definition a media literate person was considered as one who "can access, analyze, evaluate, and produce both print and electronic media" (Aufderheide, 1993, p. 1). With the rise of the digital media culture and the following developments in the media landscape the definition of media literacy has further evolved and modern scholars suggest various interpretations of what media literacy means.

Another significant step in media literacy research was David Buckingham's *Media Education: Literacy, Learning and Contemporary Culture* published in 2003. Buckingham enquires the changes in media and communications technologies and focuses on the intersections of media literacy with *new* media and digital technologies. He suggests four key concepts around media education which are:

a) Production – recognizing that media texts are consciously manufactured;

b) Language – including both verbal and semiotic languages used to construct texts;

c) Representation – understanding that media texts carry biases promoting or disadvantaging certain values, ideas and ideologies;

d) Audiences – understanding the ways different groups of audiences are addressed through media.

Buckingham (2003) defines media literacy as "the knowledge, skills, and competencies required in order to use and interpret media" (p. 36).

Renee Hobbs (2005) suggests that "most conceptualizations of media literacy now involve a type of 'critical' literacy based on reflection, analysis, and evaluation not only of the content and

structural elements of specific media texts but of social, economic, political, and historical contexts in which messages are created, disseminated, and used by audience" (Hobbs, 2005, p. 866). Hobbs (2007) further proposes an applied model of media literacy suggested by high school teacher Joanne McGlynn which intends to ask students to answer five questions while reflecting on a media text:

- Who is sending the message and what is the author's purpose?

- What techniques are used to attract and hold attention?

- What lifestyles, values, and points of view are represented in the message?

- How might different people interpret this message differently?

- What is omitted in the message? (Hobbs, 2007, p. 9)

Hobbs's suggestion can be viewed as a reflection on the conceptual model originally proposed by Aufderheide (1993) which states that:

- Media messages are constructed;

- Media messages are produced within economic, social, political, historical and aesthetic contexts;

- The interpretative meaning-making processes involved in message reception consists of an interaction between the reader, the text and the culture;

- Media have unique "languages", characteristics that typify various forms, genres, and symbol systems of communication;

- Media representations play a role in people's understanding of social reality (Aufderheide, 1993, p. 2).

The early definitions of media literacy (such as the one produced at the Aspen Institute Conference in 1992) were mainly constructed around the idea of rising public's awareness on media content. However, with the growth and development of digital media, which made the modern citizen not merely consumer but also an active creator of media, the role and potential of media literacy transformed accordingly. Considering the developments in media and communication systems over past few decades Hobbs (2011) suggests five communication competences fundamental to acquisition of media literacy:

- Access – finding and sharing appropriate and relevant information and using media texts and technology tools well;

- Analyze – using critical thinking to analyze message purpose, target audience, quality, veracity, credibility, point of view, and potential effects and consequences of messages;

- Create – composing or generating content using creativity and confidence in self-expression, with awareness of purpose, audience and composition techniques;

- Reflect – considering the impact of media messages and technology tools upon our thinking and actions in daily life and applying social responsibility and ethical principles to our own identity, communication behavior, and conduct;

- Act – working individually and collaboratively to share knowledge and solve problems in the family, the workplace, and the community, and participating as a member of community at local, regional, national, and international levels (Hobbs, 2011, p. 12 *cited in* Kamerer, 2013, p. 11).

A monograph published by UNESCO offers a quite comprehensive definition of media literacy. It defines media literacy as:

"The process of assimilating and using the codes involved in the contemporary media systems as well as the operative skills needed to properly use the technological systems on which these codes are based [and as] the capacity to access, analyze and evaluate the power of the images, sounds, and messages which we are faced every day and which play an important role in contemporary culture. It includes the individual capacity to communicate using the media competently. Media literacy concerns all media, including television, film, radio, and recorded music, the press, the internet, and any other digital communication technology…" (Perez-Tornero and Varis, 2010, p. 5).

Media literacy is a highly sophisticated field and so is its definition. An American media literacy educationalist James Potter states in an interview that "if you were to interview 100 different people, you'd probably get 150 different definitions about what it [media literacy] really means" (*Voices of Media Literacy*, 2011). In order to gain a better understanding of what media literacy means one should have a closer look at the definitions of a media literate person. According to the Centre of Media literacy (USA), media literacy aims at enabling youth and adults to:

- Develop critical thinking skills;

- Understand how media messages shape our culture and society;

- Identify target marketing strategies;

- Recognize what the media maker wants us to believe or do;

- Name the techniques of persuasion used;

- Recognize bias, spin, misinformation and lies;

- Discover the parts of the story that are not being told;

- Evaluate media messages based on our own experiences, skills, beliefs and values;

- Create and distribute our own messages;

- Advocate for media justice.[1]

The Commission of European Communities believes that:

> "Media-literate people will be able to exercise informed choices, understand the nature of content and services and take advantage of the full range of opportunities offered by new communication technologies. They will be better able to protect themselves and their families from harmful or offensive material. Therefore, the development of media literacy in all sections of society should be promoted and progress followed closely" (*Commission of the European Communities,* 2007, p. 27).

2.1.2   Media literacy approaches

Potter's (2004) cognitive processing model suggests that knowledge structures and skills are fundamental to the acquisition of media literacy. Potter (2008) examines seven skills involved in being media literate: analysis, evaluation, grouping, induction, deduction, synthesis and abstracting.

Analysis, according to Potter (2008), is the breaking down of a message into meaningful elements. Potter believes that instead of accepting media messages on the surface "we can dig deeper into the messages themselves by breaking them down into their components and examining

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[1] List retrieved from www.medialiteracyproject.org on 10/03/2017.

the composition of the elements that make up messages" (p. 16). *Evaluation* is making a judgment about the value of an element by "comparing a message element to the same standard". Potter argues that there is much evidence that people simply accept the opinions they hear in media messages without making their own evaluations. *Grouping* is "determining which elements are alike in some way and determining how a group of elements is different from other group of elements". Potter believes that if we make the sufficient effort to determine which classification rules are the best for organizing our perceptions "we will end up with groups that have more meaning and more value for us". *Induction* refers to generalizing a small amount of evidence to a larger conclusion. *Deduction*, on the other hand, refers to using general principles to explain particulars. Potter suggests that "when we have faulty general principles, we will explain particular occurrences in a faulty manner". *Synthesis*, according to Potter, is assembling elements into a new structure while *Abstracting* refers to "creating a brief, clear, and accurate description capturing the essence of a message in a significantly smaller number of words than the message itself" (Potter, 2008, p. 16).

According to Potter, "media literacy is a set of perspectives that we actively use to expose ourselves to the media to interpret the meaning of the messages we encounter" (2008, p. 19). While these skills can be viewed as fundamental basis for deconstructing media messages and rising viewer's awareness on media content, many scholars argue that a solely protectionist approach to media literacy is insufficient considering the modern-day media environment. Hobbs (2011) believes that tensions between protectionist and empowerment perspectives was long part of media literacy field, as scholars and educators debated "whether to emphasize media literacy as an expanded conceptualization of literacy or as a means of counter the negative effects of mass media and popular culture" (Potter, 2011, p. 422).

A PhD research submitted at the University of Maryland in 2008 concludes that if media literacy is taught with the sole focus on the negative effects of media without underlining the media's necessary existence in a democratic society, the learners might "be prone to develop cynical attitudes towards the media" (Mihiliadis, 2008, p. 7). The study suggests that the learners of media literacy course primarily focused on teaching protectionist techniques were skilled in media assessment and were able to deconstruct media messages in a critical and detailed manner; however, the students "were defensive towards media's role in society and democracy… were suspect of the media industry, it's functions, and its role in civic life" (Mihiliadis, 2008, p. 8). The author believes that media literacy must not only teach skills to effectively critique media but must also teach "about the civic implications of media in democratic society" (p. 9); moreover, if media literacy fails to show the larger implications and complexities involved in the effects of media "it runs the risk of breeding cynicism instead of understanding and engagement" (p. 63).

These conclusions are in line with Hobbs's (2011) belief that media literacy should be viewed not merely as means of self-protection against the negative effects of media but also as a tool for promoting an active engagement with media. Hobbs further cites the National Association for Media literacy Education's Core Principles of Media literacy Education which is "to help individuals of all ages develop the habits of inquiry and skills of expression that they need to be critical thinkers, effective communicators and active citizens in today's world" (NAMLE, 2007, p. 1 *cited in* Hobbs, 2011, p. 424). Hobbs argues that the idea of using education for promoting particular, positive or negative viewpoints about various domains of media "is a very slippery slope that verges on propaganda" (2011, p. 427). Hobbs believes that:

> "Media literacy is not about teaching students what to think; rather, it emphasizes the
>
> process of helping people arrive at informed choices that are consistent their own

values through the active, reflective, collaborative, and self-actualizing practice of reception and production" (2011, p. 428).

Perez-Tornero and Varis (2010) suggest three predominant orientations of media literacy movement: a) the protectionist orientation, b) the promoting orientation and c) the participatory orientation.

According to Perez-Tornero and Varis (2010) the *protectionist* orientation aims at protecting media viewers from the potential threats of the media system. The authors suggest that the protectionist initiatives are most commonly promoted by educational and political institutions and the protectionist policies are more frequently associated with children and youth "who are the most vulnerable to the potentially harmful effects of the media due to their age and education" (2010, p. 41).

The *promoting* orientation, according to Perez-Tornero and Varis, consists of "spearheading or encouraging activities that tend to simulate great awareness of the media universe and citizen empowerment" (2010, p. 41). This orientation is based on the idea that the new media offer all citizens opportunities and potentialities which should be positively developed and acquired. The promoting orientation is less defensive than the protectionist orientation and is mainly focused on the "relationship with the media through either intellectual creativity or communication relations" (2010, p. 42).

The *participatory* orientation stresses the spread of social production and communication for "the development of knowledge, interactivity and dialogue" (2010, p. 42). It considers the media as the legacy of all humanity and is associated with a political philosophy "that trusts in individual's autonomy, critical capacity and ability to properly guide their own personal

development and thus contribute to the collective welfare" (2010, p. 42). Perez-Tornero and Varis believe that the participatory orientation can be viewed as an important part of deliberative democracy and the concept of active citizenship (2010, p. 42).

While analyzing the three predominant orientations of media literacy movement Perez-Tornero and Varis suggest that the participatory orientation can be viewed at the future major orientation of media literacy. The authors believe that this orientation is in line with media's modern-day role in a democratic society and at the same time "it corresponds to the relevancy of the idea of the active citizen required by today's democratic institutions" (2010, p. 43). Perez-Tornero and Varis state that "the participatory orientation fits with antiauthoritarian, more dialectical styles that embrace conflict and debate with a certain philosophy of trust in the value of the public sphere and citizen's capacity to react" (2010, p. 43).

In order to examine differences between various orientations of media literacy, Kellner and Share (2007) divide the field of media literacy into four general approaches. The first approach suggested by the authors is the protectionist approach which aims at protecting media receivers from the dangers of media manipulation and addiction. However, Kellner and Share believe that this approach bears the risk of promoting an "anti-media bias" (2007, p. 60) which might over-simplify the complexity of interaction with the media and decrease the potential of active engagement. The authors argue that the protectionist approach "is important when it addresses the naturalizing processes of ideology and interrelations with social injustice, but is deeply flawed when it does so through dogmatic orthodoxy and undemocratic pedagogy" (2007, p. 60).

The second approach is described as the *media arts education* which aims at teaching students to value "the aesthetic qualities of media and the arts" (Kellner and Share, 2007, p. 60) and to use their creativity for self-expression through creating art and media. According to Kellner

and Share these programs can be found at schools and in community-based or after-school programs. The authors believe that learning of media production can be beneficial; however, they criticize this approach for being insufficient, stating that "many of these programs tend to unproblematically teach students the technical skills to merely reproduce hegemonic representations with little awareness of ideological implications or any type of critical social critique" (2007, p. 60).

Kellner and Share describe the third approach as the *media literacy movement*. This approach, according to the authors, "attempts to expand the notion of literacy to include multiple forms of media (music, video, advertising, etc.) while still working within a print literacy tradition" (2007, p. 61). Kellner and Share believe that expanding the understanding of media interaction to a wider scale can be valuable; however, they criticize this approach for being too objective and neutral, lacking the critical component and therefore being insufficient for promoting "democratic reconstruction of education and society" (2007, p. 61). The authors suggest that the media literacy movement has done an excellent work in promoting important concepts and bringing popular culture into public education; however, they also believe that "without critical pedagogy, media literacy risks becoming another cookbook of conventional ideas that only improve the social reproductive function of education" (2007, p. 61).

The fourth approach, *critical media literacy*, includes elements of the three previous approaches discussed by Kellner and Share and in addition "brings an understanding of ideology, power, and domination that challenges relativist and apolitical notions of most media education in order to guide teachers and students in their explorations of how power and information are always linked" (2007, p. 61). The authors believe that critical media literacy draws up critique of mainstream approaches to literacy and promotes democratic change through media education. This

approach promotes civic empowerment through the production of "alternative counter-hegemonic media" (2007, p. 61) and aims at empowering people who are most often marginalized or misrepresented in the mainstream media. On the other hand, Kellner and Share believe that for the members of dominant group, critical media literacy "offers an opportunity to engage with the social realities that the majority of the world are experiencing" (2007, p. 62). The authors suggest that the goal of media literacy education should be to move toward critical media literacy, stating that "critical media education is a process that requires planting seeds and scaffolding the steps for transformative pedagogy" (2007, p. 62).

2.1.3   Critical media literacy

In *Teaching the Media* (1985), Masterman introduced the concept of critical autonomy as a major objective of media education. According to Masterman, the main task of media educationalists is to "develop in pupils enough self-confidence and critical maturity to be able to apply critical judgments to media texts which they will encounter in the future" (1985, p.24).

In his book *Changing Literacies* (1997), Lankshear examines the conceptual meaning of *critical* and suggests the following definition:

> "The adjective "critical" and its related terms "criticize" and "critique", imply judging, comparing, or evaluating on the basis of careful analysis. There are, then, two necessary aspects to any critical orientation. There is the element of evaluation or *judgement*. There is, in addition, the requirement of knowing closely and "for what it is", that which is being evaluated: the *object* of evaluation or judgement. To *criticize*

X (i.e., to judge X positively or negatively) is to comment on X's qualities or merits. This requires identifying them through some kind of analysis" (1997, p. 43).

If we apply this definition to critical media literacy, mass media "become the objects that are being evaluated and critiqued" (Trier, 2006, p. 68) through analysis, evaluation and critical reflection (Buckingham, 2003). Hobbs (2005) suggests that "most conceptualizations of media literacy now involve a type of 'critical' literacy based on reflection, analysis, and evaluation" (2005, p. 866). Funk, Kellner and Share (2016) suggest that in practice critical media literacy defines *critical* as "an aspect of a dialectical, sociocultural, and analytical process" (p. 8). They emphasize the idea that the *critical* approach "attempts to understand the institutional and interpretive processes through which media are made, distributed, and interpreted" (Campbell at al., 2013 *cited in* Funk at al., 2016). They believe that:

> "This attempt at understanding invokes critical thinking that is more than just a cognitive idea; it is also a sociocultural understanding that seeks to develop in students a social consciousness as well as a working knowledge of how media operate… Students are encouraged to question hegemony and social injustices in ways that can challenge problematic dominant narratives with their own counter-narratives as a form of praxis (reflection and action)" (Funk at al., 2016, p. 9).

Kellner and Share believe that critical media literacy is essential to meet the "twenty-first-century needs of participatory democracy" (2007, p. 59). The authors suggest that critical media literacy increases the potential of education to critically analyze relationships between media and audiences, and information and power by expanding the notion of literacy to include different forms of mass communication and popular culture.

Advocates for critical media literacy advice teachers to guide students toward critical readings and alternative writings (Luke, 1999). In addition to critical readings, critical media literacy guides students to produce "counter-hegemonic" texts (Kellner and Share, 2007). Kellner and Share (2007) suggest that teaching critical media literacy is a participatory and collaborative project. A research conducted by Jesse S. Gainer in 2010 concludes:

> "In classrooms that embrace critical media literacy, space is made for students to analyze and critique dominant narratives. Furthermore, this education goes beyond critique, because students are provided tools to make their own media and make their voices heard. In the process of learning about texts as ideological and social constructions, students can take power to construct their own identities through alternative representations – counternarratives that talk back to oppressive myths of dominant discourse" (2010, p. 372).

Critical media literacy education is directly linked with fostering critical thinking skills and critical autonomy among learners. Critical autonomy can be described as "the ability of an individual to discover their own meaning in a media text"[2] or, as Masterman (1985) suggests, *to think for oneself*. O'Neill (2008) suggests that in fostering a sense of critical autonomy "the media literate person is empowered through a greater understanding of how the media *mediate* reality, rather than simply reflect it, and accordingly is better prepared to participate in society on more equal terms" (2008, p. 26). Perez-Tornero and Varis (2010) further underline the value of promoting individual autonomy based on critical thinking, which will empower individuals to "think autonomously without the control and guidance of the "guardians", the authorities that…

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[2] Description retrieved from www.themediaspot.org on 17/03/2017.

subjugate people's thinking by requiring them to accept veins of reasoning and points of view that are not theirs as their own" (2010, p. 80).

Media literacy education's value in fostering critical thinking skills and critical autonomy among learners has been underlined as a priority by the experts in the field. A UNESCO editorial research conducted in 2003 suggests that after interviewing 115 media education/media literacy experts from different countries, 84.27 per-cents of the interviewees named the development of critical thinking and critical autonomy as the most important goals of media literacy education. The research author adds that "experts from all the countries placed the aim of the development of critical thinking and critical autonomy in the first place" (Federov, 2003, p. 13).

Kellner and Share (2007) believe that critical media literacy is a powerful tool for teaching how to use and critically analyze media. However, they state that the major challenge to critical media literacy education results from the fact that it is not pedagogy "in the traditional sense with firmly established principles, a cannon of texts, and tried-and-true teaching procedures" (2007, p. 62). The authors argue that critical media literacy requires a democratic pedagogy "which involves teachers sharing power with students as they join together in the process of unveiling myths and challenging hegemony" (2007, p. 62).

Critical media literacy pedagogy as a strategy for reasserting democracy through informed and empowered citizenry has been further underlined by Funk, Kellner and Share (2016) who believe that "recognizing the political nature of education and literacy is essential for transformative teaching and democracy" (p. 2). The authors propose six questions and explanations which media educators and learners should emphasize while evaluating a media message:

1.   Who are all the possible people who made choices that helped create this text?

Social Constructivism: All information is co-constructed by individuals and/or groups of people who make choices within social contexts.

2.   How was this text constructed and delivered/assessed?

Languages/Semiotics: Each medium has its own language with specific grammar and semantics.

3.   How could this text be understood differently?

Audience/Positionality: Individuals and groups understand media messages similarly and/or differently depending on multiple contextual factors.

4.   What values, points of view, and ideologies are represented or missing from this text or influenced by the medium?

Politics of representation: Media messages and medium through which they travel always have a bias and support and/or challenge dominant hierarchies of power, privilege, and pleasure.

5.   Why was this text created and/or shared?

Production/Institutions: all media texts have a purpose (often commercial or governmental) that is shaped by the creators and/or systems within which they operate.

6.   Whom does this text advantage and/or disadvantage?

Social Justice: Media culture is a terrain of struggle that perpetuates or challenges positive and/or negative ideas about people, groups, and issues; it is never neutral (p. 7-8).

These six questions and concepts suggested by the authors represent an elaboration on the *Five Key Questions* of media literacy proposed by the Center for Media literacy which will be carefully discussed in the following sections.

2.2 Media literacy – practical approach

The current section examines the practical implementations in the field, including discussions over the effects and outcomes of media literacy interventions. Educational recourses for media literacy interventions are further analyzed in the following sub-sections.

2.2.1 Changing literacies

Current multimedia environment complexifies the understanding of *literacy* and demands the involvement of a wider range of skills rather than the mere ability or reading and writing (Perez-Tornero, 2010; Goodfellow, 2011; etc.). Therefore, the modern educational institutions seek to include various types of *literacies* into the educational programs, such as media literacy, ICT literacy, information literacy, digital literacy, visual literacy, communications literacy, technology literacy, etc.

Among multiple literacies, media literacy, information literacy and digital literacy are most strongly presented in the professional literature (Koltay, 2011). Information literacy, as suggested by Bawden (2001), in literature is related to various terms, such as:

- Information literacy;
- Computer literacy: synonyms – IT/information technology/ electronic/ electronic information literacy;
- Library literacy;
- Media literacy;

- Network literacy: synonyms – internet literacy, hyper-literacy;

- Digital literacy: synonym – digital information literacy.

    (Bawden, 2001 *cited in* Koltay, 2011, p. 215)

According to the American Library Association: "to be information literate, a person must be able to recognize when information is needed and have the ability to locate, evaluate, and use effectively the needed information" (ALA, 1989). Vord (2010) suggests that information literacy is not a new concept specifically related to online information and that it has deep roots in library science. Vord (2010) proposes *information seeking*, *information credibility assessment* and *critical information evaluation* as the key features of information literacy.

To summarize the nature of information literacy, Koltay elaborates on Hobbs's (2006) view that information literacy:

> "emphasizes the need for careful retrieval and selection of information available in the workplace, at school, and in all aspects of personal decision-making, especially in the areas of citizenship and health. Information literacy education emphasizes critical thinking, meta-cognitive, and procedural knowledge used to locate information in specific domains, fields, and contexts. A prime emphasis is placed on recognition message quality, authenticity and credibility" (Koltay, 2011, p. 215).

Digital literacy can be defined as "the awareness, attitude and ability of individuals' to use digital tools for communication, expression and social action in specific life situations" (Martin and Grudziecki, 2007 *cited in* Goodfellow, 2011, p. 3). Bawden (2008) suggests four core competencies of digital literacy as:

- Internet searching,

- Hypertext navigation,

- Knowledge assembly,

- Content evaluation.

(Bawden, 2008 *cited in* Koltay, 2011, p. 2016)

Perez-Tornero (2010) believes that the *digitalization of every-day life* has brought the necessity for adaptation of digital competencies such as ICT literacy and digital literacy. However, the term *digital literacy* must not be viewed as simply the skills involved in using digital communication but rather "the diverse ways of making meaning that involve 'digital encodification', and the 'enculturations that lead to becoming proficient in them'" (Lankshear and Knobel, 2008, p. 5-7 *cited in* Goodfellow, 2011, p. 2).

Other forms of literacies widely present in educational curriculums include film literacy and visual literacy. These literacies, be they focused on film production as a part of learning process (Goodman, 2003), film deconstruction (Ceretti, 2015; Daniels, 2012), photography analysis (Rabadan, 2015) or examination of other forms of popular culture, find their place in critical media literacy programs as the latter is generally concerned with "helping students experience the pleasures of popular culture while simultaneously uncovering the practices that work to silence or disempower them as readers, viewers, and learners" (Alvermann and Hagood, 2000, p. 194 *cited in* Tisdell, 2007, p. 6).

After careful examination of the *literacies* most frequently present in educational programs and professional literature, it can be concluded that all of these literacies are present in critical media literacy programs at some extent. Popular culture and film literacies are at the very center of critical media literacy focus, as are the information literacy (Vord, 2010, p. 171) and ICT and digital literacy (Perez-Tornero, 2010, p. 87).

2.2.2 Media literacy interventions

For a better understanding of the nature of media literacy education it will be helpful to discuss the practical aspects of media literacy interventions. However, before moving on with the discussions over the concrete media literacy programs, we can briefly touch upon various outcomes of media literacy interventions and the ways how interventions are designed aiming at the desirable outcomes.

Outcomes of media literacy interventions have been comprehensively studied by Jeong, Cho, and Hwang (2012) who classify such outcomes in two broad categories: media-relevant outcomes and behavior-relevant outcomes. According to the research, Austin et al.'s (2002), Messaris's (1997) and Potter's (2004) models suggest that interventions can influence media-relevant outcomes such as knowledge, including knowledge of specific construction techniques used to persuade audiences (Harts, 1997; Hobbs and Frost, 2003) and knowledge about advertising (Buijzen, 2007). Other media-relevant outcomes include criticism (Austin and Johnson, 1997), skepticism (Austin et al., 2005), influence, and realism which refers to the "extent to which one believes that the portrayal of persons or events in the media corresponds with those in the real world" (Jeong, Cho, and Hwang, 2012, p. 456). The behavior-related outcomes are classified by the authors on the basis of the theory of reasoned action (Fishbein and Ajzen, 1975) and the integrative model of behavior change (Fishbein and Yzer, 2003). The classification is suggested into the following: behavioral beliefs, attitudes, norms, self-efficacy and behaviors. Jeong, Cho, and Hwang (2012) suggest that according to previous research, media literacy interventions can reduce the frequency of risky or antisocial behaviors (Austin et al., 2005) as well as behavioral intentions (Banerjee and Greene, 2007) by inducing negative attitudes (Barenjee and Greene,

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2006) toward negative behavioral beliefs (Austin, Pinkleton and Funabiki, 2007; Gonzales et al., 2004) about such behaviors. Authors add that media literacy interventions can further "reduce the likelihood of an individual engaging in the behaviors by reducing normative pressure and increasing self-efficacy (Jeong, Cho, and Hwang, 2012, p. 457).

Jeong, Cho, and Hwang (2012) further suggest that the setting in which media literacy intervention is delivered may affect the outcomes. Their research finds that the interventions delivered by teachers are typically implemented in a school environment while the interventions delivered by researchers may take place in various settings such as schools (Dysart, 2008), communities (Comer et al., 2008) and labs (Divsalar, 2006).

As the aim of this research is to determine the outcomes of media literacy interventions on school students, an educational program designed for school students by the Centre for Media literacy (USA) will be analyzed and implemented throughout this research.

The Media literacy Kit conducted by the Centre for Media literacy (CML) provides analysis of the importance of media literacy education as well as the approaches to media literacy teaching, including 25 detailed lesson plans. These lesson plans will be further applied with the empirical part of this research.

The importance of media literacy education is suggested by CML in following points:

1. The influence of media in our central democratic processes;

2. The high rate of media consumption and the saturation of society by media;

3. The media's influence on shaping perceptions, beliefs and attitudes;

4. The increasing importance of visual communication and information;

5. The importance of information in society and the need for lifelong learning;

(p.12)

It should be noted that these concepts represent a reflection on Masterman's (1985) discussions over the importance of media education discussed in section 1.1.1.

CML's methodological approach to media literacy teaching is based on five traditional categories of rhetorical and literary analysis which are:

1) Authorship

2) Format

3) Audience

4) Content

5) Purpose

These categories are approached with five concepts and five key questions which further serve basis for the teaching program including the lesson plans.

CML's five core concepts are presented as following:

1. All media messages are 'constructed';

2. Media messages are constructed using a creative language with its own rules;

3. Different people experience the same media differently;

4. Media have embedded values and points of view;

5. Most media messages are organized to gain profit and/or power.

Based on these core concepts CML suggests the following key questions for approaching the concepts during the media literacy intervention:

CML's five key questions for *deconstruction*:

1. Who created this message?

2. What creative techniques are used to attract my attention?

3. How might different people understand this message differently?

4. What values, lifestyles and points of view are presented in, or omitted from, this message?

5. Why is this message being sent?

CML's five key questions for *construction*:

- What am I authoring?

- Does my message reflect understanding in format, creativity and technology?

- Is my message engaging and compelling for my target audience?

- Have I clearly and consistently framed values, lifestyles and points of view in my content?

- Have I communicated my purpose effectively?

Media literacy lessons suggested by CML are developed using the *inquiry process* which includes both analytical (deconstruction) and production (construction) skills. CML expects to promote the following analytical and critical skills among the learners:

- *Distinguish* advantages and disadvantages of different media;

- *Define* factors that go into news judgement;

- *Compare and contrast* various techniques of persuasion;

- *Analyze* the role of sound effects, music and dialogue in media messages;

- *Uncover* the 'points of view' embedded in news and information media;

- *Summarize* the differences between generalizations and stereotypes.

(5KQ, p. 9)

CML further asserts that the learners will not only gain knowledge about the *content* of contemporary media but will learn the skills and practice to *navigate* one's way in the global media culture. These skills include the ability to:

- *Access* the right information *when you need it*;

- *Analyze and evaluate* what you find;

- *Formulate* questions to *clarify* your research;

- *Summarize and integrate* what you conclude;

- *Communicate* it – clearly – to someone else.

  (cited from 5KQ, p. 11)

2.2.3   Lesson plans

Media literacy intervention implemented in the empirical part of this research will be based on the Media literacy Kit suggested by the CML and therefore a brief summary of CML's lesson plans will be discussed further in this section. The justification for implementing this particular program will be discussed in the methodological section of this work.

The lesson plans suggested by the CML are based on the five key concepts discussed in the previous section. The teaching course is divided in five sections, each section dedicated to each key concept.

The lesson plans are suggested as following:

Section #1: Authorship

Key concept 1: All messages are 'constructed'

Key question 1: Who created this message?

The first section of the kit explores the idea of 'authorship' and draws the learners' attention to the concepts of *contractedness* and *choice*. This section enquires the production processes in media and questions whether the media texts are *natural* and *real*. It draws attention to the roles of multiple actors in media and the choices these actors make during media production. It asserts that any media product is a result of multiple choices made by the producers and therefore what viewer accepts as *natural* is in fact *constructed* according to the decisions of a person or a group. The goal of section 1 is "to expose the complexities of media's 'contractedness' and thus create the critical distance we need to be able to ask other important questions" (p. 14).

Lesson plans of section 1 include:

1A – What is communication: one way vs. two way

Lesson is based on the analysis of communication and intends to compare different forms of communication through media. Through practical activities it intends to rise the learners' awareness on the advantages and disadvantages of one-way and two-way communication.

Lesson objectives: students will be able to

- List multiple forms of media

- Distinguish advantages and disadvantages of one-way and two-way communication.

- Understand some of the limits and advantages of mass media communication

1B – Inside advertising: matching messages and media

Lesson aims at rising the learners' awareness on how messages are delivered through different media. Special emphasis is laid on the analysis of commercial advertisement in different types of media.

Lesson objectives: students will be able to

- Recognize various techniques and 'languages' used in different media

- Understand how different media change a message to fit their particular structure

- Manipulate a message in order to communicate in different media formats

1C – The world in 22 minutes: constructing a TV news lineup

Lesson reflects on the concept of media *constructedness* and draws the learners' attention to the choices which media producer make and the effects of these choices on what is presented in and omitted from a media product.

Lesson objectives: students will be able to

- Experience the role of news editor

- Define factors that go into news judgements

- Explore the constructed nature of news media with a consciousness of the way subjective choices influence the news that get reported

1D – Behind the screen: movie makers and their choices

Lesson aims at rising the learners' awareness on how media products are created. It includes the analysis of the complex processes involved in media production and draws attention to how many choices of various actors influence the end products which are delivered to the audiences.

Lesson objectives: students will be able to

- Increase their knowledge about the people involved in creating media

- Build deeper comprehension of the complexity involved in making movies

- Be able to analyze some of the influences of the choices that are made by the numerous people involved in movie production

1E – Maps and pictures in our heads

Lesson is based on discussions over maps, which people seldom consider media. The example of maps is further analyzed in the context of perception of media as *truth* and *objective* by the audience without questioning the processes and actors involved in the production.

Lesson objectives: students will be able to

- Evaluate the advantages and limitations of different maps

- Deepen the process of understanding that all media are created and therefore, like maps, contain both truths and distortions

- Explain how the design of a map (scale, color, projection, etc.) can influence our understanding of what it represents

Section #2: Format

Key concept 2: Media messages are constructed using a creative language with its own rules

Key question 2: What creative techniques are used to attract my attention?

Section 2 of the Media literacy Kit explores the *format* of a media message and examines how messages are constructed using words, music, color, movement, camera angle, etc. The goal

of the section is "to help students build an internal checklist that they can apply to *any* media message *anytime*" (p. 28).

Lesson plans of section 2 include:

2A – Basic visual language 1: three building blocks

Lesson is based on the analysis of visual communication. Special emphasis is laid on three components of visual communication: *camera angle, lighting* and *composition*.

Lesson objectives: students will be able to

- Recognize the choices that photographers make when taking pictures

- Understand how different aspects of a photograph can influence its meaning

- Use three basic visual techniques to take photographs – *camera angle, lighting* and *composition*.

2B – Basic visual language 2: how to analyze a visual text

Lesson represents a continuation of the previous lesson on visual communication and draws the learners' attention to how the basic techniques of visual language are used in real-life media texts. Furthermore, the lesson explores additional techniques of visual persuasion such as body language and symbolism.

Lesson objectives: students will be able to

- Identify techniques used to communicate visually

- Compare and contrast different visual techniques found in mass media

- Apply their understanding by creating photographs that use a variety of visual literacy techniques

2C – Frame it: the power of editing

Lesson discusses *framing* and *editing* as important parts of media production process. Choices made by media producers while framing images and editing the final results are analyzed with regards to the limitations of framing and the power of editing.

Lesson objectives: students will be able to

- Experience and reflect on how framing focuses the eye and influences the meaning we make from visual images
- Understand the power of editing through 'cropping' magazine images
- Deepen their comprehension about the choices involved in the construction of visual media texts

2D – The language of sound: tools, tricks and techniques

Lesson is based on the analysis of sound effects in media products. It discusses the role which sound effects play in creating emotions and constructing meanings.

Lesson objectives: students will be able to

- Recognize influences of music and sound effects on TV images
- Analyze the role of sound effects, music and dialogue in the construction of TV and other multimedia presentations
- Apply their understanding of the relationship between visual images and sound through adding sounds to their own story telling

2E – 10 ways to sell an idea: the basics of persuasion

Lesson discusses the ability to persuade as the power of advertising. 10 common techniques of persuasion are analyzed in the lesson.

Lesson objectives: students will be able to

- Recognize various techniques of persuasion used in advertising

- Understand how advertisers use persuasion techniques for manipulative reasons

- Demonstrate their understanding of different techniques of persuasion through creating posters about some of the strategies' advertisers use to convince consumers

Section #3: Audience

Key concept 3: Different people experience the same media message differently

Key question 3: How might different people understand this message differently?

This section explores how audiences interact with the media. It addresses two ideas: "first, that our *differences* influence our various interpretations of media messages and second, that our *similarities* create common understandings" (p. 42).

Lesson plans of section 3 include:

3A – Do I see what you see? Interpreting media experiences

Lesson analyses how human similarities and differences influence the process of communicating.

Lesson objectives: students will be able to

- Experience different ways of understanding events in our lives

- Build empathy toward different points of view

- Understand how personal experiences and biases influence the process of communication

3B – Silent symbols speak loudly: icons, brands and you

This lesson draws the learners' attention to the role of brands, icons and symbols in our visual culture. It analyses how the same symbols might be perceived similarly or differently by different people.

Lesson objectives: students will be able to

- Build awareness of the visual symbols around them

- Understand how different people can read the same symbols differently

- Use symbols they choose to express their concerns, interests and ideas

3C – Movies are us: understanding audience research

Lesson analyses how media producers conduct research of both differences and similarities of audiences.

Lesson objectives: students will be able to

- Understand that groups of people with similarities form media 'audiences'

- Organize and conduct a survey, then graph and analyze the results

- Recognize the *interrelationship* between themselves as audiences and the media they enjoy

3D – Ads are us: understanding target marketing

Lesson discusses the ways advertisers approach different audiences. Delivery of advertising messages through various forms of media are analyzed in the lesson

Lesson objectives: students will be able to

- Build awareness on the way in which advertisers shape ads for specific audiences

- Analyze the target audience intended for an advertisement

- Create their own targeted ads to demonstrate their understanding of *key question 3*

3E – Valuing different views: taking a stand on media violence

This lesson aims at promoting the understanding of empathy and learning how to value different points of view. Discussions are based on the topic of violence in media which is often controversial as the concept of violence might be a subject to different insights and interpretations.

Lesson objectives: students will be able to

- Recognize and appreciate the value of multiple perspectives and differences of opinion

- Build empathy and open-mindedness for other points of view

- Become aware of the complexity of social and cultural issues such as violence in media

Section #4: Content

Key concept 4: Media have embedded values and points of view

Key question 4: What lifestyles, values and points of view are represented in, or omitted from, this message?

Section 4 of CML's lesson plans is based on the understanding that no media is value-free. As all media are constructed, the choices of the producers reflect the values, points of view and attitudes of actors involved in the creating of media content. This section lays special emphasis on *generalizations* and *stereotypes* in media.

Lesson plans of section 4 include:

4A – Peeling the onion: uncovering values and viewpoints

Lesson is based on the idea that each media message consists of layers of meanings made up of ideas, attitudes and opinions either obvious or subtle. The lesson discusses how the ideas, values and points of view of media constructors influence media product.

Lesson objectives: students will be able to

- Build and understanding of the differences between subjectivity and objectivity

- Develop their inquiry skills through analyzing messages for points of view

- Uncover and identify values and lifestyles embedded in media messages

4B – More than meets the eye: embedded values in the news

This lesson questions the *objectivity* of news reporting and draws learners' attention to the embedded values and points of views in news media. It analyses the differences between the concepts of *fairness, balance* and *objectivity*.

Lesson objectives: students will be able to

- Recognize the subjective values inherent in photographs

- Compare and contrast news photographs for fairness and balance

- Analyze values, lifestyles and points of view in news media

4C – Media stereotypes: how differences divide

The goal of this lesson is to rise learners' awareness on the role media plays in creating and perpetuating stereotypes. Special emphasis is laid on the discussion over the differences between a generalization (a flexible observation) and a stereotype (a rigid conclusion).

Lesson objectives: students will be able to

- Understand the difference between generalizations and stereotypes
- Compare and contrast gender representations
- Critically analyze media for gender stereotypes

4D – Heroes, heroines and who I want to be

Lesson is based on discussions how lifestyles, values and points of view embedded in media messages reinforce and affirm existing social roles and structures.

Lesson objectives: students will be able to

- Identify characteristics of a hero and heroine
- Compare media role models to real life people
- Analyze the values and lifestyles promoted in mass media

4E – What is missing? Making room for multiple perspectives

This lesson emphasizes the idea that sometimes what is missing in media can be more important then what is included. Lesson promotes the necessary skills for identifying and recognizing of what is missing in a media message.

Lesson objectives: students will be able to

- Identify missing characters from a text, particularly a school text

- Increase critical thinking by supplying missing perspectives in a text

- Build empathy through understanding different points of view

Section #5: Purpose

Key concept 5: Media messages are organized to gain profit and/or power

Key question 5: Why is this message being sent?

Section five of CML's lesson plans is focused on the *motive* and *purpose* of media messages. It aims at rising learners' awareness on financial and political influences of media. Special emphasis is laid on commercial aspects of media and the ownership and structure of media systems. Furthermore, the increasing influence and dissemination of individual media content through new media, in particular, internet and social platforms are analyzed in the section.

Lesson plans of section 5 include:

5A – Why we communicate: three basic tasks

Lesson is based on discussion over the purposes of media messages. Three major purposes of media messages: *to inform, to persuade* and *to entertain* are analyzed in detail.

Lesson objectives: students will be able to

- Identify the three common reasons for communication: information, persuasion and entertainment

- Create media messages for different purposes

- Develop understanding about how the purpose of a message shapes the message

5B – The business of media: who is renting my eyeballs?

This lesson analyzes the role of advertising in media. Special emphasis is laid on media techniques of increasing and retaining audiences.

Lesson objectives: students will be able to

- Keep track of the advertising they are seeing

- Analyze the relationship between commercials and the TV programs they sponsor

- Build an understanding about the economic structure of the commercial media

5C – Hidden messages: the growth of product placement

Lesson is based on the discussions over the hidden advertisements in media and how different commercial products are indirectly advertised in movies, TV shows, video games, etc.

Lesson objectives: students will be able to

- Identify product placements they see in TV programs and movies

- Build awareness of the pervasiveness of advertising in their culture

- Develop critical skills necessary to think independently in a media saturated consumer society

5D – How much of media are ads?

Lesson aims at drawing learners' attention to how much of media content are advertisements. It analyzes the pervasiveness of advertising and the interrelationship between advertising and content in media.

Lesson objectives: students will be able to

- Build an awareness of the pervasiveness of advertising in our society

- Conduct original research to access the amount of advertising in media

- Analyze the interrelationship between advertising and editorial content

5E – Power, persuasion and propaganda: exploring multiple motives

The last lesson of the Media literacy Kit is dedicated to media motives other than commercial. Media as a tool for manipulation of public opinion, influencing audiences' voting and other behaviors is analyzed in this section. Lesson aims at rising learners' awareness on the techniques of propaganda and the wide range of media motivations in the modern world.

Lesson objectives: students will be able to

- Recognize different motives even in non-commercial media

- Analyze the role of media in a democratic society

- Wrestle with ethical issues concerning media and public good

CML's lesson plans presented in this section will be respectively modified and further implemented in the empirical part of this research. A detailed plan of implementation will be carefully discussed in the methodological section of this work.

2.2.4 Integration of media literacy across subject curriculum

Another approach to integration of media literacy competence into formal education is teacher training in integration of media literacy across non-specific subjects as a cross-cutting competence. José Manuel Perez-Tornero (2008) suggests that in many countries due to the overload of the existing school curricula it is advised to, instead of adding a separate course, to

promote a cross-curricula approach for integration of media literacy competence into the formal school setting.

The objectives of such activities are identified by Perez-Tornero as the following:

1. **Promote the basic capacities for information and media literacy:** information searches, activating reception, critical reading, understanding, appreciation, reflection and expression, higher level of reasoning (eg. Problem solving, decision making, analytical vision, etc.)

2. **Develop curricular activities for media and information education:** courses, conferences, seminars, workshops, didactic programs, cross-curricular projects, etc.

3. **Develop and direct school resources and media:** publications, website, blogs, radio stations, videos, educational television stations, etc.

4. **Create and develop communication and cooperative work settings through information and communication technologies:** social networks, e-learning activities, life-long learning, etc.

   (original emphasis) (Perez-Tornero, 2008, p. 21)

According to Perez-Tornero (2008) it is recommended that the curriculum development methods combine theoretical and practical activities carried out in the classroom "with the direct and practical knowledge of the processes and contexts in which the teachers will have to develop their activity once the training period is over" (p. 28).

Perez-Tornero (2008) further suggests that media literacy competence should be promoted in almost every curricular subject:

"Media and information literacy imply crosscutting content that affects the entire curriculum and permeates all courses. That means that in almost every curricular subject, teachers should acquire media and information literacy competencies. This assumes that they would have some awareness, knowledge and ability in relation to media and information literacy, but it is nevertheless necessary to categorise these abilities and knowledge systematically in order to prepare teachers for didactic activities in media and information literacy in the classroom" (p. 20).

As discussed in sections 3.3 and 3.4, the school teachers interviewed for this research had been trained in integrating media literacy competence across their subject curriculums as a cross-cutting competence. The Georgian organization Civic Development Institute (CDI), which trained the teachers, kindly agreed to provide access to their Moodle platform in order to enable inclusion of their training program into this thesis (Appendix 1).

The examination of the training program suggests that the program consisted of two parts. The goals and structure of the program is explained by the authors as following:

1. **Introduction to media literacy**

   The first part of the training module is prepared for the school teachers, students, citizens of any age and profession which have the interest to learn the basic theories of media literacy and the ways media influences our opinions, feelings, attitudes and decisions.

Major goals:

- The trainees will become familiar with the major concepts and the key questions of media literacy;

- The trainees will gain the skills for deconstruction of media products;

- The trainees will gain the skills for differentiating their reality from the image of reality created by media.

The first part of the course comprises of lessons, reading materials, educational recourses and instruments for evaluation. The participants will have the opportunity to gain knowledge and to train in deconstruction of media messages and analysis and critical evaluation of media products. After the completion of the course the trainees will gain a better understanding of the goals of the media and will improve the skills for the analysis and evaluation of media products.

2. **Critical media literacy**

The second part of the training module is prepared for schools and universities. Representatives of the education system will learn how to plan lessons using multimedia products.

Major goals:

- Representatives of the education system will learn the major goals of media literacy education;

- Representatives of the education system will gain knowledge concerning planning and implementation of educational processes aiming at enhancing media literacy competences.

The second part of the course comprises of lessons, reading materials, educational recourses and instruments for evaluation. The participants will be introduced to the concepts of critical media literacy and the techniques for integration of media literacy competence into the educational processes.

As the examination of CDI's Moodle platform further suggests, the teacher training module consists of four following sessions:

Session 1: The goals of the media literacy training and the multimedia recourses.

The participants will be introduced to:

- The formats of media literacy training;
- The accordance of the goals of media literacy training with the national curriculum plan.

The first session consists of two video lectures, two reading materials and the corresponding assignments:

Video lecture1: The format of the methodological material.

Video lecture 2: The goals of the media literacy training and the multimedia recourses.

Reading material 1: The format of the methodological material.

Reading material 2: The goals of the media literacy training and the multimedia recourses.

Assignment 1: A test for inquiring the participants' understanding concerning the basic theories of media literacy.

Assignment 2: A test for inquiring the participants' understanding concerning the correspondence of media literacy training with the national curriculum.

Assignment 3: Listening to short interviews with international experts on media literacy and writing a brief analysis on the topic expressing the viewpoints of the participants.

Homework: To prepare a short paper on the participants' concrete plans concerning the integration of media literacy competence across curriculum.

Session 2: The fundamental components of media literacy education, the major principles and questions.

The participants will be introduced to:

- The fundamental components and the major principles of media literacy;
- The questions corresponding to the major concepts of media literacy.

The second session consists of two video lectures, two reading materials and the corresponding assignments:

Video lecture 1: The major principles of media literacy.

Video lecture 2: Types of questions.

Reading material 1: The major principles of media literacy.

Reading material 2: Types of questions.

Assignment 1: A test for inquiring the participants' understanding concerning the major goals of media literacy training.

Assignment 2: A test for inquiring the participants' skills concerning the identification of credibility and trustworthiness of information sources.

Homework: To prepare a short paper on discussions over multimedia recourses and suggestions for a lesson plan.

Session 3: Preparation of a lesson plan.

The participants will be introduced to:

- The ways of integrating media literacy competence into a lesson;
- The techniques of deconstruction of media messages.

The third session consists of two video lectures, two reading materials and a corresponding assignment:

Video lecture 1: Integration of media literacy competence into the curriculum.

Video lecture 2: Deconstruction of media messages.

Reading material 1: Integration of media literacy competence into the curriculum.

Reading material 2: Deconstruction of media messages.

Assignment: A test for inquiring the participants' understanding of the proper selection of multimedia products in the process of integrating media literacy competence into a particular curriculum.

Homework: To prepare a short paper on the instruments for evaluation of media literacy integration strategies.

Session 4: Edition of media literacy methodological materials.

The participants will be introduced to:

- The procedures of collegial evaluation of media literacy methodological materials;
- The comprising components of media literacy methodological materials.

The last session of the training module consists of two video lectures, two reading materials and a homework:

Video lesson 1: The format of a media literacy lesson.

Video lesson 2: The collegial evaluation.

Reading material 1: The format of methodological materials.

Reading material 2: The collegial evaluation.

Homework: To upload the final paper describing the participants' views concerning the issues discussed during the four sessions.

According to the data provided on the Moodle platform, up to 60 school teachers had been trained with the teacher training program discussed in this section. The results of the interviews with the participant teachers will be presented and analyzed in the following sections of the thesis.

2.2.5   Media literacy in Georgia

Before moving on to the second part of the literature review, it will be helpful to discuss the state of media literacy in Georgia, where the empirical part of this research will be implemented.

2.2.5.1 Georgia – country profile

Situated in the South Caucasus, Georgia is surrounded by its neighbors Turkey, Russia, Armenia and Azerbaijan.

Country profile conducted by the United Nations and the World Bank suggests:

Capital: Tbilisi

Population: 4.3 million

Area: 69,700 square kilometers

Language: Georgian

Major religion: Orthodox Cristian

Life expectancy: 71 years (men), 77 years (women)[3]

After declaring its independence from the Soviet Union in 1991, currently Georgia is a representative democratic semi-presidential republic, with the President as the head of state and the Prime minister as the head of Government. The executive branch of power is made up of the President and the Cabinet of Georgia which is composed of ministers, headed by the Prime minister and appointed by the President (Nakashidze, 2016). The parliament of Georgia assembled by 150 members represents the legislative authority of the state.

Georgia's foreign strategies are based on the integration into the European Union and NATO. Its aspiration to join the EU and NATO is observed to have a strong support from Georgian citizens and the countries major political parties[4], including the ruling parties of the last two-three decades.

Georgia's geopolitical challenges are shaped by the disputes with Russian Federation which openly supports two breakaway regions of Georgia. Georgia's two autonomous regions Abkhazia and Tskhinvali Region (also known as South Ossetia) are recognized as independent states by Russia, Venezuela, Nicaragua and Nauru. The rest of the international community considers them as parts of Georgia. Georgia's sovereignty and territorial integrity are strongly supported by the United States of America and the European Union.

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[3] Retrieved from www.bbc.com on 04/05/2018.
[4] Retrieved from www.forreignaffairs.com on 04/05/2018.

2.2.5.2 Education system of Georgia

According to the National Center for Educational Quality Enhancement of Georgia, general education in Georgia is regulated by the laws of Georgia: "On General Education" and "On Education Quality Enhancement"; Operating by the National Curriculum and other Sub-legal acts.

Full general education includes 12 years of study and is carried out in three levels (primary, basic, secondary). Primary education includes 6 years of study and is implemented in I-VI grades; Basic education includes 3 years, implemented in VII-IX grades; Secondary education includes 3 years, carried out in X-XII grades. Primary and basic education is mandatory.

General education institutions are public or private.

The study in general educational institutions carried out according to the National Curriculum, developed by the National Curriculum Department of the Ministry of Education and Science.

Upon completing the Basic education, school students receive a Basic Education Certificate (Atestate).

Upon completing the Full General education, school students receive a Full General Education Certificate (Atestate).

Attestation exams are conducted by the LEPL - National Assessment and Examination Center.

A person who completes The Full General Education and receives the certificate (Atestate) has the right to continue learning in the higher education institution.

A person who completes the Basic education has the right to continue studies on the Secondary education level of the General Education or primary level of the Vocational education.

General education is fully funded by the State with the voucher applicable to a financial norm for a student.

According to the data from April 2018, 2085 public and 224 private schools are operating in Georgia[5].

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[5] Retrieved from www.eqe.ge on 12/05/2018.

Figure 1: Education system in Georgia
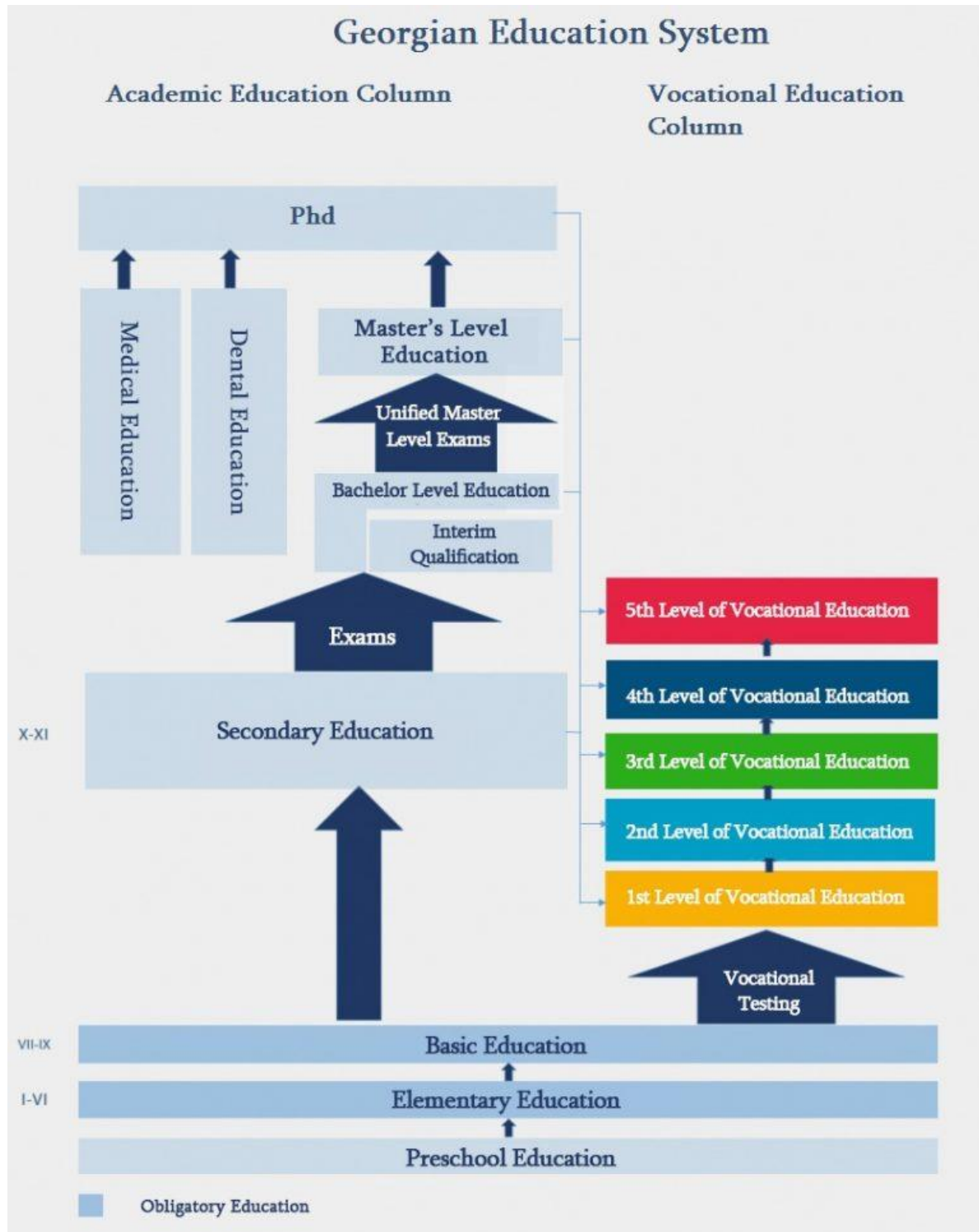
Source: Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport of Georgia (2019)

According to a UNICEF study conducted in 2018, primary and secondary school attendance in Georgia is the following:

Figure 2: Primary and secondary school attendance in Georgia, 2017

	Primary school attendance	Secondary school attendance	
	Age 6-12	Age 12-15	Age 15-18
Gender			
Female	97.4	97.5	86.6
Male	96.9	97.7	86.6
Location			
Urban	97.6	97.6	91.0
Rural	96.7	97.5	82.4
Total	**97.1**	**97.6**	**86.6**

Source: UNICEF, 2018

2.2.5.3 Literacy in Georgia

Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) conducted research of literacy rates in Georgia in 2011 and again in 2016. As the study suggests:

"Georgia has always enjoyed a strong literacy tradition. According to the UNESCO Institute of Statistics, adult literacy (i.e., age 15 and older) rates in Georgia are 99.7 percent for women and 99.8 percent for men. Youth literacy (specifically ages 15 to 24) rates are 99.9 and 99.8 for females and males, respectively. In 2009, Georgia's net enrollment rate in primary

education for both genders was 100 percent, as was the transition rate from primary to secondary education" (PIRLS, 2016).

PIRLS study (2016) further suggests that in Georgia the national curriculum describes national standards consisting of learning outcomes and grade level indicators for each subject taught in school.

Figure 3: National standards for the language/reading curriculum, grades 1 through 4, in Georgia

Learning Outcomes for Grades 1 to 4	Evidence of Achieving Target
Understand, Analyze, and Evaluate Information	• Retell various types of texts after having listened to them • Construct sentences and texts after reading • Read and understand various types of texts • Identify and interpret various grammatical constructs • Write about familiar topics • Adequately apply punctuation, orthographic, and grammar rules
Understand and Apply Communication Aspects of Language	• Adequately react to various conversational situations • Use argument, discussion, and reasoning strategies • Use communicaton skills according to communication norms • Master basic reading skills • Develop written texts of various characters, purposes, and objectives
Understand and Express Literary Texts	• Read literary texts of various genres; express own emotions and ideas after reading or listening to literary texts of various genres • Relate the information in literary texts to own experience • Link various parts of the text to each other and identify the main theme • Evaluate characters' actions • Identify literary forms and strategies and explain their function • Develop literary texts • Select reading literature according to own preferences

Source: Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport of Georgia (2018)

Learning outcomes in reading at the end of Grade 4 are defined as follows:

• Student can read and understand nonliterary texts on familiar topics;

• Student can independently read literary texts on various topics;

- Student can identify main language and grammar notations of various literary and nonliterary texts;

- Student can express his/her attitude toward a text after reading; demonstrates desire for aesthetic and ethical evaluation;

- Student can adequately analyze age relevant texts and identify nonverbal parts; demonstrates nonverbal interpretation of the text;

- Student can use various strategies to locate information about a specific topic and process it (PIRLS, 2016).

Georgia's score in the distribution of reading achievement international ranking conducted by PIRLS remained unchanged from 2011 to 2016 with a total score of 488:

Figure 4: Distribution of reading achievement, 2011

Exhibit 1.1: Distribution of Reading Achievement

PIRLS 2011 4th Grade

Country	Average Scale Score		Reading Achievement Distribution
[3] Hong Kong SAR	571 (2.3)	○	
Russian Federation	568 (2.7)	○	
Finland	568 (1.9)	○	
[2] Singapore	567 (3.3)	○	
† Northern Ireland	558 (2.4)	○	
[2] United States	556 (1.5)	○	
[2] Denmark	554 (1.7)	○	
[2] Croatia	553 (1.9)	○	
Chinese Taipei	553 (1.9)	○	
Ireland	552 (2.3)	○	
† England	552 (2.6)	○	
[2] Canada	548 (1.6)	○	
† Netherlands	546 (1.9)	○	
Czech Republic	545 (2.2)	○	
Sweden	542 (2.1)	○	
Italy	541 (2.2)	○	
Germany	541 (2.2)	○	
[3] Israel	541 (2.7)	○	
Portugal	541 (2.6)	○	
Hungary	539 (2.9)	○	
Slovak Republic	535 (2.8)	○	
Bulgaria	532 (4.1)	○	
New Zealand	531 (1.9)	○	
Slovenia	530 (2.0)	○	
Austria	529 (2.0)	○	
[1][2] Lithuania	528 (2.0)	○	
Australia	527 (2.2)	○	
Poland	526 (2.1)	○	
France	520 (2.6)	○	
Spain	513 (2.3)	○	
‡ Norway	507 (1.9)	○	
[2] † Belgium (French)	506 (2.9)	○	
Romania	502 (4.3)		
PIRLS Scale Centerpoint	**500**		
[1] Georgia	488 (3.1)	▼	
Malta	477 (1.4)	▼	
Trinidad and Tobago	471 (3.8)	▼	
[2] Azerbaijan	462 (3.3)	▼	
Iran, Islamic Rep. of	457 (2.8)	▼	
Colombia	448 (4.1)	▼	
United Arab Emirates	439 (2.2)	▼	
Saudi Arabia	430 (4.4)	▼	
Indonesia	428 (4.2)	▼	
[2] Qatar	425 (3.5)	▼	
Ψ Oman	391 (2.8)	▼	
✳ Morocco	310 (3.9)	▼	

○ Country average significantly higher than the centerpoint of the PIRLS scale

▼ Country average significantly lower than the centerpoint of the PIRLS scale

Percentiles of Performance
5th 25th   75th 95th
95% Confidence Interval for Average (±2SE)

SOURCE: IEA's Progress in International Reading Literacy Study – PIRLS 2011

Source: PIRLS, 2011

Figure 5: Distribution of reading achievement, 2016

Exhibit 1.1: Distribution of Reading Achievement

Country	Average Scale Score	Reading Achievement Distribution
Russian Federation	581 (2.2) ○	
[3] Singapore	576 (3.2) ○	
[2] [†] Hong Kong SAR	569 (2.7) ○	
Ireland	567 (2.5) ○	
Finland	566 (1.8) ○	
Poland	565 (2.1) ○	
Northern Ireland	565 (2.2) ○	
Norway (5)	559 (2.3) ○	
Chinese Taipei	559 (2.0) ○	
England	559 (1.9) ○	
[2] Latvia	558 (1.7) ○	
Sweden	555 (2.4) ○	
Hungary	554 (2.9) ○	
Bulgaria	552 (4.2) ○	
[†] United States	549 (3.1) ○	
Lithuania	548 (2.6) ○	
Italy	548 (2.2) ○	
[2] Denmark	547 (2.1) ○	
Macao SAR	546 (1.0) ○	
[†] Netherlands	545 (1.7) ○	
Australia	544 (2.5) ○	
Czech Republic	543 (2.1) ○	
[1] [2] Canada	543 (1.8) ○	
Slovenia	542 (2.0) ○	
[2] Austria	541 (2.4) ○	
Germany	537 (3.2) ○	
Kazakhstan	536 (2.5) ○	
Slovak Republic	535 (3.1) ○	
[3] Israel	530 (2.5) ○	
[2] Portugal	528 (2.3) ○	
Spain	528 (1.7) ○	
Belgium (Flemish)	525 (1.9) ○	
New Zealand	523 (2.2) ○	
France	511 (2.2) ○	
PIRLS Scale Centerpoint	500	
[2] Belgium (French)	497 (2.6)	
Chile	494 (2.5) ▼	
[1] Georgia	488 (2.8) ▼	
Trinidad and Tobago	479 (3.3) ▼	
Azerbaijan	472 (4.2) ▼	
[2] Malta	452 (1.8) ▼	
United Arab Emirates	450 (3.2) ▼	
Bahrain	446 (2.3) ▼	
Qatar	442 (1.8) ▼	
Saudi Arabia	430 (4.2) ▼	
Iran, Islamic Rep. of	428 (4.0) ▼	
Oman	418 (3.3) ▼	
Kuwait	393 (4.1) ▼	
Morocco	358 (3.9) ▼	
Egypt	330 (5.6) ▼	
South Africa	320 (4.4) ▼	

○ Country average significantly higher than the centerpoint of the PIRLS scale

▼ Country average significantly lower than the centerpoint of the PIRLS scale

Percentiles of Performance
5th 25th 75th 95th
95% Confidence Interval for Average (±2SE)

Source: PIRLS, 2016

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2.2.5.4 Mass media in Georgia

According to the 2017 Freedom of the Press Index by Freedom House, Georgian media is ranked as partly free with a score of 50 (0=best, 100=worst) (Freedom House, 2018). This ranking recognizes Georgian media as the freest among its neighboring states (Russia: not free, score 83; Turkey: not free, score 76; Armenia: not free, score 63; Azerbaijan: not free, score 90) (ibid).

Georgian media is further characterized by Freedom House as following:

"Georgia continues to have the freest and most diverse media environment in the South Caucasus, though political polarization and the close links between media companies and politicians have historically plagued the industry. While none of the country's major providers of news are known to be directly owned by a politician, strong ties remain between media outlets and political parties or interests" (ibid).

2017 research by National Democratic Institute suggests that 72 percent of Georgians name TV media as the primary source of receiving information about Georgian politics and current events, 18 percent named online media while print media and radio received less than 1 per cent each (CRRC – Georgia, 2017). It should be noted that according to the research, the number of respondents naming internet at the primary source of information grows year by year (April 2015 – 7 percent; June 2016 – 14 percent; July 2017 – 19 percent) (ibid).

The polarization of Georgian TV media is underlined in media monitoring reports conducted by local organizations funded by European Union Delegation to Georgia and United Nations Development Program in Georgia during the Georgian elections in 2016, 2017 and 2018. According to the monitoring reports, the polarization of Georgian TV media was evident during

the 2016 and 2017 elections and reached its peak during the 2018 presidential elections when two of the most popular Georgian TV channels openly engaged in the campaigns of the presidential candidates (Civic Development Institute, Georgian Charter of Journalistic Ethics, Internews Georgia, 2018). The study further suggests that during the 2016 and 2017 elections in Georgia media bias was visible through positive coverage of certain politicians, while during the 2018 elections the bias was visible through an extremely negative coverage of certain presidential candidates (ibid).

According to the same monitoring results, polarization and political bias are less present in Georgian online media and radio but are strongly present in Georgian press, along with the rude violations of journalistic ethical standards (ibid).

2.2.5.5 Media education in Georgia

In 2011 Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia adopted a new national curriculum which defines media literacy as a cross cutting competence. According to the national curriculum, media literacy skills must be enhanced among students in all subject groups (Mosiashvili et al., 2014). However, no evidence of implementation is visible. Media literacy related activities in Georgia are mainly carried out by a small number of non-governmental organizations.

As far as the evidence shows, the only organization in Georgia aiming at integration of media literacy into school education nationwide is a local NGO Civic Development Institute (CDI). Since 2013 CDI has conducted a number of activities aiming at enhancing media literacy competence among Georgian youth and integrating media literacy into academic syllabus. CDI has trained

more than 60 teachers throughout Georgia in integrating media literacy into the curriculum. The materials published by the trained teachers on CDI's online portal (*www.medialiteracy.ge*) have been awarded with the continuous professional development credits by the Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia. Semi-structured interviews with the school teachers trained by CDI will serve as basis for further discussions in the later sections of this thesis.

2.3 Public sphere

The second part of literature review suggests analysis of Jurgen Habermas's works, with special emphasis on his theories of the *public sphere* and *communicative action*. The role of mass media in Habermas's analysis is closely examined as well as reflections of various authors on Habermas's theories.

2.3.1   Introduction to Habermas

Jurgen Habermas, sociologist and philosopher, belonged to the second generation of the Frankfurt School following the first generation and founders such as Max Horkheimer, Theodor Adorno and Herbert Marcuse. Jurgen Habermas is generally identified with the critical social theory; however, his works have influenced multiple disciplines, including communication studies, cultural studies, moral theory, law, linguistics, philosophy, political science, theology, sociology and democratic theory.

His first major work *The Structural Transformation of the Bourgeois Public Sphere* has been a subject for diversified discussions in various disciplines since its publication in 1962 (translated into English in 1989). In his work Habermas presents a concept of the *public sphere* of citizens emancipating from state domination and contributing to formulation of public opinion through rational-critical debate:

"By the "public sphere" we mean first of all a realm of our social life in which something approaching public opinion can be formed. Access is guaranteed to all citizens. A portion of the public sphere comes into being in every conversation in which private individuals assemble to form a public body" (Habermas, 1964, p. 49).

According to Habermas, the public sphere or "the sphere of private people come together as a public" (Habermas, 1989, p. 31) initially formed in French, British and German coffee houses and salons where private citizens would gather to engage in rational-critical debate over philosophy, literature, arts, and in course of time over social and political matters as well. Through the early forms of press and the active participation of what Habermas refers to as *the man of letters* public's rational-critical debate exceeded the salons and coffee houses and eventually gained a political importance. The public debate, through formulation of the public opinion, "put the state in touch with the needs of society" (ibid, p. 31) and consequently found its way into the political realm.

In Habermas's analysis the development of the public sphere is discussed in the closest affiliation with the development of mass media. Starting from the early forms of press and through the processes leading to the establishment of journalism as *the fourth estate*, Habermas focuses his analysis on the role of print media among major arenas of public's rational-critical debate. He further analyses the interrelations of media and the public sphere after the development of

electronic media such as radio and television and directly links the decline of the public sphere with the rise of consumer-oriented mass media. He believes that with the development of the market-oriented mass media *public* turned into *audience* deprived from critical reflection and participation. Moreover, with the development of electronic media the need for immense funds turned the mass media into "the gate through which privileged private interests invaded the public sphere" (ibid, p. 185). Habermas describes this process as the *refeudalization* of the public sphere as the original basis of the publicist institutions became reversed and while the early forms of publicity had to be achieved through opposing the secret politics of monarchs by engaging in rational-critical public debate and being accountable in front of public, later this concept reversed and publicity became achieved with the help of secret politics of interest groups which manipulate public opinion without themselves being controlled by it.

In his later works, such as *The Theory of Communicative Action* (1981) and *Between Facts and Norms* (1992) Habermas turns to normative philosophy. His analysis of the invasion of the public sphere by the political and economic interests and it's *refeudalization* finds continuation in his later *Theory of Communicative Action* with the discussion over *systemic colonization of the lifeworld*. However, in this later work Habermas downplays the discussion over mass media and centers his analysis on the interpersonal, face-to-face communication and the *ideal speech situation*.

Habermas's theories have been widely criticized and debated upon. His idealization of the bourgeois public sphere has been doubted as well as the exclusion of other civic movements from his analysis, underestimation of the modern mass media's role in his theory of communicative action and his system-lifeworld distinction (*for a detailed criticism of Habermas's discussions see Kellner, 2000, Lunt and Livingstone, 2013*). In his later publications Habermas admitted certain

gaps in his analysis and offered further clarifications over his discussions; however, he preserved the validity of his historical argument.

In the following sections special emphasis will be laid on two of Habermas's major works *The Structural Transformation of the Bourgeois Public Sphere* and *The Theory of Communicative Action*. The role of mass media in Habermas's discussions will be carefully examined as well as the criticism over his analysis over modern mass media's role in contemporary societies.

2.3.2   The structural transformation of the bourgeois public sphere

As Habermas's theory of the *public sphere* serves a major basis for this thesis, it will be helpful to include a very detailed review of authors views presented in *The Structural Transformation in the Bourgeois Public Sphere*. The following sub-section is dedicated solely to examination of this singe work, as presented by the author.

Jurgen Habermas (1989) begins his work by questioning the rationality of usage of the word *public*. He believes that even the sciences such as jurisprudence, political science and sociology seem incapable to replace *public* and *private* with more adequate terms. He analyses the terms such as *public building*, *public authority*, *public opinion* and *informed public* and concludes that the word "public" changes its meaning in different contexts:

"We call events and occasions "public" when they are open to all, in contrast to closed or exclusive affairs" – argues Habermas – "as when we speak of public places or public houses. But as in the expression "public building", the term needed not refer to general accessibility; the building does not even have to be open to public traffic. "Public buildings" simply house state

institutions and as such are "public". The state is the "public authority". It owes this attribute to its task of promoting to public or common welfare of its rightful members. The word has yet another meaning when one speaks of a "public [official] reception"; on such occasions a powerful display of representation is staged whose "publicity" contains an element of public recognition. There is a shift in meaning again when we say that someone has made a name for himself, has a public reputation" (p. 2).

Habermas suggests that if we attain the historical understanding of the *pubic* and the *public sphere*, we can perceive "a systematic comprehension of our own society" (p. 5). Therefore, the author offers the analysis of the *public* and the *public sphere* starting from the Middle Ages in Europe when the economic organization of social labor "caused all relations of domination to be centered in the lord's house-hold" (p. 5) and no public law approved privet people's participation in the public sphere.

Habermas discusses the evolution of the concepts of *private* and *public* beginning from Roman and Greek origins, through the Middle Age Europe and to the aristocratic society which emerged after the Renaissance. He particularly examines British and German models and assumes that the public sphere emerged in Germany during the eighteenth century as its name (*Öffentlichkeit*) was formulated in this period.

Jurgen Habermas profoundly analyzes the changes in the social order after the emergence of the new form of capitalism which was brought by the expansion of the international trade as early as in the thirteenth century. In his analysis Habermas lays special emphasis on the creation of the new ways of communication, such as the early forms of press and the changes in the financial structures of the European states.

As the author illustrates, the expansion of trade gave rise to the necessity of new ways of information flows. According to Habermas, with the expansion of the international trade "markets of a different sort arose" (p. 15) which demanded a more improved and exact information about distant events. Merchants organized the first mail routes and big cities became "centers for the traffic in news" (p. 16). Postal services and press institutionalized regular communication. However, the first forms of press were not open to wide public as the merchants and court chanceries preferred to limit the information to insiders.

According to Habermas, only by the end of the seventeenth century press became accessible to general public when journalists started to find ways of avoiding merchant's unofficial censorship and making their newspapers more accessible to public in order to increase their incomes. Eventually, the state authorities started to use press for promulgating official announcements and thus the press became public "in the proper sense" (p. 21). Soon the press was "systematically made to serve the interests of the state administration" (p. 22). However, the authorities did not try to reach the "common man" but rather the *educated classes* were the addressees of their promulgations – the new stratum of *bourgeois* people which occupied a central position within the public – the officials of the ruler's administration, doctors, pastors, officers, professors and scholars "who were at the top of a hierarchy reaching down through schoolteachers and scribes to the "people" (p. 23).

The bourgeois public sphere is described by Habermas as "the sphere of private people come together as a public" which soon "claimed the public sphere regulated from above against the public authorities themselves, to engage them in a debate over the general rules governing relations in the basically privatized but publicly relevant sphere of commodity exchange and social labor" (p. 27). The bourgeois were private people as they did not *rule*. Therefore, their

confrontation with the authorities was based not on the distribution of power but rather on the changes in domination. The first phase of the bourgeois public sphere is described by the author as *the public sphere of letters* as it was based on discussion and debate, which through the formulation of public opinion "put the state in touch with the needs of society" (p. 31).

Habermas describes the initial institutions of the public sphere which were coffee houses in Britain, salons in France and *tischgesellschaften* in Germany and suggests that despite some differences, all of them had a number of institutional criteria in common. *Firstly*, they established a kind of social intercourse which promoted the equality of status. In these salons and coffee houses the authority of a better argument stood higher than the social or economic hierarchy. *Secondly*, discussion within such public "presupposed the problematization of areas that until then had not been questioned" (p. 36). These salons and coffee houses became the first institutions where the monopoly of authorities and church over interpretations and discussions about philosophy, literature, arts and even social, political and economic concerns was shifted to wider public.

The cultural product became available to private people for discussion which gave way to critical debate. *Thirdly*, these processes established public *as in principle inclusive*. The discussion and debates in the salons and coffee houses did not remain internal and was directed at the outside world too, which made even wider masses able to participate directly or indirectly.

Soon after the institutionalization of salons and coffee houses, the theatres, museums and operas became available to wider audiences which gave way to creation of a *greater* public. Habermas suggests that while the early institutions of bourgeois public sphere were "closely bound up with aristocratic society as it became dissociated from the court", the "great" public which was formed subsequently in the theaters, museums and concerts "was bourgeois at its social origin" (p. 43) and by the middle of eighteenth century its influence began to predominate. Houses of

bourgeois families took the role of new kinds of *salons* where closer circles of people would gather for social evenings and receptions. Author describes this sphere as "the scene of a psychological emancipation that corresponded to the political-economic one" (p. 46). These private individuals were emancipated from governmental directives and controls and were freer to make decisions in accordance with their own convictions. In this period private as well as public correspondence became exceptionally popular which formed, as author describes, "the public sphere of a rational-critical debate in the world of letters" (p. 51).

According to Habermas, with the rise of a social sphere regulating public opinion which battled with public power "public sphere shifted from the properly political tasks of a citizenry acting in common to the more properly civic tasks of a society engaged in critical public debate" (p. 52). By the eighteenth century the polemic within the public sphere gained political importance. The audience-oriented privacy made way into the political realm and "regulation of civil society" (ibid.) became the political task of the bourgeois public sphere.

Habermas suggests that the public sphere that functioned in the political realm first arose in Great Britain at the beginning of the eighteenth century when the critical public was empowered enough to influence the decisions of state authority. The author underlines three major events influencing this process which took place in Great Britain: the founding of the Bank of England, the elimination of the institution of censorship and the first cabinet government taking the first steps toward the *parliamentization* of the state authority. With the elimination of the censorship, despite a number of strict laws and restrictions, press in Britain become more liberated than in other European states. This deliberation furthered the increase of critical debate in the press as politicians began to hire professional writers in order to defend their party causes not only in the pamphlets but in the journals and newspapers as well. Eventually, the press "was for the first time

established as a genuinely critical organ of a public engaged in critical political debate: as the fourth estate" (p. 60). These developments led to the formulation of the new term *public opinion* which was "formed in public discussion after the public, through education and information, had been put in a position to arrive at a considered opinion" (p. 66).

In France, as Habermas suggests, also arose a public which critically debated the political issues but only during the middle of the eighteenth century. It was not able to effectively institutionalize its *critical impulses* before the Revolution and one of the main reasons was the strong state censorship which would not allow the development of critical press. In France not only political journalism was lacking but also "an estates assembly which under its influence might have gradually been transformed into a representative institution of the people" (p. 67). Habermas believes that the "social basis for such institutions was lacking as well" (ibid.). The situation in France changed dramatically after the Revolution when the "political functions of the public sphere quickly transformed into slogans that spread over Europe" (p. 70). The 1791 and 1793 constitutions ensured freedom of assembly and freedom of expression and despite the *elimination* of free press by Napoleon in 1800, upon the return of the Bourbons the freedom of press was reestablished and preserved.

In Germany "something akin to parliamentary life" (p. 71) emerged only after the French revolution. Habermas believes that in Germany bourgeois distanced themselves from the people and the public's critical debate of political issues "took place predominantly in the private gatherings of the bourgeoisie" (p. 72). By the end of the eighteenth century, press in Germany, including political journals "were the crystallization points of the "social" life of private people" (ibid.). Reading societies spread across the country which generally dealt with disputes in "parliamentary fashion" (p. 73). They "exclusively served the need of bourgeois private people to

create a forum for a critically debating public: to read periodicals and to discuss them, to exchange personal opinions, and to contribute to the formulation of an opinion that from the nineties on will be called "public" (ibid.).

Jurgen Habermas believes that the understanding of the functioning of the public sphere in political realm is abstract as long as its discussion is limited to the interrelations of the public, press, parties and parliaments. He believes that only after the promotion of the private law and the liberalized market the public sphere "as a functional element in the political realm was given the normative status of an organ for the self-articulation of civil society with a state authority corresponding to its needs" (p. 74). With the development of the civil law private people became capable of dealing with one another without impositions by the state and eventually the civil society as the private sphere "emancipated from the directives of public authority to such an extent that at that time the political public sphere could attain its full development in the bourgeois constitutional state" (p. 79).

The bourgeois idea of law-based state, to be exact "the binding of all state activity to a system of norms legitimated by public opinion" (p. 82) aimed at abolishing the state as an instrument of domination. The constitutional state as a bourgeois state established the public sphere in the political realm "as an organ of the state so as to ensure institutionally the connection between law and public opinion" (p. 81). As the consequence of ensuring a set of basic rights (such as the freedom of speech and expression, freedom of press, property rights, etc.) and the constitutional definition of the public realm and its functions "publicness became the organizational principle for the procedures of the organs of the state themselves; in this sense one spoke of their "publicity" (p. 83).

Habermas believes that the self-interpretation of the function of the bourgeois public sphere "crystallized in the idea of "public opinion" (p. 89). He profoundly analyzes the history of the concept of the *public opinion* and suggests the difference of the concept evolution in Great Britain, France and Germany and provides comprehensive analysis of the concept by authors such as Hobbes, Locke, Bayle, Rousseau, Friedrich Georg Forster, Burke and Louis Sebastian Mercier. Furthermore, Jurgen Habermas dedicates a considerable volume of his work to the philosophical discussion on the public sphere, public opinion and the interrelations of politics and morality by Kant, Marx, Hegel and the liberalist approaches to the public sphere concept by John Stuart Mill and Alexis de Tocqueville and concludes that neither the liberal nor the socialist models "were adequate for the diagnosis of a public sphere that remained peculiarly suspended between the two constellations abstractly presented in the models" (p. 140). He believes that the principle of the public sphere, namely the critical publicity, eventually lost "its strength in the measure that it expanded as a *sphere* and even undermined the private realm" (ibid.).

In the concluding three chapters of *The Structural Transformation of the Bourgeois Public Sphere* Habermas discusses the social-structural transformation of the public sphere and the changes in its public functions. He believes that the bourgeois public sphere evolved in the confrontation between state and public but in such a way that it remained a part of the private realm. However, with the growth of a market economy a sphere of *social* arose which further decreased the domination based on landed estate and the necessity of administration by the state authority. Consequently, production was detached from the functions of the public authority and the political administration "was released from the production tasks" (p. 140). Despite the state interventionism, the privatized society became more and more powerful and the private sphere evolved into the sphere of private autonomy. Habermas believes that eventually the "powers of

"society" themselves assumed functions of public authority… increasing "stateification" of society gradually destroyed the basis of the bourgeois public sphere – the separation of state and society" (p. 142). The private institutions themselves gained a semipublic character and formed a "repoliticized social sphere in which state and societal institutions fused into a single functional complex that could no longer be differentiated according to criteria of public and private… relationships and conditions multiplied which could not be adequately ordered through institutions of either purely private or purely public law… they required the introduction of norms of so-called social legislation" (p. 148).

State and society became so fused that the institution of the family dissociated its connection with the social reproduction, "the intimate sphere, once the very centre of the private sphere, moved to its periphery to the extent that the private sphere itself became deprivatized" (p. 152). While the bourgeois of the liberal era spent their private lives generally in occupation and family, ultimately these two realms developed into different directions – family became more private and the work more public. The development of large industrial initiatives became more and more dependent on the state of capital concentration and *work* which was once a domain of private control became *publicized*. Any large enterprise became referred to as an *organization* which Habermas analyzes in the context of an *occupational sphere*: "Today time not spent on the job represents precisely the preserve of the private, while the "job" begins with the step into occupational activity" (p. 154). He believes that the structural transformation of the conjugal family since the liberal era resulted in family losing its productive functions in contrast to gaining more consumptive ones.

The rational-critical debate of public people which took start in salons, coffee houses and reading societies was not directly related to production or consumption, "to dictates of life's

necessities" (p. 160). Instead, it demonstrated the emancipation "from the constraints of survival requirements" (p. 160). However, as soon as the public sphere in the world of letters spread into the realm of consumption the intimate sphere became intruded by the *sham-private world* of culture consumption. The rational-critical debate became replaced by consumption "and the web of public communication unraveled into acts of individuated reception…" (p. 161). The products of a *patented culture industry* spread by the mass media turned the *public* into the *audience* and generated the consumer's consciousness and illusion of privacy. Family's inner space became occupied by the *social forces* channeled through mass media and a "pseudo-public sphere of a no longer literary public was patched together to create a sort of superfamiliar zone of familiarity" (p. 162).

Habermas believes these transformations to be a result of weakening of the institutions which ensured the consistency of the public as a critically debating entity from the middle of the nineteenth century. He believes that firstly, the family lost its function as a "circle of literary propaganda" (p. 162). Secondly, the literary periodicals in course of time were replaced by advertise-financed magazines with the major goal of raising the sales. Thirdly, when the family lost connection with *the world of letters* salons went out of fashion. In the twentieth century the new forms of sociability, as Habermas believes, had one thing in common despite their regional or national diversity: "abstinence from literary and political debate" (p. 163). The later forms of sociability lost the institutional power induced by a rational-critical debate as the new forms of leisure such as going to movie theatre, listening to the radio or watching TV were performed *publicly*:

"The communication of the public that debated critically about culture remained dependent on reading pursued in the closed-off privacy of the home. The leisure activities of the culture

consuming public, on the contrary, themselves take place within a social climate, and they do not require any further discussions. The private form of appropriation removed the ground for a communication about what has been appropriated" (p. 163).

On the other hand, the tendency of rational public debate continued as an element of adult education. However, Habermas believes that the public debate assumed the form of consumer item as it was staged and carefully cultivated. The conversation itself became *administered*. Professional dialogues, panel discussions and round table shows – the rational debate of private people became a part of mass media production. Discussion became a business and critical debate assumed the functions of a "tranquilizing substitute for action" (p. 164), increasingly losing its publicist functions. The cultural products, as well as the discussion around them became more dependent on the market and sales which gave way to the concept of *mass culture*. Habermas argues that:

> "mass culture has earned its rather dubious name precisely by achieving increased sales by adapting to the need for relaxation and entertainment on the part of consumer strata with relatively little education, rather than through the guidance of an enlarged public toward the appreciation of a culture undamaged in this substance" (p. 165).

Habermas further analyzes the tendencies of mass culture. He suggests that in the eighteenth century the attempt of enlarging the sphere of educated critical public was carried out by educating the larger strata of people. The reading clubs developed its branches which aimed at educating the so-called lower classes of public. Therefore, "the "people" were brought up to the level of culture; culture was not lowered to that of masses" (p. 166). However, in the course of time culture became a commodity "not only in form but also in content" (p. 166) and became emptied from the elements whose appreciation required a certain amount of training and education.

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The special consumer-oriented preparation of cultural products focused on entertainment and leisure gave way to the creation of the mass culture which the author believes to provide not cumulative but regressive experience as "serious involvement with culture produces facility, while the consumption of mass culture leaves no lasting trace" (p. 166)

Habermas believes that the most essential sector of critical literary debate which is the book market has also transformed in a consumer-oriented fashion. He argues that in order to increase the sales, book publishers not only reduced the book prices but more importantly they lowered the requirements for the authors to the needs of *mass taste*. The *entrance requirements* for the authors were eased and the literature became directed to the reception of "fewer requisites and weaker consequences" (p. 167). The book clubs struggled to defend their authors from criticism as their product was viewed in terms of business which consequently weakened the role of literary criticism. The reading public that debated critically about matters of culture was replaced by the mass of culture consumers.

The same consumer-oriented tendencies affected press which gave way to the rise of the so-called *yellow journalism*. With the expansion of the news-reading public and with the development of the sales-oriented press political issues and critical discussion in press lost its influence. Public affairs, social problems, economic matters, education and health were pushed back by the *immediate reward news* such as comics, accidents, disasters, sports, social events, etc. Same tendencies found continuation in the *newer media*. Once separate domains of journalism and literature, which is information and rational-critical argument, mixed into a "pleasant and at the same time convenient subject for entertainment that, instead of doing justice to reality, has a tendency to present a substitute more palatable for consumption and more likely to give rise to an impersonal indulgence in stimulating relaxation than to a public use of reason" (p. 170).

Habermas believes that *modern art* was affected by these tendencies as well. The recognition of an artist became more dependent on larger audiences which meant larger strata of consumers. Consequently, new elite of *intellectuals* arose which asserted the role of art critics while the public's critical debate over cultural product weakened. Therefore, public split apart into minorities of specialists, which were well-paid cultural functionaries, and the great mass of uncritical consumer public.

With the replacement of a public critically reflecting on its culture with a public of consumers the public sphere lost its specific character. The culture propagated by the mass media effectively obtained elements of advertising and consequently the public sphere assumed the advertising functions. The more public sphere became an arena for political and economic propaganda the more it became *unpolitical* and *pseudo-privatized*. The political processes deprived from public participation and became the matter for private bureaucracies, special-interest associations, parties and public administration; "competition between organized private interests invaded the public sphere" (p. 179). Habermas believes that public became involved in the political processes only sporadically. It was deprived from the active participation and became a target for political and economic influences as a consumer and voter. The basis of bourgeois public sphere's participation in the social-political process was removed without supplying a new one. The mass media in this matter became a channel for the political and economic powers for obtaining public agreement and support and eventually critical publicity became "supplanted by manipulative publicity" (p. 178).

Habermas believes that the shift in the function of the public sphere can be clearly documented with regard to the transformation of press. The newspaper trade initially represented a small handicraft business of publishers who ran this enterprise as private business. When press

developed from a "business in pure news reporting to one involving ideologies and viewpoints" (p. 182) a political element was added to the economical one. The news itself transferred in form and an editorial function emerged. The publisher's role changed from the *merchant of news* into the *dealer in public opinion*. However, with the development of the *literary journalism* the commercial aspect of the press production decreased. Many newspapers became financed by individual scholars or *the men of letters* and quite often they were money losers at the start. Press had commercial basis, but it was not commercialized as such. It evolved out of *public's use of its reason* and represented an extension to its debate. It was not solely a transformation of information any more but not yet "a medium for culture as an object of consumption" (p. 183). With the development of political debate in press political journals emerged which were generally funded by political groups to support their agenda.

In the first half of the twentieth century in Great Britain, France and the United States the advertising business throve, and press began to transform again from a forum of ideological discussion into business. New market competition for press demanded larger incomes and as a result every press outlet became dependent on the advertisement as the financial source for survival. As press became more and more dependent on big finances, eventually it turned into "the gate through which privileged private interests invaded the public sphere" (p. 185). With the technical advancements in the transformation of news the role of editor changed and once a *literary activity* became a journalistic one. Publishers frequently hired editors which would "do as they are told in the private interest of a profit-oriented enterprise" (p. 186). The commercial tendencies of the period of concentration and centralization found way in press too and by the end of the nineteenth century the first newspaper trusts were formed which resulted into the monopolization of press. The degree of economic concentration and technical-organizational coordination in press

industry could not be compared to the *new media* of the twentieth century which were film, radio and television. Their capital requirements were giant and influence was immense.

Habermas believes that the original basis of the publicist institutions became reversed. While the liberal model of the public sphere protected the institutions of the public engaged in rational-critical debate from the state intervention by ensuring their operation by private people, during the twentieth century these institutions turned *into complexities of societal power* so that "their remaining in private hands in many ways threatened the critical functions of the publicist institutions" (p. 188). With the increasing power of the mass media it became more and more *accessible to the pressure* of certain private interests. With the transformation of the journalism of private "men of letters" into the public services of the mass media "the sphere of the public was altered by the influx of private interests that received privileged exposure in it – although they were by no means *eo ipso* representative of the interests of private people *as* a public" (p. 189).

Habermas argues that the publicist presentation of privileged private interests was primarily dominated by political interests. Advertisement simultaneously acquired not only commercial but political goals as well, which resulted in the practice of *public relations*. While the advertisement in its classical understanding is directed at private individuals as to consumers, the *public relations* and *opinion management* is directed to the *public opinion* and the sender of the message "hides his business intensions in the role of someone interested in the public welfare" (p. 193). Habermas believes that the opinion management with its *promotion* and *exploitation* invades the process of public opinion through mass media "by systematically creating news events or exploiting events that attract attention" (p. 193). Therefore, powerful political or economic, which mostly are interrelated, powers succeed to manage the public opinion while depriving the public itself from the means of rational-critical reflection. Correspondingly, state too has to

address its citizens like consumers and compete for publicity. This process is described by the author as the *refeudalization of the public sphere* as the concept of publicity, which one meant the "exposure of political domination before the public use of reason" (p. 195) became reversed.

Habermas further discusses the development of *publicity*, the "carefully managed display of public relations" (p. 197) which deprived the public sphere from its original functions and through the interventions by administrations, special-interest associations and parties influenced a new process of integration of state and society. Author believes that the publicity work is "aimed at strengthening the prestige of one's own position without making the matter on which a compromise is to be achieved itself a topic of *public discussion*" (p. 200). He suggests that the *modern* publicity has many similarities with feudal publicity as it focuses on staging representation and reputation before the public; the public sphere became "the court *before* whose public prestige can be displayed – rather than *in* which public critical debate is carried out" (p. 201). If the early forms of publicity had to be achieved by opposing the secret politics of monarchs by engaging in rational-critical public debate and being accountable in front of public, later this concept reversed and publicity became achieved with the help of secret politics of interest groups which can manipulate public opinion without themselves being controlled by it.

These functional transformations infused the entire public sphere in political realm, including the relations between the public, the parties and the parliaments. In the political public sphere of liberal era the number of professional politicians was small and there was a constant flow of information between the local discussion centers and the sessions of parliament. However, in the course of time this system transformed into an apparatus of professional politicians organized like a *business enterprise* focused on gathering votes. The process of vote gathering was pursued through various techniques of public manipulation which gave way to the rise of *modern*

propaganda. The trend of *mass-based party* became the dominant type. Correspondingly, parliament evolved away from a frankly debating body and with the major decisions made *behind the closed doors* the whole political process turned into a *stylized show*. Habermas believes that publicity lost "its critical function in favor of a staged display; even arguments are transmuted into symbols to which again one can not respond by arguing but only by identifying with them" (p. 206). These developments corresponded in public's voting behaviors too. An industry of political marketing emerged which influence voting decisions of public by some means similarly as advertising aims at influencing public's buying decisions. Party agitators and *old style propagandists* were replaced by advertising experts "neutral in respect to party politics and employed to sell politics in an unpolitical way" (p. 216). Party meetings turned into *advertising events* channeled through the mass media too.

At the end of the *Structural Transformation of the Bourgeois Public Sphere* author discusses the transformation of the liberal constitutional state into a so-called social-welfare state and once again touches upon the concepts of public opinion. Habermas believes that the first modern constitutions guaranteed society as a sphere of private autonomy through the promotion and preservation of basic rights which were the core center of the liberal model of the bourgeois public sphere. The transformation of the liberal constitutional state into a state committed to social rights was "characterized by continuity rather than by break with the liberal traditions" (p. 224). The social-welfare state aimed at shaping social conditions and to simultaneously continue the legal tradition of the liberal state with its legal order. However, Habermas believes that through this transformation political and special-interest powers still operate in a fashion of maximal exclusion of public from the rational decision-making processes. He further argues that:

"The mandate of publicity is extended from the organs of the state to all organizations acting in state-related fashion. In the measure that this is realized, a no longer intact public of private people dealing with each other individually would be replaced by a public of organized people. *Only such a public could, under today's conditions, participate effectively in a process of public communication via the channels of the public spheres internal to parties and special-interest associations and on the basis of an affirmation of publicity as regards the negotiations of organizations with the state and with one another*" (p. 232).

Habermas draws a distinction between two kinds of public opinion with a public opinion present as a "critical authority in connection with the normative mandate that the exercise of political and social power be subject to publicity" (p. 236) on one side and a public opinion formed through staged display and manipulated propagation in service of persons and institutions on the other. He frames these two dimensions as a *public opinion* and *nonpublic opinion*. However, neither form is able to play a politically relevant role in the process of consensus formation in a *mass democracy* without the involvement of the organizations and institutions by which the opinion of people is mobilized. Public became replaced as the subject of public opinion by agencies and institutions specialized in opinion management. The author suggests that even if public opinion engages in resistance to governmental or administrative power, it can be *diagnosed* and effectively manipulated through the results and recommendations by the opinion research institutions. He believes that the *nonpublic* opinion became dominant while the public opinion developed into a fiction of the constitutional law. Habermas believes that an opinion which is public *in a strict sense* can be generated only through the mediation of a domain of *critical publicity* and that such a mediation is possible "on a sociologically relevant scale only through the

participation of private people in a process of formal communication conducted through intra-organizational public spheres" (p. 248).

2.3.3   Theory of communicative action and discourse ethics

In his later monumental work *Theory of Communicative Action* (1984, 1987, originally published in 1981) Jurgen Habermas takes a *linguistic turn* (Huttunen and Heikkinen, 1998; Kellner, 2000; Holub, 1991) and suggests a model of free and rational communicative action as basis for rebuilding the public sphere (Groswiller, 2001). Communicative action aims at reaching common agreement and understanding of social norms and values. Hugh Baxter (1987) summarizes four stages in the development of this theory:

"1) its action-theoretical foundations in the notion of communicative action, 2) Habermas's construction of the concept of the "life-world" as the social background to communicative action, 3) his critical review of systems-theoretical concepts, and finally 4) his construction of a model of society that can integrate insights from both the action-theoretical and system-theoretical approaches – a highly generalized model of social process as "interchange" between the functionally organized economic and administrative systems, on one hand, and the "components" of the communicatively structured "life-world", on the other" (p. 39)

Habermas believes that social action is either communicative or strategic. Communicative action aims at interpersonal communication which is oriented towards mutual understanding while participants treat each other as genuine persons and not as objects of manipulation. As Outhwaite (1994) suggests "the (verbal or non-verbal) interaction between two or more actors who 'seek to

reach an understanding about their action situation and their plans of action in order to coordinate their actions by way of agreement'" (p. 71). While communicative action is oriented on reaching understanding, the strategic action, on the other hand, aims at calculative exploitation or manipulation of others. Strategic action is focused on self-interest through the manipulation of others either openly or tacitly (Habermas, 1987).

Habermas further distinguishes two types of strategic action – *open* and *concealed*. In *open* strategic action all participants act strategically while in *concealed* strategic action at least one participant believes that other parties are acting communicatively. During strategic action the *speech act* is not aiming at reaching consensus but at realizing self-centered strategic goals. While communicative action is *understanding-orientated*, the strategic action is "purposive-rational action orientated toward other persons from a utilitarian point of view… the actor does not treat others as genuine persons, but as natural objects" (Huttunen and Heikkinen, 1998, p. 311).

Habermas distinguishes two types of speech acts – *simple imperatives* which belongs to *open* strategic action and *normatively authorized requests* which belong to communicative action. In *simple imperative* speech act speaker "does not claim either the *right* to issue the command or the moral or legal obligation of the hearer to obey; he or she claims only the *power* to enforce his or her will by positive or negative sanctions… in issuing a simple imperative the speaker does not raise a claim to the *normative rightness* of the command, either in the sense that the act of issuing the command is justified by underlying norms, or in the sense that any norms obligate the hearer to obey" (Baxter, 1987, p. 43). The situation differs with *regulative* speech acts where speaker "refers to something in a common social world, and in such a way that he or she intends to establish an interpersonal relationship recognized and legitimate" (Habermas, 1987, p. 326). With a normatively authorized request the speaker raises a *validity claim* to *rightness*.

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According to Habermas, *truth*, *truthfulness* and *rightness* represent the speech acts constituting the communicative action.

1) *Truth (Wahrheit)*. A claim that refers to the objective world is valid if it is true, i.e. if it corresponds to reality.

2) *Truthfulness (Wahrhaftigkeit)*. A claim that refers to the subjective world is valid if it is honest, i.e. if it has an authentical relationship with the subjective world.

3) *Rightness (Richtigkeit)*. A claim which refers to the social world is valid if it does not contradict commonly agreed social norms (Habermas, 1987, p. 440).

Habermas believes that communicative action takes place within social context which he defines as the *life-world*. He suggests that the "contemporary societies are divided between a lifeworld governed by norms of communicative interaction and a system governed by "steering imperatives" of money and power" (Kellner, 2000, p. 275). Author defines three *structural components* of the life-world – *culture, society* and *personality*:

"By *culture* I mean the stock of knowledge upon which participants in communication draw in order to provide themselves with interpretations that will allow them to reach understanding [with one another]… By *society* I mean the legitimate orders through which participants in communication regulate their membership is social groups, and thereby secure solidarity. Under *personality* I understand the competences that make subjects capable of speech and action, and thus enable them to participate in process of reaching understanding, and thereby assert their own identity" (Habermas, 1987, p. 209)

The *system*, on the other hand, represents an opposing and instrumental imperative of money and power which enable business and the state to strengthen the control over the lifeworld, "thus

undermining democracy and the public sphere" (Kellner, 2000, p. 275). This process is described by Habermas at the *systemic colonization of the lifeworld*. He believes that in advanced capitalistic societies the capitalist economic system and bureaucratic state authority are subsystems "differentiated out from the societal components of the life-world" (Habermas, 1987, p. 471). The private and public spheres are "socially integrated spheres of action in the life-world that stand over against the systems of economy and state, respectively" (Baxter, 1987, p. 66). The public sphere as an arena of political discussion is constituted through the *communication networks* of the culture industry, such as the press and electronic media and "[a]round these interchange relations between private sphere and economic system, on one hand, and public sphere and administrative system, on the other, develop the roles of consumer and employee, in the first case, and client of the state administration and citizen, in the other" (ibid.).

In his later work Habermas suggests that from the time of developing this distinction he had "considered the state apparatus and economy to be systematically integrated action fields that can no longer be transformed democratically from within… without damage to their proper system logic and therewith their ability to function" (Habermas, 1992, p. 444 *cited in* Kellner, 2000, p. 275). Douglas Kellner (2000) believes that all that one can do, from this perspective, is to "protect the communicative spheres of the lifeworld from encroachment by the forces of instrumental rationality and action and the imperatives of money and power, preserving a sphere for humanity, communication, morality, and value in the practices of everyday life" (p. 275).

With the theory of Discourse Ethics, Habermas turns his focus to normative philosophy. He analyses the presuppositions which make conversation possible and suggests a model of *ideal speech situation*. Adopting the *Rules of Reason* proposed by Alexy (1990), Habermas identifies the following universal presuppositions as the criteria for *ideal speech situation*:

1) Every speaker may assert what he really believes.

2) A person who disputes a proposition or norm under discussion must provide a reason for wanting to do so.

3) Every subject with the competence to speak and act is allowed to take part in a discourse.

4) a. Everyone is allowed to question any assertion whatever.

b. Everyone is allowed to introduce any assertion whatever into the discourse.

c. Everyone is allowed to express his attitudes, desires and needs.

5) No Speaker may be prevented by internal or external coercion, from exercising his rights as laid down in 3 and 4 (Habermas, 1995, p. 88-89).

Habermas seeks to suggest a model of *ideal speech situation* where a stronger argument prevails. However, he acknowledges that any argument can be challenged by a stronger argument at any time and therefore offers three principles for reaching universal norms through discourse:

1) The universality principle (U): All affected can accept the consequences and the side effects its general observance can be anticipated to have for the satisfaction of everyone's interests (and these consequences are preferred to those of known alternative possibilities for regulation) (Habermas, 1995, p. 65).

2) The discourse principle (D): Only those norms can claim to be valid that meet (or could meet) with the approval of all affected in their capacity as participants in a practical discourse (Habermas, 1995, p. 66).

In addition, Habermas suggests that consensus can be achieved only if all participants take part in discussion freely and that an agreement cannot be achieved "unless all affected can *freely* accept the consequences and the side effects that the *general* observance of a controversial norm can be expected to have for the satisfaction of the interests of *each individual*" (ibid.).

2.3.4   Mass media and the public sphere

The development of mass media plays the key role in Habermas's discussions over the emergence, as well as the decline, of the public sphere. Throughout *The Structural Transformation of the Bourgeois Public Sphere* the evolution of mass media is discussed in the closest affiliation with the evolution of the public sphere. Starting from the early forms of press and through the processes leading to the establishment of journalism as *the fourth estate*, Habermas focuses his analysis on the role of print media among major arenas of public's rational-critical debate. Author further analyses the interrelations of media and the public sphere after the development of electronic media such as radio and television and directly links the decline of the public sphere with the rise of consumer-oriented mass media. It should be pointed out that in his later momentous work *The Theory of Communicative Action* Habermas downplays the discussion over mass media and focuses his analysis on the interpersonal, face-to-face communication. However, Habermas's underestimation of media's role in his theory of communicative action, especially with regards to his system-lifeworld model, can be controversial and will be carefully discussed further in this section.

The interrelations between the media, public opinion and active citizenship had been debated long before Habermas's analysis of the public sphere. Walter Lippmann (1922, 1930), which has been called the founder of American Media Studies (Carey, 1989), believed that the public was too vulnerable to media manipulation and thus was unable to contribute to complex policy debates in an informed and effective manner. He argued that the accepted theory of popular government:

"rests upon the belief that there is a public which directs the course of events. I hold that this public is a mere phantom. It is an abstraction… The public is not, as I see it, a fixed body of individuals. It is merely those persons who are interested in an affair and can affect it only by supporting or opposing the actors (politicians, bureaucrats and experts)" (Lippmann, 1930, p. 77 *cited in* Self, 2010, p. 80).

Lippmann's ideas that the public does not really exist and that non-specialized citizens are unable to contribute to policy making were challenged by John Dewey which in 1922 published a review of Lippmann's *Public Opinion* (1922). While the both authors questioned whether it is possible for citizens to engage in complicated policy debates, Dewey believed that the public should not be kept out of policy making. He saw critical debate and discussion as the key to public's engagement into sophisticated social processes:

"Knowledge is communication as well as understanding. A thing is fully known only when it is published, shared, socially accessible. Record and communication are indispensable to knowledge. Knowledge cooped up in private consciousness is a myth… Unless there are methods for directing the energies which are at work and tracing them through an intricate network of interactions to their consequences, what passes as public opinion will be 'opinion' in its derogatory sense rather than truly public, no matter how widespread the opinion is" (Dewey, 1984, pp. 345-346).

Dewey's arguments coincide with the theory of communicative action suggested by Habermas in the sense that Dewey also believes in public empowerment through debate and communication deprived of manipulation.

Another author preceding Habermas's analysis of media's role in the public sphere and according to Douglas Kellner (2000) having a direct influence on Habermas's discussions over mass media C. Wright Mills (1956) focused on "manipulative functions of media in shaping public opinion and strengthening the power of the dominant elites" (Kellner, 2000, p. 9). Like Habermas, Mills too illustrates the transformation of *communities, of publics* engaged into active political and social debate into a *mass society* in which public turns into a *mass*. Furthermore, Mills (1956) also lays special emphasis on discussions over the entertainment media as a forceful instrument of social control stating that "popular culture is not tagged as 'propaganda' but as entertainment; people are often exposed to it when most relaxed of mind and tired of body; and its characters offer easy targets of identification, easy answers to stereotyped personal problems" (Mills, 1956, p. 336 *cited in* Kellner, 2000, p. 269).

Mills's discussions over the entertainment media are indeed in close line with Habermas's suggestions. Habermas believes that after the rise of the consumer-oriented *newer media* the once separate domains of journalism and literature , which were information and rational-critical argument, mixed into a "pleasant and at the same time convenient subject for entertainment that, instead of doing justice to reality, has a tendency to present a substitute more palatable for consumption and more likely to give rise to an impersonal indulgence in stimulating relaxation than to a public use of reason" (Habermas, 1989, p. 170).

In Habermas's analysis the shift in the function of the public sphere can be clearly documented with regards to the transformation of press. The newspaper trade initially represented a small handicraft business of publishers who ran this enterprise as private business. When press developed from a "business in pure news reporting to one involving ideologies and viewpoints" (Habermas, 1989, p. 182) a political element was added to the economical one. The news itself

transferred in form and the publisher's role changed from the *merchant of news* into the *dealer in public opinion*. With the development of the *literary journalism* the commercial portion of the press production decreased and many newspapers became financed by individual scholars or *the men of letters*. Press had commercial basis but it was not commercialized as such. It evolved out of "public's use of its reason" and represented an extension to its debate (ibid, p. 183). However, with the rise of advertisement business press transformed again from a forum of discussion into business. Market competition for press demanded larger incomes and as a result every press outlet became dependent on the advertisement as the financial source for survival which turned the press into "the gate through which privileged private interests invaded the public sphere" (ibid, p. 185).

The literary periodicals in course of time were replaced by advertise-financed magazines with the major goal of raising the sales and the sales-oriented press gave way to the rise of the so called *yellow journalism*. Critical discussion in press lost its influence as the public affairs, social problems, economic matters, education and health were pushed back by the *immediate reward news* such as comics, accidents, disasters, sports, social events, etc.

Same tendencies continued with the rise of what Habermas calls the *new media* which is film, radio and television. The need of immense funds turned the electronic media into the channels for the political and economic powers for obtaining public agreement and support. As a result of media's market-oriented strategies culture became a commodity and became emptied from the elements whose appreciation required a certain amount of training and education. The special consumer-oriented preparation of cultural products focused on entertainment and leisure gave way to the creation of the mass culture. *Public* turned into the *audience* as the debate and conversation became *administered*. Professional dialogues, panel discussions and round table shows – the rational debate of private people became a part of mass media production. Discussion became a

business and critical debate assumed the functions of a "tranquilizing substitute for action" (ibid, p. 164), increasingly losing its publicist functions.

With the replacement of a public critically reflecting on its culture with a public of consumers the public sphere lost its specific character. The culture propagated by the mass media effectively obtained elements of advertising and consequently the public sphere assumed the advertising functions. The more public sphere became an arena for political and economic propaganda the more it became *unpolitical* and *pseudo-privatized*. The political processes deprived from public participation and became the matter for private bureaucracies, special-interest associations, parties and public administration and "competition between organized private interests invaded the public sphere" (ibid, p. 179).

Habermas believes that the original basis of the publicist institutions became reversed. While the liberal model of the public sphere protected the institutions of the public engaged in rational-critical debate from the state intervention by ensuring their operation by private people, during the twentieth century these institutions turned "into complexities of societal power" so that "their remaining in private hands in many ways threatened the critical functions of the publicist institutions" (ibid, p. 188). With the increasing power of the mass media it became more and more *accessible to the pressure* of certain private interests. The basis of bourgeois public sphere's participation in the social-political process was removed without supplying a new one.

Consequently, *publicity* developed into a "carefully managed display of public relations" (ibid, p. 197) which deprived the public sphere from its original functions and through the interventions by administrations, special-interest associations and parties influenced a new process of integration of state and society. If the early forms of publicity had to be achieved by opposing the secret politics of monarchs by engaging in rational-critical public debate and being accountable

in front of public, later this concept reversed and publicity became achieved with the help of secret politics of interest groups which can manipulate public opinion without themselves being controlled by it. Habermas believes that *public relations* and *opinion management* invade the process of public opinion through mass media "by systematically creating news events or exploiting events that attract attention" (ibid.). Therefore, powerful political or economical powers succeed to manage the public opinion while depriving the public itself from the means of rational-critical reflection. Habermas describes this process as the *refeudalization of the public sphere* as the concept of publicity, which once meant the "exposure of political domination before the public use of reason" (ibid, p. 195) became reversed.

Habermas's analysis of the invasion of the public sphere by the political and economic interests and it's *refeudalization* finds continuation in his later *Theory of Communicative Action* with the discussion over *systemic colonization of the lifeworld*. However, in this later work Habermas downplays the discussion over mass media and centers his analysis on the interpersonal, face-to-face communication. His underestimation of mass media's role in his system-lifeworld model, especially with regards to the concept of the *steering media* of money and power invading the lifeworld, was challenged by Douglas Kellner (2000) who believes that Habermas's separation of the system from lifeworld and his categorical division of the social system are problematic and need further clarification:

> "I would argue, as Habermas himself recognizes, that the lifeworld is increasingly subject to imperatives from the system, but that in the current era of technological revolution, interaction and communication play an increasingly important role in the economy and polity that Habermas labels the "system"… I will suggest that the volatility and turbulence of the contemporary "great transformation" that we are

undergoing constitute a contradictory process where the lifeworld undergoes new threats from the system – especially through the areas of colonization by media and new technologies that Habermas does not systematically theorize…" (Kellner, 2000, p. 274).

Kellner (2000) argues that Habermas's categorical distinctions can no longer be maintained as the new technologies are dramatically transforming what Habermas discusses as system and lifeworld. In *Television and the Crisis of Democracy* (1990) Kellner suggests that media, state and business are the major institutional forces of contemporary capitalist societies and that media *mediate* between state, economy and social life. Therefore, he believes that the communication media cannot be excluded from the analysis of what Habermas defines as the *steering media*. Kellner argues that Habermas does not adequately theorize the social functions of contemporary media of communication and information:

> "they are for him mere mechanisms for transmitting messages, instruments that are neither as essential part of the economy or polity in his schema, and of derivative importance for democracy in comparison to processes of rational debate and consensus in the lifeworld" (Kellner, 2000, p. 275).

Indeed, despite Habermas's intense and comprehensive discussions over mass media, the lack of analysis concerning the newer opportunities driven by the technological advancements of media and communication are obvious. Furthermore, in Habermas's works the mass media is more frequently presented as a negative force of the social life without discussions over the immense potential of the modern electronic media for the promotion of active citizenship and participatory democracy. One obvious reason of this deficiency is that during Habermas's early works (such as the *Structural Transformation of the Bourgeois Public Sphere*, *The Theory of Communicative*

Action and *Between Facts and Norms*) the electronic media and the internet were not developed to the modern advancements. However, in his later works Habermas tends to retain rather pessimistic views on the role of mass media in modern societies. For instance, in his later work published in 2006 Habermas, while acknowledging the potential of civic participation through the means of mass media, still draws pessimistic conclusions and sees mass media itself as the initiator of the possible change:

> "A self-regulating media system must maintain its independence vis-à-vis its environments while linking political communication in the public sphere with both civil society and the political center; and, second, an inclusive civil society must empower citizens to participate in and respond to a public discourse which, in turn, must not degenerate into a colonizing mode of communication. The latter condition is troubling, to say the least" (Habermas, 2006, p. 420).

At the end of this section let us once again touch upon the discussions over the interrelations of the mass media and the modern societies and present a discussion by Charles S. Self (2010) which after analyzing a number of 20th century authors, concludes that Hegelian understanding of public can be best applied to the modern processes of public's interaction with the mass media. Hegel (1977) describes public not as an essence but rather as an activity or process. In relations to the modern technological advancements in media and communication this description can be indeed significant considering the constant and rapid social transformations along with the technological developments. Self (2010) believes that the emergence of the new communication technologies, such as social networks and interactive media, "reveal public to be a process, a flow, rather than an essence or group" (p. 90). He argues that the vision of the public as an evolving process suggests that:

"[N]otions of a stable public operating as an essence within a public sphere might always have been better understood as a constantly evolving flow of communication activity – assertion, rereading and reassertion of the universal aspiration of particulars – in a never-ending struggle for recognition" (ibid).

The gaps in Habermas's analysis over the participatory and emancipative potentials of the modern mass media certainly leave space for further discussions. The process of the rapid transformation of the modern media and communication technologies having tremendous impact on societies across the world calls for a more comprehensive analysis of contemporary mass media's place and potential in what Habermas describes as the *public sphere*.

2.4 Media literacy and the public sphere

After discussing mass media's role in Habermas's analysis, it can be helpful to once again touch upon the research question of the thesis and seek to understand the possible points of intersection between media literacy and the public sphere. As discussed in the previous section, the changes in media and communication technologies and correspondingly, the mass media, have had a major impact on the process of *refeudalization* of the public sphere, as described by Habermas. In order to seek to understand the possible answers to the research question of the thesis, which inquires the potential effects of media literacy intervention on what Habermas describes as the public sphere, let us examine which particular changes in mass media in Habermas's analysis have affected the public sphere most dramatically and on the other hand, which of the outcomes could media literacy education be directed at.

After a careful examination of Habermas's views over mass media's role in the process of *refeudalization* of the public sphere, the following key points can be identified: the emergence of profit oriented, advertise-financed press and the emergence of *new media* such as radio, film and television, which required immense sums to operate. In Habermas's analysis, these changes served as basis for further transformations of media's character and correspondingly, the media's role in the public sphere. These changes, as described by Habermas, can be summarized as following:

- The products of a *patented culture industry* spread by the mass media turned the *public* into the *audience*;

- Professional dialogues, panel discussions and round table shows – the rational debate of private people – became a part of mass media production;

- Public debate assumed the form of consumer item as it was staged, carefully cultivated and delivered through mass media;

- Discussion became a business and critical debate assumed the functions of a *tranquilizing substitute for action*;

- The cultural products, as well as the discussion around them, became more dependent on the market and sales, which gave way to the concept of *mass culture*;

- Same consumer-oriented tendencies affected press which gave way to the rise of the so-called *yellow journalism*;

- With the expansion of the news-reading public and with the development of the sales-oriented press, political issues and critical discussion in press lost its influence;

- Public affairs, social problems, economic matters, education and health in press were pushed back by the *immediate reward news* such as comics, accidents, disasters, sports, social events, etc.;

- New elite of *intellectuals* arose which asserted the role of art critics while the public's critical debate over cultural product weakened;

- The culture propagated by the mass media effectively obtained elements of advertising and consequently the public sphere assumed the advertising functions;

- The more public sphere became an arena for political and economic propaganda the more it became *unpolitical* and *pseudo-privatized*;

- The mass media became a channel for the political and economic powers for obtaining public agreement and support and eventually critical publicity became *supplanted by manipulative publicity*;

- Self-interest-driven political element was added to the economical one in mass media production;

- With the development of political debate in press, political journals emerged which were generally funded by political groups to support their agenda;

- Every press outlet became dependent on the advertisement as the financial source for survival;

- As press became more and more dependent on big finances, eventually it turned into *the gate through which privileged private interests invaded the public sphere*;

- The commercial tendencies of the period of concentration and centralization found way in press too and by the end of the nineteenth century the first newspaper trusts were formed which resulted into the monopolization of press;

- Advertisement in mass media simultaneously acquired not only commercial but political goals as well, which resulted in the practice of *public relations*;

- The opinion management with its *promotion* and *exploitation* invaded the process of public opinion through mass media *by systematically creating news events or exploiting events that attract attention*;

- Powerful political or economic powers succeed to manage the public opinion through mass media while depriving the public itself from the means of rational-critical reflection;

- The trend of *mass-based party* became the dominant type and correspondingly, parliament evolved away from a frankly debating body and with the major decisions made *behind the closed doors* the whole political process turned into a *stylized show* delivered through mass media;

- An industry of political marketing emerged which influence voting decisions of public through mass media by some means similarly as advertising aims at influencing public's buying decisions;

- With the replacement of a public critically reflecting on its culture with a public of consumers, the public sphere lost its specific character.

To narrow down the points suggested by Habermas, the effects of transformations of mass media's role and character on the public sphere can be summarized as following:

1. Media became driven by commercial interests which target the public in a similar way as advertisers target consumers;

2. Political interests target the public through mass media in a similar way as advertisers target consumers;

3. Mass media lost the ability to serve as a domain for public's rational-critical debate and instead turned public into passive audience.

4. Mass media became a channel for the political and economic powers for obtaining public agreement and support which eventually turned critical publicity into manipulative publicity;

On the other hand, let us once again review the major goals of media literacy education. As suggested by the Centre for Media literacy, whose media literacy intervention model is implemented in this study, media literacy aims at enabling youth and adults to:

- Develop critical thinking skills;

- Understand how media messages shape our culture and society;

- Identify target marketing strategies;

- Recognize what the media maker wants us to believe or do;

- Name the techniques of persuasion used;

- Recognize bias, spin, misinformation and lies;

- Discover the parts of the story that are not being told;

- Evaluate media messages based on our own experiences, skills, beliefs and values;

- Create and distribute our own messages;

- Advocate for media justice.[6]

It seems fair to suggest that the main goals of media literacy education might have an effective influence on the complex understanding of the main issues suggested by Habermas over mass media's role in the public sphere. The major goals of media literacy education clearly aim at increasing the learners' awareness over the issues which are described by Habermas as the main contribution of mass media in the process of *refeudalization* of the public sphere. The issues such as the major points discussed above: the ways and techniques of how commercial and/or political powers target the public through mass media; the ways and techniques of how mass media to a

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[6] List retrieved from www.medialiteracyproject.org on 10/03/2017.

great extent manage to turn the public into passive consumers; and the ways and techniques of public manipulation by the mass media.

For further discussion over the possible interrelation of media literacy and the public sphere, let us have a look at the concepts of the two, briefly presented in the following figure:

Figure 6: Proposed interrelation of media literacy and the public sphere
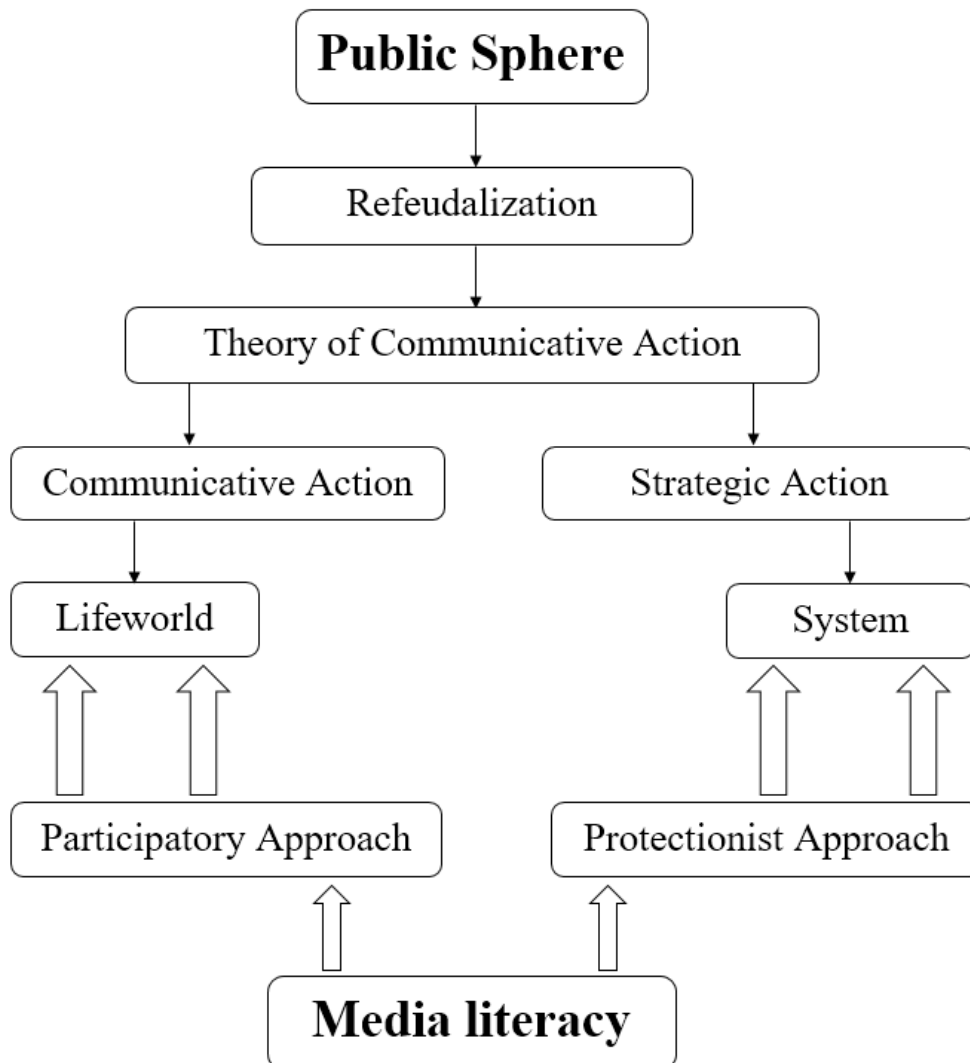
Source: Author (2019)

In Habermas's analysis, the developments in the communication systems and correspondingly, the mass media, served a key role in the process of what the author discusses as the *refeudalization* of the public sphere (sections 2.2, 2.4). Habermas further suggests the free and rational communication action as basis for rebuilding the public sphere (section2.3). As discussed earlier (section 2.3), Habermas believes that social action is either communicative or strategic. The communicative action, according to the author, takes place in the *lifeworld* while strategic action serves the *system* (section 2.3). The *systemic colonization of the lifeworld* suggested by Habermas represents an opposing and instrumental imperative of money and power which enable business and the state to strengthen the control over the lifeworld (section 2.3). Despite the fact that Habermas himself downplays the role of mass media in his theory of communicative action, authors such as Douglas Kellner suggest that the mass media in particular serve as the major instrument through which Habermas's *system* invades and dominates the *lifeworld*. Kellner (2000) argues that:

> "as Habermas himself recognizes, that the lifeworld is increasingly subject to imperatives from the system, but that in the current era of technological revolution, interaction and communication play an increasingly important role in the economy and polity that Habermas labels the "system"… volatility and turbulence of the contemporary "great transformation" that we are undergoing constitute a contradictory process where the lifeworld undergoes new threats from the system – especially through the areas of colonization by media and new technologies that Habermas does not systematically theorize…" (Kellner, 2000, p. 274) (*argument discussed in detail in section* 2.4).

As discussed in the earlier sections (1.1.1., 1.1.2) media literacy researchers define two major approaches of media literacy education: the protectionist approach and the participatory approach. What figure 6 suggests is to direct the protectionist potential of media literacy education to Habermas's strategic action provided by the system and to direct the participatory approach of media literacy education to promotion of the communicative action in the life world.

As discussed in this section, in theory media literacy education seems to have the potential to have an influence on public's understanding of the major points suggested by Habermas in respects with the interrelation of mass media and the public sphere. The following sections of the thesis aim at examining these theories in practice and inquiring at what extent may media literacy contribute to the promotion of what Habermas defines as the public sphere.

3.   METHODOLOGICAL DESIGN

3.1   Objectives of the study

The main objective of the study is to explore the possible points of intersection of media literacy education with what Jurgen Habermas defines as the *public sphere* and to suggest answers to the corresponding research question:

"How can media literacy serve as an instrument for promoting the public sphere?"

In order to seek to understand the possible interrelation of the two concepts, the effects of media literacy interventions have been analyzed through examining the perceptions of students and teachers with a respective Media literacy related experience.

The following section presents the methodological design and tools implemented in order to examine the effects of Media literacy intervention on the participants, which will be further discussed in the concluding sections in relation with Habermas's theories of the public sphere.

3.2 Qualitative approach

In accordance with the nature of the thesis and its proposed research question, the thesis is based on a purely qualitative research model. Qualitative research tools such as participant observation and in-depth interviews have been implemented for the purpose of data collection and analysis.

Qualitative research models are mainly applied to social science research aiming at in-depth understanding of social phenomena within their natural setting (Miles and Huberman, 1984; Denzin and Lincoln, 1994; Maxwell, 1996). According to Taylor, Bogdan and DeVault (2015), two major theoretical perspectives dominate the social science scene – positivist and phenomenological (*also see* Bruyn, 1966; Deutscher, 1973, Saldana, 2011; Creswell, 2012). The positivist perspective, according to the authors, seeks the facts or causes of social phenomena apart from the subjective states of individuals. The phenomenologist or interpretivist (Ferguson, Ferguson and Taylor, 1992) perspective focuses on "understanding social phenomena from the actor's own perspective and examining how the world is experienced" (Taylor et al., 2015, p. 3). Accordingly, research models of positivists and phenomenologists requires different methodologies as they address different kinds of issues:

> "The phenomenologist seeks understanding through qualitative methods, such as participant observation, in-depth interviewing, and others, that yield descriptive data. In contrast to practitioners of a natural science approach, phenomenologists strive for what Max Weber (1968) called *verstehen*, understanding on a personal level the motives and beliefs behind people's actions" (Taylor et al., 2015, p. 4).

Reflecting on these definitions, this thesis evidently falls into the category of phenomenologist perspective requiring an adequate qualitative methodological model. Participant observation has been selected as the most adequate methodological tool for conducting the field work, while in-depth interviews have been implemented for data collection and analysis.

3.3 Research design

The methodological model of this thesis has been designed strictly in accordance with the proposed research questions. In order to seek to understand the possible points of intersection of media literacy with what Jurgen Habermas describes as the public sphere, the following field work activities have been undertaken:

1.   Student assessment: a nine-day-long media literacy course was introduced to school students. The participant students were interviewed after one year since the completion of the course in order to inquire which aspects of the course the students remembered more clearly and what kinds of practical impacts did the course have on the students' perceptions of mass media and its role in their lives. The main goal of this activity was to inquire at what extent did the media literacy course influence the participants' perceptions over mass media and its effects on society.

2.   Teacher assessment: In order to inquire teachers' perspective on the potential effects of media literacy intervention on students, teachers with the experience of integrating media literacy into the curriculum were interviewed as well. The main goal of this activity was to examine teachers' perspectives on how media literacy interventions influence students' perceptions over mass media and its effects on society.

As discussed in the following sub-sections, participant observation has been selected as the most adequate methodological tool for conducting the students' assessment, while semi-structured telephone interviews have been conducted with the participant teachers. The data collected through

the activities are analyzed in the concluding chapters of the thesis with respect to the theory of the public sphere, as suggested by Jurgen Habermas.

3.3.1   Participant observation

Participant observation is traditionally viewed as a research method predominantly implemented during ethnographical and anthropological studies (Marshall and Rossman, 1989; DeMunck and Sobo, 1998; Fine, 2003). However, in the past decade the method of participant observation has been increasingly present in the field of education research as a methodological tool for qualitative data collection as well (Kawulich, 2005).

Participant observation represents a qualitative research method which enables the researcher to observe activities and mindsets of people under study in a natural setting. This research model poses the researcher as an active participant of the events studied and provides the opportunity of being an internal, rather than an external, observer. DeWalt and DeWalt (2002) suggest that "the goal for design of research using participant observation as a method is to develop a holistic understanding of the phenomena under study that is as objective and accurate as possible given the limitations of the method" (p. 92 *cited in* Kawulich, 2005, p. 5). According to the authors, participant observation can increase the validity of a study as observations give the researcher a better understanding of the context of the phenomenon under investigation. According to Jorgensen (1989) participant observation is especially appropriate for exploratory studies, descriptive studies and studies aimed at generating theoretical interoperations.

Kawulich (2005) suggests that while determining whether to use observation as a method for data collection, the researcher "must consider the types of questions guiding the study, the site under study, what opportunities are available at the cite for observation, the representativeness of the participants of the population at that site, and the strategies to be used to record and analyze the data" (p. 6). Kawulich (2005) further elaborates on suggestions by Schensul, Schensul and LeCompte (1999) concerning the reasons for using participant observation in research. According to these suggestions, participant observation enables the researcher to gain a better understanding of the priorities, organization and interrelations of the observed participants, provides the researcher with a source of questions and helps the researcher to ease the facilitation of the research process.

Bernard (1994) suggests further reasons for using participant observation as a research method in order to increase the validity of research, which include the possibility to collect different data while familiarizing with the research community and developing culturally relevant questions.

Jorgensen (1989) believes that it is highly important for the participant observer to perform multiple roles during the study and to generally be flexible and creative as its practice fundamentally depends on the ability of the researcher to adjust and adapt skillfully to the daily activities of the group under investigation (*also see* Johnson, 1975, 1977).

Jorgensen (1989) further argues that participant observation cannot be presented simply as a series of mechanical steps to be followed literally and dogmatically: "the logic of participant observation is nonlinear, its practice requires the researcher to exercise a wide variety of skills, make judgments, and be creative, as many nonrational factors influence most aspects of actual study" (Jorgensen, 1989, p. 9 *also see* Douglas, 1976).

Gold (1958) proposes four approaches a researcher can apply to the observation:

1. Complete participant – which conceals the role of investigator and appears as a natural member of the group under study.

2. Participant as observer – which informs the group under study about the role of the investigator.

3. Observer as participant – which informs the group under study about the role of the investigator as well as takes a selective position by participating by own preference, mostly in the activities related to the data collection.

4. Complete observer – which is not visible, or in some cases, is hardly visible to the participants while observing their activities. The participants are not informed about being investigated.

(Gold, 1958 *in* Kawulich, 2005, p. 10-11)

Kawulich (2005) believes that the stance of *observer as participant* represents the most ethical approach to observation "as the researcher's observation activities are known to the group being studied, yet the emphasis for the researcher is on collecting data, rather than participating in the activity being observed" (p. 11).

In accordance with the goal and nature of this research, the approach of *observer as participant* has been implemented during the process of observation.

3.3.1.1 Field work – the media literacy intervention

The necessity of implementing the method of participant observation through this study arose due to the fact that no students with an experience of ever learning Media literacy were found in Georgia. As discussed in section 2.4, a number of school teachers in Georgia had been trained in integration of Media literacy competence into their school subject; however, their activities were solely based on integration of Media literacy competence and as the research suggested, no direct intervention of Media literacy had ever taken place in any Georgian classroom. Therefore, in order to examine the effects of the direct Media literacy intervention into the classroom, the researcher personally conducted a nine-day-long Media literacy intervention at a Georgian school (*see section* 3.4).

The field work included the following activities:

a) Conducting the media literacy course;

b) Interviewing the participants after the course;

c) Observing the participants through the process of learning and collecting the personal notes respectively.

d) In a second stage, interviewing Georgian teachers.

It must be noted that the personal notes have been implemented in this study only as a complementary tool in order to gain access to the real-life environment of the participant students as well as for providing additional information to the analysis of the major instrument for data collection and analysis in this thesis – the semi-structured interviews.

3.3.1.2 The media literacy course

As discussed in section 2.4, a local school kindly agreed to allow conducting of a nine-day-long media literacy course. Therefore, the media literacy lesson plans suggested by the Centre for Media literacy (*section 1.2.3.*) had to be narrowed down to nine lessons.

The 26 lesson plans suggested by the Centre for Media literacy were narrowed down to nine lessons in the following order:

Day 1: Introduction to media literacy; definitions of media; history of mass media.

The first lesson served as an introduction to the media literacy course. The definitions of media literacy were explained to the students as well as the meanings of media in general. The history of mass media was discussed as well, starting from the early forms of press, up to the modern day mass media and internet.

Day 2: Information; communication; types of advertisements.

The second lesson was dedicated to the discussions over the flow of information and how human brain accepts and filters information.

The second part of the second lesson was dedicated to the discussions over communication. Students were asked to name and compare different types of communication and to analyze the advantages and disadvantages of one-way and two-way communication (*as suggested in section 1.2.3.*).

The last part of the second lesson was dedicated to advertisements; however, in a relatively brief manner. As a comprehensive analysis of advertisement in media was scheduled for the

following sessions, during the second lesson this issue was touched upon briefly and mainly consisted of comparison of different types of advertisements, such as TV, radio, press, online, street banners, posters, etc.

At the end of the second lesson students were given a homework which consisted of gathering information online concerning the effects of tobacco smoking. The materials prepared by the students were analyzed during the fourth lesson.

Day 3: Media production; issues of subjectivity and objectivity in media; editorial choices.

The second lesson was dedicated to the discussions over how media products are constructed. Students were introduced to the details of media production – how personal or editorial choices affect the media product. The issues of *subjectivity* and *objectivity* were critically analyzed as well.

During the lesson the students were given a task to initiate a line-up for a daily news program. Afterwards, a discussion was held on which topics should have been prioritized in a daily news program. This task allowed the students to explore the constructed nature of news media with a consciousness of the way subjective choices influence the news which get reported daily.

Day 4: Advertising.

The fourth lesson was fully dedicated to the discussions over advertisement in mass media. Various techniques of persuasion and of attracting public attention were analyzed during the session. Including the *10 ways to sell an idea* suggested by the Centre for Media literacy (*see section 1.2.3.*).

During the lesson advertisements of various tobacco brands were discussed. The students were asked to analyze the difference between how the tobacco advertisements portray cigarettes and

what the real effects of tobacco consumption (the task given at the end of lesson 2) are. The goal of the discussion was to observe how immense might be the difference between how advertisers present their product and what the effects of the product might be in reality.

Day 5: Visual images in media; Stereotypes.

The fifth lesson was dedicated to the discussions over the importance of visual images in media and to the issues of stereotypes created by mass media as well.

During the first half of the session the issues of visual persuasion were discussed, including analysis of some iconic images presented in media throughout history. The students were introduced to the theories of how visual images affect human mind and how they stay in public's memories. Various types of image composition and their meaning were discussed during the lesson as well.

The second part of the session was dedicated to the analysis of how media create stereotypes. During the lesson the students were asked to reflect on several posters of women portrayed in the advertisements of washing products.

Day 6: Audience; target marketing.

The sixth lesson was dedicated to the discussions over the issues of audience in relation to media. During the session the students were involved in the analysis of how different audiences understand media messages differently. The importance of the volume of the audience for media in commercial terms were discussed during the lesson as well. A few examples of Georgian websites trying to attract audiences through provocative (and mostly untrue) headlines and articles were shown to the students.

The second part of the session was dedicated to the issues of target marketing. The students were introduced to the techniques of how online platform gather consumer data in order to increase the efficiency of target marketing.

Day 7: Hidden messages; hidden agendas; maps.

The seventh lesson was dedicated to the discussions over the issues of hidden messages, hidden advertisements and hidden agendas in media products. Several examples of Georgian TV shows were analyzed during the session.

By the end of the session maps as media images were discussed as well. The students were given a task to guess how close to Georgia were various countries, without looking at a map.

Day 8: Political and commercial interests in media; propaganda.

The eighth lesson was dedicated to the discussions over the political and the commercial interests in media. The issues of media ownership were discussed at the session as well as the issues and origins of political bias in media.

The second part of the session was dedicated to the issues of political propaganda and disinformation. Several examples of Georgian as well as international cases of political propaganda in media were discussed during the lesson.

Day 9: Creation of media product; civic engagement.

The final lesson was dedicated to the topic of civic engagement and participation through creation of media products. Several easy ways of spreading information through social networks were analyzed during the session. The students were asked to participate in debates on the issues of personal responsibility in the process of creating and spreading media products.

3.3.2 Interviews

Kvale (1996) suggests that an interview is a conversation which has a structure and a purpose determined by the interviewer. An interview, as a qualitative research method, represents a naturalistic tool for data collection aiming at a broad understanding of investigated phenomena. Seidman (2013) believes that "at root of in-depth interviewing is an interest in understanding the lived experience of other people and the meaning they make of that experience" (p. 9 *cited in* Taylor et al., 2015, p. 102). Or as Kvale (1996) notes "a conversation, whose purpose is to gather descriptions of the [life-world] of the interviewee" (p. 174).

Alshenqeeti (2014) suggests that in order to ensure the quality of an interview, the interviewer must establish an appropriate atmosphere through which the interviewees are content to speak freely and honestly. Alshenqeeti further elaborates on suggestions by Barbour and Schostak (2005) concerning the key concepts which researchers should take into consideration while using interviews as a data collection method:

- Power relation: the interrelated power within the interview;

- Value: the value of the interview itself, and the value of the interviewees words;

- Trust: the extent to which researcher guarantees objectivity, accuracy and honesty;

- Meaning: the meaning the interviewer intends to convey;

- Wording: the wording of questions asked in the interview.

  (Barbour and Schostak, 2005, pp. 42-43 *cited in* Alshenqeeti, 2014, p. 41)

In qualitative research, three major categories of interviews are generally implemented: structured, semi-structured and unstructured (Adhabi and Anozie, 2017; Edwards and Holland,

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2012). Structured interviews are fully controlled by the interviewer and are less flexible for the interviewee's interpretations and discussions (Adhabi and Anozie, 2017, Stuckey, 2013). Structured interviews generally are constructed by short, predetermined direct questions which require immediate answers (Alshenqeeti, 2014; Berg, 2007). Unlike the structured, the semi-structured interviews provide the interviewer with more flexibility for inquiring further reflections and interpretations based on the interviewee's answers (Adhabi and Anozie, 2017). While being based on a prepared set of questions, a semi-structured interview "allows depth to be achieved by providing the opportunity on the part of the interviewer to probe and expand the interviewee's responses" (Rubin and Rubin, 2005, p. 88 *cited in* Alshenqeeti, 2014, p. 40).

While analyzing categories of interviews for social science research, Kvale (2007) lays special emphasis on the semi-structured interview and defines it as "an interview with the purpose of obtaining descriptions of the life world of the interviewee with respect to interpreting the meaning of the described phenomena" (p. 8). Adhabi and Anozie (2017) believe that based on the current understanding, no interview can be qualified as completely unstructured. However, certain types of interviews fall into the category. The unstructured interviews imply the freest and the most flexible forms of interviews among the other categories and enable the interviewer to elaborate on the interviewee's answers to a greater extent (Alshenqeeti, 2014; Dornyei, 2007).

In addition to this categorization, qualitative interviews can vary in terms of technical conduction as well. Bolderston (2012) discusses four types of interviews:

1. Face-to-face interviews: carried out one to one with an interviewer and an interviewee and are often described as a continuum, from structured to semi-structured to unstructured (Nelson, 2009);

2. Group interviews: often called focus groups, allows the interviewer to interview a number of participants at once. It focuses on gathering narratives, rather than being a discussion, problem-solving session or decision making group (Patton, 2001);

3. Telephone interviews: a particularly useful method for collecting data from geographically remote participants (Musselwhite et al., 2007). Additionally, this method might be both cost and time effective as there is no travel involved;

4. E-mail or internet interview: another form of remote interviewing further expanding the potential of using computer as a methodological tool for research (Meho, 2006).

(Bolderston, 2012, p. 68)

Considering the nature and the structure of this thesis, face-to-face semi-structured interviews were implemented for collecting data from the school students, while telephone interviews of semi-structured nature were conducted with the participating teachers.

3.3.2.1 Field work – interviews

In order to increase the validity of the collected data, the participant children were interviewed after one year since the completion of the course. This technique was used in order to avoid the risks of qualitative interviewing such as the influence of the instructor on the interviewees summoned by conducting the interviews immediately after the course; with a special consideration of the fact that the interviewees represented young children potentially being more vulnerable to the influences of the instructor. Moreover, interviewing the participant students after one year since

the completion of the course provided a more valuable data concerning the long-term outcomes of media literacy intervention on the school students.

During the interviews, the students were asked the following questions:

1. What do you remember most from our course conducted last year?

2. Have you, in your daily life, practically used anything during the last year from what you learned from our course?

3. Has our course changed your attitudes towards advertisement?

4. Has our course changed your attitudes towards political news?

5. Do you observe any changes in your perceptions about media since our course (including video games, social networks, YouTube, etc.)?

6. Do you create media products? (including social network posts, sharing photos and videos, engaging in discussions on online platforms)?

7. Has our course influenced the way you create media products?

8. Do you think that our course was beneficial for you? If you do not think so, please feel free to say it honestly, if you think that it was beneficial, please say, how?

Despite the fact that the semi-structured interviews were selected for interviewing the participant students, the interviews were conducted strictly in accordance with the pre-planned questionnaire. Considering the young age of the interviewees, the number of follow-up questions were minimal, in order to avoid influencing the interviewees answers by the researcher.

Semi-structured interviews were implemented for collecting the data concerning teachers' perception concerning the effects of media literacy education as well. Telephone interviews were conducted with 12 teachers. During the interviews, the participant teachers were asked the following questions:

1. How did you practically integrate media literacy competence into your subject curriculum?

2. According to your observation, which aspects of media literacy were most interesting for your students?

3. Do you believe that integrating media literacy into the curriculum had an impact on student's perceptions over advertisement?

4. Do you believe that integrating media literacy into the curriculum had an impact on student's perceptions over political news?

5. Do you believe that integrating media literacy into the curriculum had an impact on student's perceptions over media's role in their daily lives?

6. Do you believe that integrating media literacy into the curriculum had an impact on student's perceptions over media's larger role on society?

7. Do you believe that integrating media literacy into the curriculum had an impact on the ways your students create media products and communicate via media?

8. Which aspects of media literacy do you personally consider to be the most beneficial for school students?

3.4 Sampling

The sampling procedures for this study have been carried out in two steps:

1. Selection of participant school students;

2. Selection of participant teachers.

As discussed in section 2.3, one of the two main components of the field work intended to deliver a short media literacy course to school students and in aftermath to inquire at what extent

did the media literacy course influence the participant students' perceptions over mass media and its effects on society. For this purpose, an offer was published on a partner organization's website (annex 1) offering Georgian private schools a free media literacy course conducted by a doctoral candidate as a part of his research. Three private Tbilisi based schools responded. Profile research of the three schools suggested that two of them represented relatively high cots institutions. The third one named *Italian School Tsiskari* was selected for conducting the media literacy intervention as the tuition fees at this school were relatively lower, which indicated that the school students represented the middle class, which has been considered most adequate for the purposes of this research (Appendix 2). The terms were discussed with the school administration and the following was agreed:

- All eight graders at the school would be invited to participate in the course.

- Participation would be voluntary and not compulsory.

- The school would allow 45 minutes long sessions each day for nine days.

- Each session would start after the completion of the last class of the day.

At the result, 15 students attended the course. Respectively, the media literacy lesson plans suggested by the Centre for Media literacy (*section 1.2.3*) was shortened to nine sessions. A detailed description of the implemented course is presented in section 2.3.1.1.1.

After one year since the completion of the course the school administration kindly agreed to organize the interview sessions with the participant students. 12 participant students attended the session and were interviewed respectively.

The 12 students were given a number (in alphabetical order) for the efficiency during the results analysis:

Figure 7: The participant students

Student #	Name and Surname	Age (by the time of the interview)	Gender
Student 1	Ketevan Chichinadze	14	Female
Student 2	Giorgi Janjalashvili	13	Male
Student 3	Luka Khalvashi	14	Male
Student 4	Zuka Kharazishvili	14	Male
Student 5	Sopo Kobakhidze	14	Female
Student 6	Ana Lolua	13	Female
Student 7	Mia Mkervalishvili	13	Female
Student 8	Zura Natsvlishvili	14	Male
Student 9	Nitsa Qoqoladze	14	Female

Student 10	Giorgi Sagirashvili	14	Male
Student 11	Medea Tugulashvili	14	Female
Student 12	Maka Zitanishvili	14	Female

Source: Author (2019)

The second component of the data collection intends to examine teachers' perspectives on how media literacy interventions influence students' perceptions over mass media and its effects on society. For this purpose, interviews with teachers experienced in integrating media literacy into the curriculum were conducted. As discussed in section 1.2.4.3, in 2018 a Georgian non-governmental organization Civic Development Institute trained up to 60 Georgian teachers in integrating media literacy competence into the school curriculum. The organization kindly agreed to provide contact information of the trained teachers. The trained teachers were approached through e-mail and kindly asked to participate in the interviews. 12 teachers responded and agreed to the telephone interviews.

The 12 teachers were given a number (in alphabetical order) for the efficiency during the results analysis:

Figure 8: The participant teachers

Teacher #	Name and surname	School subject	Gender
Teacher 1	Irma Ghaniashvili	Mathematics	Female
Teacher 2	Khatuna Gogaladze	Biology	Female
Teacher 3	Nino Jincharadze	Georgian Language and Literature	Female
Teacher 4	Bela Lagvilava	Georgian Language and Literature	Female
Teacher 5	Mzia Maisuradze	History	Female
Teacher 6	Patima Makalatia	Beginner Level (1st-4th grades)	Female
Teacher 7	Lia Merebashvili	Beginner Level (1st-4th grades)	Female
Teacher 8	Maia Moseshvili	Georgian Language and Literature	Female
Teacher 9	Manana Nutsubidze	History	Female
Teacher 10	Tamar Pachulia	Georgian Language and Literature	Female

Teacher 11	Gita Tvalabeishvili	Beginner Level (1st-4th grades)	Female
Teacher 12	Mzia Pirveli	Beginner Level (1st-4th grades)	Female

Source: Author (2019)

3.5 Validity of the study

Validity of a study refers to "the degree to which a study reflects the specific concepts it aims to investigate" (Alshenqeeti, 2014, p. 43). Several steps have been taken for the purpose of ensuring the validity of the current research:

1. The study investigates perceptions of both, students and teachers involved in media literacy interventions;

2. The media literacy course delivered to the school students is based on a well adopted lesson plans kit prepared by the Centre for Media literacy (USA);

3. For the purpose of the students' assessment, two methodological tools – participant observation and in-depth interviewing – have been implemented simultaneously, in order to increase the validity of the collected data;

4. For the purpose of the teachers' assessment, only the teachers trained by a well reputable local organization have been interviewed;

5. In order to increase the validity of the collected data, the participant children have been interviewed after one year since the completion of the course. This technique was used in order to avoid the risks of qualitative interviewing such as the influence of the instructor

on the interviewees summoned by conducting the interviews immediately after the course; with a special consideration of the fact that the interviewees represented young children potentially being more vulnerable to the influences of the instructor. Moreover, interviewing the participant students after one year since the completion of the course provided a more valuable data concerning the long-term outcomes of media literacy intervention on the school students.

3.6 Limitations

The current study seeks to understand the possible interrelation of media literacy education with what Jurgen Habermas defines as the public sphere. For this purpose, a case study of a Georgian classroom has been examined on one hand and an assessment of the perceptions of a group of Georgian teachers on the other hand. This study aims at contributing to the theoretical debate and by no means intends to generalize the findings universally. The discussion and conclusions presented in the following sections apply exclusively to the interviewed participants of this research.

4. RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

The following section is dedicated to the presentation and analysis of the results of the fieldwork. The results of the interviews with the participant students and teachers as well as the personal notes collected during the observation will be presented and analyzed in the following sub-sections.

4.1 Students' assessment

The following section intends to present and analyze the results of the interviews with the participant students. As discussed in sections 2.3.2.1 and 2.4, semi-structured face to face interviews had been conducted with the participant students after one year since the completion of the media literacy intervention.

4.1.1 Personal notes

Before moving to the analysis of the interviews, it can be helpful to review the short personal notes collected as a part of participant observation method during the media literacy intervention.

The notes have been collected on each day during the nine-day-long media literacy intervention:

Day 1: When asked about the types of media, most of the students named internet platforms and social networks. Surprisingly enough, almost none of the students named TV, radio or press among media.

Day 2: The students seemed particularly interested and involved while discussing the changes in information flow throughout history.

While giving the homework (searching online for the effects of tobacco consumption) all of the students confirmed that they were able to search online in English language.

Day 3: While composing the line-ups for a daily news program, students engaged in a lively debate concerning the importance of various daily news and their priority order in the line-up. By the end of the debate students clearly realized how different viewpoints and values might affect news coverage in reality.

Day 4: Among all the lessons conducted, the students were clearly the most actively engaged in lesson four. The particular interest was driven to the discussed techniques of persuasion and attraction of public attention by advertisers.

Day 5: Students actively engaged in discussions over the various types of image compositions as well as the issues of stereotypes in media. A particularly live debate took place while analyzing images of women in the advertisements of washing products.

Day 6: An exciting matter took place during the lesson discussing target marketing: while projecting a YouTube video on the screen, the students noticed an advertising of an airline company popping-up on the screen and asked the researcher if he had purchased a flight ticket recently. In fact, the researcher had purchased a flight ticket to Barcelona two days prior to the lesson. Without a prior planning the researcher went on opening his Facebook personal page and

several other websites and to the students' great excitement, advertisements on every website offered flight tickets and hotel deals in Barcelona. This case served as an ideal way of demonstrating to the students the concept of target marketing in real time.

Day 7: After discussing maps as a form of media, the students were asked to guess which out of two different countries were geographically close to Georgia. To the students' amusement, most of the answers were wrong.

Day 8: While discussing the issues of media manipulation, one of the students asked to clarify the definition of the word *propaganda*. To the researcher's surprise, most of the students were not familiar with the word *propaganda*.

Day 9: After discussing the issues of creation and spreading of media products, several students asked technical advices concerning creation of video clips and spreading them through social networks. Most of the students clearly demonstrated their willingness for becoming more active creators of media products.

4.1.2   Memories of the course

Interview question 1: What do you remember most from our course conducted last year?

The first question of the interview aimed to inquire at what extent did the students remember the media literacy course conducted one year earlier and which specific aspects of media literacy they remembered the most. As discussed in section 2.3.2.1, the students were interviewed after one year since the completion of the intervention and therefore the primary interest was to examine their memories of the course.

The answers varied in their length and form, however, as the following discussion shows, most of the answers were connected with advertisement and marketing in media.

To this first question of the interview, some students gave exceptionally short answers. For instance, student 3 responded:

"I remember advertising and how to use internet"

student 4 gave a surprisingly similar answer:

"what I remember most is advertising and how to use internet"

Another short answer by student 8 was:

"from what we talked about last year, what I remember the most are the types of commercials and what techniques they use to attract our attention".

While not leaving much space for examination due to being exceptionally laconic, these answers demonstrate that the most memorable aspects of the media literacy intervention were connected solely with advertising and marketing for these students.

Other students, while providing relatively longer answers, mostly talked about advertising and marketing strategies as well. For instance, student 7 responded:

"I remember creation of media content and types of commercials which try to attract our attention. I remember the techniques which they use, such as portraying a happy family of using sexy images"

This answer as well as the previous ones was evidently based solely on advertising and marketing. So were the answers by student 1, student 9 and student 11:

Student 1: "Mostly I remember about advertising and media products and internet. To say honestly, now I cannot remember much. I remember only commercials and how these commercials are everywhere, including the street banners. I mostly remember advertisements".

Student 9: "What I remember most are commercials and advertisements on the street banners. We see plenty of them every day. I remember how they try to make us remember things by using various techniques, but I also remember that our brains are too used to it and so we do not pay much attention".

Student 11: "First of all I remember how media representatives work on human psychology. For example, as you mentioned, one day you might search for something [on the internet] and the next day it will pop up on a completely different webpage. I remember how smartly is the whole base organized. I also remember how they use the topic of happy family of friends to make various products attractive for us".

All of these three answers are again solely connected with media advertising and marketing, however, here more details are presented discussing various types of advertisement such as street banners and online advertisements. Moreover, these answers emphasize the techniques used by advertisers in order to attract attention. Despite the fact that student 11 begins the answer with media representatives influencing human psychology, the rest of the answer clearly demonstrates that this concept was mentioned solely in the context of advertising and marketing. Correspondingly, it can be concluded that the answers by student 1, student 9 and student 11 also reflect solely on the topic of media marketing.

The answer from another interviewee, student 5, was also based on advertisement and marketing in media, however, in a very detailed manner:

"[I remember] political and commercial advertisements and announcements which are often written on street banners. On every bus stop and on every step on the street we see these advertisements, even on the trees and walls sometimes, but we do not pay attention because there are too many of them and we are used to them. Also on Facebook sometimes there are advertisements saying that one glass of some liquid cures cancer or something. I remember that these things are mostly lies. Some people might naively believe them but they are mostly lies and somebody wants to make profit by making people believe in it. These are just commercials. Also while watching a movie or some video sometimes advertisements pop up and try to attract people's attention using various techniques. They do everything to attract attention. I remember too that a commercial must be very attractive to make people become interested in the product".

While also being based solely on the topic of advertisement in media, this answer demonstrates a better memory of the specific topics discussed during the course. Moreover, at the beginning it includes mentioning of a political element as well.

Two students, student 2 and student 10, specifically based their answers on the phrase "how to use internet":

Student 2: "[I remember] talking about using internet. Since our course I learned how to use internet better. After our course I am more interested in Georgian daily news, I want to receive more information, more often. I learned how to use internet, after our course".

Student 10: "What I remember most are commercials and what webpages teach us, what internet teaches us, what is more important for us and how to use internet".

As most of the students, in the beginning student 10 mentions advertising as well, however, the main issue in his answer refers to internet. "Using internet" is the dominant issue in the answer

of student 2 as well. However, student 2 interestingly enough states that the media literacy intervention increased his interest in daily news, which can be examined again during the further analysis.

Lastly, two students, student 6 and student 12, gave answers which corresponded to relatively more complex issues of media literacy which is information management and filtration:

Student 6: "From the course I remember that people receive information every second and then filter it in their brains. I also remember that before the course I had a completely different idea about media and after the course I was surprised because I would not imagine that my ideas about media would change so much. I also remember that advertising and media literacy concerns almost everything that I touch".

Student 12: "What I remember most is what you told us about information management and how we mostly do not pay attention and how they try to deliver information to us and make us interested".

The responses to the first question clearly demonstrate that what students remembered after one year since the completion of the course was exclusively in relation with media marketing and advertisement.

Despite the minor differences in students' answers, most of them reflect solely on the topics of commercial interests in media. It should be also mentioned that some answers lead to different angles for the further discussions; namely, the answer by student 2 about the rise of his interest in daily news since the completion of the media literacy course and the answers by student 6 and student 12 who's responses touched upon the more complex topics of media literacy, such as information management and information filtration. Two responses, by student 2 and student 10

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require further examination, as their answers "how to use internet" might be interpreted in various ways.

4.1.3   Media literacy competence in practice

Interview question 2: Have you, in your daily life, practically used anything during the last year from what you learned from our course?

The second question of the interview intended to examine at what extent did the students manage to use their knowledge of media literacy in practice. Answers varied in form and character. Two students (student 7 and student 8) simply responded "no".

Interestingly enough, for six students, advertisement was the main topic of responses for the second question as well.

Student 2 responded:

"I don't know how much I used it, but while watching advertisements I often remember our lessons where I learned many interesting things about advertisement. Now I watch advertisements differently because now I have my own views"

While speaking about viewing advertisements differently after the course, student 2 did not exactly specify how differently, or using which competence and particular knowledge of media literacy has influenced his views of advertisement in practice.

Responses of similarly broad characters were given by students 4 and student 9:

Student 4: "Yes, several times I used what we learned about advertisement. When I use some website, after some time advertisement of that website pops up on another website and reminds to visit the website which I visited before. At those moments I remember what we learned".

Student 9: "After our course I pay more attention to advertisements and street banners but after time passed I did it less and less and now I probably do not do it any more".

Two students, student 11 and student 12, based their answers on the topic of advertisement as well; however, with a relatively more specificity:

Student 11: "Yes, for example, when I see advertisements popping up on some website, I try to pay attention and understand why was this message sent to me. I do not know how much I use my knowledge, but I try to connect these advertisements with what I learned during the course. Also, when I see commercials on TV, I pay attention to which techniques they use to attract my attention and which techniques they use to make the product look better. I try not to become influenced from these techniques because of the ways in which they are pretended and I try to pay attention to more important things about the advertised product".

Student 12: "Yes, last year we talked about advertisements, how they pop up on some website or the commercial videos which we often see. Before I did not pay any attention to it but after our course I pay attention to every commercial. I pay attention to how they try to attract our attention. I pay to all the details".

In the responses by student 11 and student 12 more details are presented concerning the practical adoption of media literacy competence in their daily lives.

Student 6 responded in a quite original way. While the response being also related to advertisement, she stated that the knowledge of media literacy topics has helped her in her relationships, as she tries to inform others about the challenges of media marketing as well:

"I have used many things. On many occasions the term media literacy was helpful for me as I was trying to explain to others more about the advertisements, banners and newspapers which they see and use. It helped me to a great extent in relationships. When a person knows something interesting, they are nice to communicate with, right? I feel interesting when I have some information which others do not have and I like to share it with others. So, it helped me the most in relationships with others".

Two students, student 5 and student 10, related their responses to information management and filtration:

Student 5: "I do not know if I use it, but after our course I pay more attention to media products. For instance, on Facebook and on other websites I could believe the information easily before, but now I know that there are many lies and not everything deserves to be believed in. Now I see that there are many things which try to attract my attention but not all of them are true and believable".

Student 10: "Yes, I learned to internet properly and to manage information. Internet is a space where you can receive much information and now I feel that I know more than others because I know that not all the information is true".

Two students, student 2 and student 3, related their answers to political issues in mass media. Student 2 responded:

"Yes, I use what we learned last year in relation to daily news and information. Now I watch the daily news program on Imedi TV[7] almost every day. I became interested in the daily news and also I like to observe them critically".

Quite original was the response from student 3, which stated that he begun to watch and observe advertisements of the presidential candidates:

"I observe how they lie to people while watching the campaign advertisements of Zurabishvili"[8].

The responses by student 2 and student 3 will be further discussed in the following sections as political issues were not frequently present in the responses of the interviewed students.

As the results suggest, the issues of media marketing and advertisement dominated in the students' responses on the second interview question as well. Six students (out of 12) based their responses on the issues of advertising in mass media. It should be also noted that two student related their response to a relatively complex issues of information management and filtration. Special attention should be payed to the responses by student 2 and student 3, as political issues emerged in their responses for the first time.

4.1.4   Perceptions of advertisement

Interview question 3: Has our course changed your attitudes towards advertisement?

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[7] A Georgian TV Channel.
[8] A Georgian presidential candidate during the 2018 elections in Georgia.

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The third question of the interview intends to examine at what extent has the media literacy course affected students' perceptions of advertisement particularly. Three students (student 2, student 3 and student 12) simply responded that it had had no direct effect.

One student's (student 4) response was not very descriptive either:

"Probably yes, because before I did not know what advertisements really offer us. But honestly, I do not remember how I used to watch advertisements before [the course]".

Four students, student 7, student 8, student 9 and student 10, gave quite laconic responses as well; however, with a relatively more details:

Student 7: "Before the course advertisement were for me just pictures with some fonts on it and without any agenda. Now I see more concepts in them and so now I can understand more information".

Student 8: "I think that advertisements are evolving year by year in the sense that some of them are becoming more interesting, some of them include lots of obvious lies and some of them are of a good quality. Advertisements are different and I remember that [from our course]. Now I can better notice how the advertisements are evolving".

Student 9: "Probably now I think more about how they deliver advertisements to us. Now I notice how much work is behind the advertisements of even very simple things. Now I see how conceptual are the advertisements and how they try to deliver their messages to us. Now I certainly pay more attention".

Student 10: "Yes, before I did not pay any attention to advertisements. Before I thought that these are just advertisements, but now I know that the advertised product might not be interesting for me at all".

All the four responses express students' confirmation concerning the changes in their perceptions of advertisement in mass media. However, due to the length and character of the responses, it is hard to determine at what extent did the media literacy course change their perceptions in reality.

Student 1 responded in a more detailed manner, underlining a specific issue of gender stereotypes in advertisements:

"Since the course I have more information and I now I know more interesting things about advertisements. In general, I do not like advertisements as they often tell stories in a wrong manner. For example, I see that the advertisements of washing powders portray women as washers. Why? Cannot men wash too? This is a family item and they tell us that only women are supposed to wash. Or the advertisements of proteins – I see that they portray men, but women take proteins too. This is why I do not like advertisements. I see to many lies in them".

Another student underlining a specific issue was student 5, which based his response on the topic of political news in media:

"Of course, I pay attention. Before the course I did not pay much attention but now I do. Now we have elections and I pay attention to which techniques do politicians use in the political advertisements. They also include regular citizens in their advertisements and they try to use them to attract attention and trust of other regular citizens. They use this technique hoping that the voters

will say – if these regular citizens trust this politician and vote for him, then I can trust him and vote for him too. Now I pay attention to such things".

Interestingly enough, this was the only response including the element of political advertisements in mass media.

The only student relating her response directly to the techniques used by advertisers, was student 11:

"Yes, before I used to look at advertisement in a different way, I liked some advertisements and I disliked others for just how they looked. Now I realize that the looks are not enough to like an advertisement. Before I used to like funny advertisements but now I try to connect them to my knowledge – why are these techniques used? The techniques of portraying a happy family or the other techniques which we discussed. Now I try to pay more attention to these techniques and to think more about which product is better, rather than thinking about which advertisement looks better".

This response by student 11 demonstrates the memory of the discussed advertisement techniques as well as the student's confidence in practically applying this knowledge in her daily life.

Another student demonstrating an exceptional memory of the advertisement-related issues discussed during the course was student 6:

"Yes, for example, the issues discussed during our course about how advertisements influence our choices – how we become attracted by some product if it is advertised professionally, how some products are portrayed much better than they are in reality, the characters presented in the advertisements – but in reality this might be just an illusion. When I see advertisements now, I try

to pay attention to what might be true and what might be a lie. When I see an advertisement I try not to pay attention to how the product is portrayed, but to what the product really represents. When I see an advertisement of some food, for example, I try not to pay attention to the characters in the advertisement but to think about how good this food really is".

The responses to the third interview question suggest that most of the students demonstrate changes in their perceptions over advertisement in media. It should also be noted that some of the responses lack the evidence of practical implementation of the advertisement-related issues discussed during the media literacy course. Two responses require special attention during the further discussions as they are closely related to certain specific issues, such as gender stereotypes in advertisement and political advertisements.

4.1.5   Perceptions of political news

Interview question 4: Has our course changed your attitudes towards political news?

The fourth question of the interview intends to examine at what extent has the media literacy course affected students' perceptions of political news particularly. Six students (student 2, student 3, student 4, student 7, student 8 and student 12) responded that they never watch political news and therefore they could not specify any changes in this matter.

Student 1 related her response to advertising yet again and laid special emphasis on political advertisements:

"Before I did not watch political news, but now we have elections and I watch sometimes because it has become more interesting for me. I do not like politics in general because we have a

quite deranged country. These political advertisements are everywhere, on TV and on the streets, the presidential candidates are asking people to vote for them through these political advertisements. When I see these advertisements I remember about what we learned during the media literacy course".

Student 1 does not clearly specify what particularly had changed in her perceptions of political news; however, in her response she clearly demonstrates an increased interest and attention to political advertisements and her ability to relate those to her knowledge gained during the media literacy course.

Three students, student 5, student 6 and student 9, related their responses to the notion of untruth in political news:

Student 5: "TV channels and all the media do not tell truth about politicians very often. Only a very small percent of truth might be present in their coverage of politics. The rest, they say what suits them, because media is the tool for delivering information to wide audiences and so they say what they want people to believe in".

Student 6: "I remember about media literacy when I see political news. Nothing in this world is completely reliable and so is our media too. Before attending the media literacy course I used to believe everything what I heard from media because I thought that if they say it then it must be true. Now I know that the situation is different and some information might not be very accurate or true. Now I pay more attention and I think that I can tell the difference now".

Student 9: "I often remember [our course] because now I know that not everything is true from what they tell us. They pretend that everything that they say is true, but now I know that there are many ways to tell the stories inaccurately".

These three responses demonstrate the changes in students' attitudes towards political news in media. A shift to a more critical analysis is clearly visible in all the three responses. It should be also mentioned that while students underline the possibility of falsehood in the media coverage of political events, none of the students have touched upon the reasons why media could be bias while political reporting. None of the three students mentioned the issues of media ownership and political influences in the media, which have been actively discussed during the media literacy course conducted one year before the interviews.

Another student, student 10, relating his response to media bias did not mention the issues of media ownership or political influences in media either:

"Yes, for example, I see that many opinions in media are biased towards various political groups. We have TV channels which try to promote some political groups and TV channels which try to discredit other political groups".

Only one student, student 11 related her response to the issue of credibility of information sources:

"Before I did not watch daily news and if I watched sometimes, I did not pay much attention and I thought that things are the way in which they are presented by media. Now I try to be more careful and if I see some interesting information, I try to check it through other sources as well because many TV channels and news websites are clearly biased. I see that there are many fake stories and so I try to check everything and not affected by disinformation".

Responses by the student's to the fourth question of the interview clearly demonstrate the changes in students' perceptions of the political news in media. Despite the fact that half of the students responded that they never watch news, the other half which does watch news sometimes,

clearly demonstrate a shift to more critical evaluation of the daily political news. It should be also noted that while demonstrating their critical approach, none of the students touched upon the reasons of media bias towards political issues; the topics of media ownership and political influences in media which have been actively discussed during the media literacy course one year prior to conducting the interviews.

4.1.6 Perceptions of media in general

Interview question 5: Do you observe any changes in your perceptions about media since our course (including video games, social networks, YouTube, etc.)?

The fifth question of the interview intends to examine at what extent did the media literacy course affect students' perception of media in general. Four students (student 1, students 3, student 9 and student 10) simply responded that the Media literacy course had had no direct effect on their perceptions of media in general.

Three students, student 2, student 4 and student 7, responded in an exceptionally laconic manner as well:

Student 2: "I do not play videogames but I visit YouTube quite often. I only see changes in advertisements".

Student 4: "I think I use media much smarter now. I pay more attention to what I need, compared to what is offered to me".

Student 7: "Yes, a little bit. Mainly I feel it in relation with advertisements. Because wherever you go on the internet, the advertisements keep popping up".

These three responses, while being particularly laconic, again demonstrate students' increased awareness towards advertising.

Three other students, student 5, student 6 and student 8, related their responses to advertisement as well; however, in a more detailed manner:

Student 5: "Yes, I try to pay attention now. I do not play videogames but when I am on Facebook or some other websites, advertisements pop up all the time and you have to watch them. If you are interested to continue the video which you are watching, then you have to wait some seconds for the advertisement to finish. Now I pay attention to this".

Student 6: "Yes, since our course I see that when advertisements pop up, or when some text pop up, you have to watch them. I go to the internet in order to receive new information but now when I pay attention, there are many advertisements which do not give me any information and which I do not need to see. I checked one website and I counted ten advertisements. Before I did not see these but now I pay attention. Now I see why they show me these advertisements – this information stays somewhere in my brain and then when I see that product, it will attract me easily".

Student 8: "As I said before, advertisements are evolving and now they know very complicated ways for attracting our attention. I do not use social networks but when I am outside on the street, I notice different advertisements. I did not pay attention to it before, but now I know how they try to attract my attention".

As the analysis suggest, these three responses are related solely to the issues of advertisement in media as well.

The response by student 11 was in close relation with advertisement as well:

"Some things have changed in my mind [after the course]. As I already mentioned, I try not to get influenced by the techniques which they use to attract my attention and I try to go deeper in understanding of what is more important and useful for me. Before my attention used to be attracted by these techniques, for example, when they [advertisers] use images of a happy family and so on".

The only student not relating her answer directly to advertisement was student 12, which focused her answer on the information flow in general:

"Yes, I feel changes. While receiving information, now I pay more attention. I try to question why is this particular information delivered to me and what are the goals of those who try to deliver this information to me".

As the responses to the fifth interview question suggest, most of the interviewed students relate their responses to the issue of advertisement yet again. The responses by four students stating that the Media literacy course had no effect on their perceptions of media in general will be further discussed in the following sections as the four students had given different answers in the previous questions, concerning the changes in their attitudes towards more specific topics. In general, analysis of the fifth question prove that the issues of mass media are very closely related to the topic of advertisement for the interviewed students.

4.1.7 Creation of media products

Interview question 6: Do you create media product (including social network posts, sharing photos and videos, engaging in discussions on online platforms)? Has our course influenced the way you create media product?

The following questions of the interview intend to examine at what extent has the media literacy course affected students' behavior while creating and sharing information through media.

On the question "do you create media product?" four students (student 2, student 3, student 5 and student 11) shortly responded "Yes". Five students responded in a slightly more detailed manner:

Student 4: "I do not share photos on Facebook, but I often share funny things".

Student 6: "I do not use social networks very often, but I share some information daily".

Student 7: "Yes, I often take and share photos".

Student 10: "I like to share my opinions, but not very often".

Student 12: "Yes, very often".

All these five responses confirm the creation and sharing of information by the interviewed students; however, the laconic character of the responses does not provide a deep insight into the manner and scale of those activities.

Two students, student 1 and student 8, responded in a relatively negative manner:

Student 1: "I do not think I ever create or share media product".

Student 8: "No, I have not visited any social networks for 5-6 months by now".

It should be noted, that while asking the question, students were clearly informed that creation of a media product might mean such simple daily activities as taking a photo, or sharing a music video clip with friends.

Only one student, student 9, responded in a relatively detailed manner:

"Yes, I often do take photos and share them on Facebook. Also I make presentation for school classes quite often. We often have to do these kinds of things".

The analysis of the sixth interview question suggest that most of the students create media product at some extent. Only two out of 12 students stated that they never create a media product.

Four students (student 2, student 4, student 8 and student 12) responded that the media literacy course had had no effect on the ways how they create and share media product. It should be noted that in response to the previous question three of these students (student 2, student 4 and student 12) stated that they do create and share media product at some extent.

One student, student 3, gave an exceptionally laconic answer:

"Now I do it more often".

One student, student 10, responded that he started creating and sharing media product right after the media literacy course:"

"When I started to learn about media literacy, exactly then I started to create and share media product and I think that it was in direct relation with the course".

Three students, student 5, student 6 and student 7, related their responses to the issue of spreading information through the media:

Student 5: "I do not think much about media literacy when I share some photos or music videos, but when I see my friends posting [on Facebook] information about some injustice taking place in our country, then I remember media literacy and I notice that these friends become the media as they spread information to wide audiences".

Student 6: "Lately I had to prepare some articles and while preparing and sending them I remembered about what we learned during the media literacy course. When I write some information, some article or just my opinions and when I share them with my classmates or friends, I always remember about media literacy and I realize that I become the media spreading information. I think that other people's opinion is an information too".

Student 7: "Yes, it has changed in some way. While creating media product I often remember that by doing this I also become a part of this huge system which spreads information".

All these three responses demonstrate the rise in students' awareness over the scale and importance of spreading information through media. They all confirm that they realize the outcomes of their activities related to creation and spreading of information. It should be also noted that none of the three students specified how exactly has the media literacy course changed their attitudes towards creation and spreading information in practice.

Only one student, student 1, directly related her response to her increased responsibility while spreading information:

"I never was too active in posting things on Facebook and I do not like when people post very stupid things. After our course I pay more attention to what I share. For example, when I share some videos, I ask myself – is it truth? Or maybe I am sharing some lie or propaganda? I have

become much more responsible while spreading information because now I know that I might be sharing some lies or the videos which I share might be offensive for someone".

Student 1 was the only interviewed student mentioning precisely the issue of responsibility while spreading information. It should be also noted that she slightly touched upon the issue of checking the credibility of information before spreading it as well.

Student 9 and student 11 responded in a quite original way, stating that while spreading information they use their knowledge gained during the media literacy course concerning the techniques of attracting public attention:

Student 9: "For example, when I have to prepare a presentation or when I have to upload some materials, I try to remember our discussions about attracting public attention. So I try to make my presentations more attractive for those who watch and listen, by using those techniques".

Student 11: "I remember about media literacy when I want to wrap my product, presentation and another school task, so that it attracts the viewers' attention. Now I know that I can use some techniques which will make my work more attractive and interesting".

These responses by student 9 and student 11 deserve special attention, as, interestingly enough, rather than demonstrating increased responsibility while creation and spreading of media products, they demonstrate the adoption of the advertisers' techniques for the attraction of public attention.

The responses to the sixth and seventh questions of the interview suggest that firstly, most of the students create and share media products at some extent. Secondly, most of the interviewed students demonstrate the changes in their perceptions concerning the importance of spreading information through media. The findings will be further discussed in the following section; including the frankly unanticipated responses by student 9 and student 11 concerning their use of

the advertisers' techniques of attracting public attention while preparing their school tasks related to creation of media products.

4.1.8 Benefits of the course

Interview question 8: Do you think that our course was beneficial for you? If you do not think so, please feel free to say it honestly, if you think that it was beneficial, please say, how?

The last question of the interview intends to examine the interviewed students' own views about the benefits of the course. It should be underlined that the students were asked to express it freely if they believed that the media literacy course had had no benefit for them whatsoever.

Most of the students related their responses to the issues of advertisement and information management. Two students, student 7 and student 8, related their responses solely to the issue of advertising:

Student 7: "Yes, it was certainly good for me as I learned many new things. Before I knew nothing about advertisement but now I pay attention to which techniques the advertise use to attract our attention".

Student 8: "I pay more attention since our course. I do not visit social networks often but when I do now I notice all the advertisements which are there. Now I am more interested in the topics of advertising".

While student 7 demonstrated the changes in her perceptions of advertisement in a clear and relatively detailed manner, student 8 did not specify how in particular did the media literacy course benefit him in relation to the issue of advertising.

Two students, student 3 and student 4, related their responses to the issues of internet as well as the advertisement:

Student 3: "It [the course] taught me about advertisement in mass media and hot to use internet smartly".

Student 4: "Yes, it was very beneficial because I learned a lot about internet and about advertising".

Both of these question, while being exceptionally laconic, touch upon the issues of using internet in a mindful manner.

The only student relating his response solely to the issues of using internet was student 2:

"It [the course] taught me how to receive information from the internet smartly".

Two other students relating their responses with the issue of advertising, student 1 and student 6, touched upon the issue of information management as well:

Student 1: "To say honestly, I am not sure if it was very beneficial for me, but it was certainly very interesting. If I had to take that course again, I would do it with pleasure because I learned many new things from that course. Before I had some knowledge about advertising but now I know more and also I pay attention to the information which I receive and I started to pay more attention. So, I believe that it was good for me".

Student 6: "It was certainly beneficial for me because I started to look differently at the advertisements and other information which I receive. I have learned how to filter the information which comes to me. Now when I watch a commercial I do not get attracted by the techniques because now I know what these advertisements are made of. Now I know more about this whole ideology".

Another student, student 9, relating her response to the issue of advertising, touched upon the issue of creation of media products as well:

"It was beneficial for me for the reasons which I already stated in my previous responses. I have learned much about advertisement and also I always remember about media literacy when I create and share a media product, even when I prepare presentations for the class".

It should be mentioned that student 9 was one of the students which responded to the previous question of the interview in a quite original manner, stating that she uses the advertisers' techniques for attracting public's attention while creating and sharing media products.

Student 5 related her response to her increased attention to media products:

"I cannot say that it [the course] had a crucial benefit for me, but now I certainly pay more attention to what I receive from media. I watch more carefully and I listen more carefully and I read more carefully".

Only one student, student 11 related her answer directly to critical evaluation of information received through media:

"Yes, the course was certainly beneficial for me because before I used to trust everything what I received from media very easily, I used to think that everything what I saw in media was truth.

Now, after the course, I try to check the information which I receive because sometimes two different TV channels tell events completely differently and I try to check various sources before I believe any information. Before I thought that everything was true, but now I am very careful".

The response by student 11 demonstrates the changes in her perceptions about relatively more complex topics of media literacy, such as critical evaluation of information and comparison of various information sources.

Student 10 confirms his feeling of benefiting from the media literacy course, however, his response does not clarify what in particular he believes that he has benefited from the course conducted one year earlier:

"Yes, it [the course] was beneficial for me. I have learned how to use my skills and also I learned what scientists in this field have brought to us".

The response does not provide much space for analysis due to its unclear character.

Another student, student 12, confirms her feelings of benefiting from the course, however, provides quite unclear response concerning the particular changes in her views as well:

"Yes, the course was beneficial for me because I have learned many things. Before I did not know the meaning of all of this and that we could understand so much. Now I understand more about media".

The responses to the last interview question suggests that all of the interviewed students consider the media literacy course to be beneficial for them. As for the most interview questions, the responses concerning the last interview question were frequently related to the issues of advertisement as well. However, more than half of the students related their responses to other

topics of media literacy as well; topics such as critical evaluation of information, comparison of information sources, a mindful engagement with online platforms, responsible creation of media products and increased attention to information received through media in general.

4.2 Teachers' assessment

The following section intends to present the results of the interviews with the participant teachers. As discussed in sections 2.3.2.1 and 2.4 semi-structured telephone interviews had been conducted with 12 participant teachers.

4.2.1   Integration of media literacy competence in practice

Interview question 1: How did you practically integrate media literacy competence into your subject curriculum?

The firsts question of the interview intends to explore how in particular did the interviewed teachers manage to integrate media literacy competence into their subject curriculum. The responses have been presented in a descriptive manner in order to provide the reader a better understanding of what kind of activities did the teachers conduct in their classrooms.

As the analysis suggest, most of the teachers related their practical activities to the issues of critical evaluation of information. Correspondingly, many activities were related to the issues of information credibility and comparisons of various information sources.

Teacher 7, for instance, focused on comparison of different information sources in order to discuss the issues of information credibility with her students.

Teacher 7: "I was discussing the topics of viruses and personal hygiene in general to the third graders when I tried integration of media literacy competence for the first time. I showed two posters and one short video clip about vaccination [to the students] and we compared the information provided from each source. Then we engaged in a debate concerning the credibility of each source and the reasons why there were differences in the information provided by the different sources. For me the most important task was to help students discover on their own which sources were more trustworthy and why. I am confident that I succeeded in my task, according to my students' comments by the end of discussion".

Teacher 7 further expressed her attitudes towards integration of media literacy competence into the school curriculum in general:

"Before I had tried to implement these kinds of activities for my students but only after becoming familiar with media literacy aspects I became able to do it successfully. The ability of comparing various sources and thus evaluating credibility of information is the major competence for school students and media literacy has helped me to contribute to the promotion of these competences better than any other tool".

The responses by teacher 7 clearly demonstrate her confidence in the successful integration of media literacy competence in practice.

Teacher 8 focused her activities of the comparison of various information sources as well, however, the main topic of her discussion was a historical figure and the task was to analyze various sources concerning the historical events.

Teacher 8: "I was teaching history in the 9th grade and according to my practice, the 9th grade is the time when students become relatively passive and absent. So I tried to make the topic more interesting for the students by integrating media literacy competence into the subject. I asked the students to read a novel about a Georgian king Erekle the Second; then we watched a feature movie about the king and afterwards we analyzed the historical sources concerning the king. Then we engaged in a discussion over the differences in the information provided by the different sources and the students were asked to analyze the differences in the portrayal of the king by a literary author, by a movie director and by a historian. Children were asked to express their arguments concerning the credibility and character of each source".

Another teacher relating her activity to a historical event was teacher 10, who focused her discussions on a historical battle.

Teacher 10: "Firstly, I discussed with students the developments in communication technologies and I tried to explain to them that in the modern era apart of traditional texts, the multimedia texts have an increasing importance as well. I also briefly discussed the topics of visual and audio messages and the ways in which the media delivers them to us. I experimented to integrate media literacy competence into my subject when we were discussing a historical event – the Bakhtrioni Battle. I gave the students a literary novel about this battle and also a poem about the same battle. Afterwards we watched a feature movie about the battle and then we engaged in debates. During the debates children were asked to compare how the same historical event was portrayed differently in different media products. After the discussion I asked the students to imagine that they had attended the battle as an observer and I asked them to prepare news items about twat they saw. Later, we created a newspaper issue with these articles".

Teacher 8 and teacher 10 both focused their activities on interpretation of historical events. While teacher 8 related her activities solely to the issues of critical evaluation and comparison of information sources, teacher 10 included the element of media production as well. While describing her activities, teacher 10 added:

"It is highly important to engage students in creation of media products as well. This way they understand the true power of media and also they get a better insight into the issues concerning the credibility of information sources".

Teacher 12 related her activities with comparisons of various information sources as well. However, the topic of her discussion was a novel for children.

Teacher 12: "We discussed a novel for children about an ostrich named Koko. In the novel Koko is very inattentive and leaves its eggs for long periods. One time when Koko came back to its eggs after taking a walk to drink water, Koko found that a fox had stolen its eggs. This novel is in the curriculum but I realized that it might give students incorrect ideas about an ostrich. So we watched a documentary about ostriches and about how caring and attentive they are towards their eggs in real life. I believe that by discussing this example the students will understand that the information provided in novels might not be scientifically accurate. I also believe that this activity will promote among my students the habit of checking various sources of information as well".

Despite the fact that the first interview question did not enquire the teacher's personal views on the issues of media literacy, teacher 12 still added:

"I want to say that most importantly, after being introduced to the concepts of media literacy, I also begun to view information around me differently. I feel that I myself was completely unprotected from the mass of information which I receive daily. I want to underline this fact

because it is crucially important to realize how beneficial it will be for school students if their teachers are media literate".

Teacher 6 related her activity to a novel for children as well. She discussed with students how a similar story may vary in different media products.

Teacher 6: "I discussed a novel by a Georgian author with my students. Afterwards, we watched a cartoon and a feature film based on the same novel. I asked the students to engage in a debate over which details were presented similarly and which differently in the three different media products. My goal was to help students realize that different authors may present the same stories in different ways".

Teacher 6 further added that according to her observation, the lessons related to the integration of media literacy competence are among the most interesting and engaging lessons for her students:

"During these lessons I never have to ask anybody to be quiet or to pay attention. Children stare at me with great interest in their eyes and during the debates they all want to talk and share their ideas, nobody is passive".

As the analysis suggest, teacher 6 and teacher 10 experimented to integrate media literacy competence into their subject while discussing novels for children. They both confirmed their confidence in successfully rising students' awareness on the issues of information credibility and the importance of comparison of various information sources.

Teacher 2, which is a biology teacher, experimented the integration of media literacy competence into her subject by engaging the class into a critical debate while analyzing different information sources concerning a particular topic of biology.

Teacher 2: "In biology there are many issues which require a critical approach and therefore promoting critical thinking among students has to be among the top priorities for biology teachers. There are many challenging issues in biology which might be understood differently by different students. So, while discussing one particular topic of biology, I asked my students to compare various sources providing information on the topic and afterwards we all engaged in a debate. Biology is not a subject where you can learn things by heart, biology requires a great deal of critical thinking and therefore I am confident that media literacy competences are crucial in my field of teaching as it promotes students' abilities of critical evaluation of the received information. During the discussion we compared various articles and video clips on the topic and I was happy to see how my students based their arguments on their own critical analysis".

Teacher 2 was the only interviewed teacher underlining the importance of integration of media literacy competence particularly in her subject. Her views concerning the particular importance of the media literacy competences, such as the critical evaluation of received information, deserve special attention in the further analysis.

Another teacher, teacher 3, related her activities to the issues of critical analysis of information sources as well:

"I had a talk with my students about ecological problems. I told them about the pollution of oceans and rivers and the effect of the pollution on marine life. Afterwards I gave them a homework to search online for the ecological problems connected to the pollution of oceans and rivers and to check if the information was provided by me accurately. Additionally, the homework included to bring to the class the information which they found online on the topic respectively. My goal was to promote the competence of critical evaluation of information sources among my students and for this purpose I asked them to check the information provided by me as well. During

the next class we discussed the notes and articles brought by the students and the concepts of information credibility and trustworthiness in general as well".

As the response by teacher 3 suggests, in order to demonstrate the importance of the critical evaluation of information sources, she asked her students to check the credibility of the information delivered by her as well. Teacher 3 was the only interviewed teacher who asked the students to check the information provided by her personally.

Teacher 1 described a quite original way of relating her class to media literacy competencies and to demonstrating a case of disinformation to her students:

"I read a newspaper announcement by a government body stating that sports festivals had taken place at every Georgian school. The truth is that no such festival had taken place at our school and nobody had even heard of such a festival at our school. So I showed this article to my students and asked them to discuss why such a disinformation would be announced by a government body and why would a newspaper publish it without checking the facts. I gave the students a task to ask questions what was the goal of such an announcement and what could be done in order to counter this disinformation. We came up with an idea to prepare an advertisement of our school from an angle which would demonstrate our will and readiness to participate in such a festival. The students prepared articles about the infrastructure of the school, they interviewed other students in order to find out which sports would have been a priority for us and we distributed these advertisements to parents and other people in our town".

These activities conducted by teacher 1 touch upon several topics of media literacy. Firstly, it questioned the motives of a false message spread through mass media. Secondly, it questioned the role of the media in spreading disinformation and thirdly, it promoted countering of disinformation

through engagement and participation. Teacher 1 was the only interviewed teacher suggesting her students to counter disinformation through creating and spreading their own media products.

Two teachers, teacher 5 and teacher 9, related their activities to political issues. The main topics of their discussions were comparison of information sources, propaganda and hidden messages in media texts.

Teacher 5: "I experimented integration of media literacy competence into my subject while discussing the Cold War with 12th graders. We discussed several propagandistic posters of the Cold War era created in the US and in the Soviet Union. We engaged in a debate over what were the main messages in each poster and what goals were these messages supposed to achieve. Afterwards I read them historical speeches by Joseph Stalin and Winston Churchill and I gave the student a task to guess which speech belonged to which leader. After completion of the task, the students had to state their arguments why they believed that a particular speech was made by Stalin or Churchill; they were asked to demonstrate which messages from the speech formulated their opinions about the authorship and why".

In her response teacher 5 clearly demonstrates an attempt of an in-depth analysis of propagandistic media messages. The task of formulating students' arguments according to the values reflected in the speeches clearly falls into the category of an advanced level of critical thinking. It should be also noted that teacher 5 was the only interviewed teacher lecturing the 12th graders.

Teacher 9 based her discussion on political issues as well. Her goal was to analyze the meaning of hidden messages in media texts with her students:

"The hidden messages in caricatures are often hard to notice, but I tried to teach my students that the caricatures quite often include a certain message. For instance, I showed my students a caricature of Vladimir Putin walking a dog and on the dog the word *media* was written. I asked the students to engage in a debate over their interpretations of this caricature. Afterwards I showed them a video clip of Russian officials telling a group of international ambassadors that Russia never intervenes in the affairs of its neighboring states. I asked the students to analyze if this statement was true or false and to reflect on the goals of spreading such a message. Later we discussed a poster which portrayed Russian people thanking Vladimir Putin for ruling the country in a such successful way. Students were asked the goals of this poster as well. Eventually, I asked the students to create their own posters with only true and credible facts on them".

Responses by both, teacher 5 and teacher 9, are original in a sense that these were the only two teachers relating their activities to political issues. Their discussions included several topics of media literacy, such as the political propaganda and its goals, the hidden messages in media texts, values and viewpoints presented in media messages, deconstruction of media images and countering disinformation through creation of media products.

The techniques of integration of media literacy competence into the subject curriculum by teacher 4 and teacher 11 can hardly fall into any category, according to their original characters. Teacher 4 based her discussions on the issues related to the changes in the communication systems over time, while teacher 11 experimented practicing the art of shadow play as a form of media product creation.

Teacher 4: "I discussed a literary article with my students where a child asks his father how did they live in the old days without internet. In response, the father tells stories of his life in the Soviet Union. I gave my students to ask the same question to their parents and to write down the

responses. The students also interviewed our school teachers, asking everyone the same question – what was our life like without internet? Then we analyzed the collected materials and engaged in a debate over the similarities and differences in the answers. We also related this discussion to the article which gave the idea of this experiment. As the result, we had the opportunity to compare how different people described the same issue in different ways. Also this topic served as a wonderful opportunity to demonstrate the importance of the modern technological advancements to the students".

Despite the task of comparing various information sources, this activity conducted by teacher 4 might be controversial, as the information sources described their feelings and memories, rather than facts. Therefore, critical evaluation of the credibility and trustworthiness of information sources might be less relevant in this case.

The last interviewed teacher, teacher 11 suggested a quite original way of integration of media literacy competence into her lessons:

"Firstly we discussed the character of shadows play. I myself did not know much about this form of art and I can say that I learned about it together with my students. We watched a few video clips and shadows play and a couple of interviews the performers in that field. I explained to my students that a shadow play was a form of media too and we started discussing the ways how we could share our messages through this form of art. So we decided to practice creation of a media product through staging shadow plays. The students were exceptionally active and engaged and I am confident that I succeeded to promote their skills and motivation of expressing themselves through media product creation".

As the response by teacher 11 suggests, her main goal was to promote the skills and motivation of media product creation among her students. It should be also noted that while being quite original and challenging, the activities conducted by teacher 11 does not seem to have included some of the most important topics related to media literacy, such as critical evaluation of the received information, critical analysis of information sources, deconstruction of hidden messages in media, etc.

The responses to the first interview question suggest that all of the interviewed teachers had experimented integration of media literacy competence into their school subjects. Most of the teachers related their activities to the issues of critical evaluation of information sources and creation of media products.

Only two of the interviewed teachers related their activities to political issues. Two teachers suggested their students the discussions over the credibility of different information sources on historical events and figures. Others related their activities to the issues of ecology, arts, sports, literary novels, tales for children, etc.

It can be concluded that all of the teachers managed to integrate the media literacy competence into their school subjects at some extent. It should be also noted that most of the teachers expressed their personal acknowledgement of the importance of media literacy competences, even though they were not being asked about their personal reflections on the importance of media literacy during the first interview question.

4.2.2 Students' interest in media literacy

Interview question 2: According to your observation, which aspects of media literacy were the most interesting for your students?

The second question of the interview intends to inquire the teachers' observations on which particular aspects of media literacy competencies appeared to be the most interesting for their students. The responses were quite diverse.

Two teachers, teacher 4 and teacher 10, related their responses solely to the issue of media product creation.

Teacher 4: "The most interesting and involving activity for them [the students] was the process of creation. I gave them a task to interview their parents and then to discuss the results in the class while divided in several groups and I am confident that this was the most interesting part of our activities for my students".

Teacher 10 describes the same phenomenon of students' interest in media product creation as well, however, in a more detailed manner:

"When I first asked my students to prepare a newspaper, they said that it would be too hard for them. In fact, it appeared to be a little bit hard as the preparation of the newspaper took us much more time than planned. But the next time the same task was much easier to accomplish and the students certainly seemed interested and involved. During the discussion they also told me that the hardest but also the most interesting and exciting part of our activates was expressing our ideas through media production. They also admitted that the issues related to the filtration and critical evaluation of received information were highly interesting and exciting for them as well".

Both, teacher 4 and teacher 10, demonstrate their confidence in media product creation to have been the most interesting and involving part of media literacy related activities for their students during the class.

Two teachers, teacher 5 and teacher 9, related their responses to the topic of creation of media products as well; however, along with the issues related to deconstruction of media messages.

Teacher 5: "The most joy I observe among students while deconstructing media messages and creation of media products. They always look interested while analysis various posters and illustrations and afterward engaging in debates over the meanings of different media messages. I can clearly see their interest in the process of observing and evaluation media products. Also, they certainly look joyful and engaged while creating media products during the class. Honestly, when I see their joy, this makes the process more interesting for me too. So I like to work in this direction".

Teacher 9 begins her response with the issues related to deconstruction of media messages and critical evaluation of information as well:

"I believe that the most interesting part of our media literacy related activity for my students was when I asked them to deconstruct caricatures. They also enjoyed asking critical questions and finding answers to them. It was evident how important was for them to express their opinions and in this sense, expressing themselves through media production seemed the most interesting and engaging part of our activities. They were very motivated while giving these kinds of tasks – when they had to edit some photos, or draw pictures, or write texts and then combine them into their own products – that was when they seemed the most joyful and engaged".

Both, teacher 5 and teacher 9, name the processes of creation of media products and deconstruction of media messages among the most interesting and engaging parts of their media literacy related activities conducted with students. They both confirm their confidence in students' special interest and motivation while conducting the tasks related to self-expression through creation of media products.

Two other teachers, teacher 3 and teacher 11, name creation of media products among the most interesting media literacy related topics for their students. However, both teachers name at least one issue in addition to creation of media products.

Teacher 3: "My first observation was that working with video recourses was quite interesting for my students. I teach the beginner level and these kinds of materials always deserve their special attention, they like posters and images. All the materials which I used – video clips, illustrated books, posters and audio files – were all very interesting and exciting for my students. I also prefer to work with them with these kinds of recourses because they perceive them much better, due to their young age. Also, I observed a clear rise in their motivation and engagement when we worked on creation of media products. We created some posters and video recourse as well, on the issues of ecology and wildlife and I can confirm that these kinds of activities interested them the most".

While naming creation of media products among the most interesting media literacy related issues for her students, teacher 3 was the only interviewed teacher underlining the rise in students' interest and engagement while working with the materials which are attractive for the students of young age.

Teacher 11, named comparison of various information sources along with creation of media products as the most interesting media literacy related issues for her students:

"I integrated media literacy competence into my subject while teaching the third graders and therefore I could not go deep into some complex issues of media literacy. We went in a slightly different direction – we started with discussions and analysis of how media messages, such as advertisements and daily news are created. Due to the young age of the students, I tried to deliver this information to the min a rather simplified way. Afterwards, when we had to search for some information, children themselves started to compare various sources from the school books and the internet and by asking others. Then we had discussions over credibility of various sources. So I believe that they were the most interested during these activities – while comparing various information sources and while creating media products of their own".

The response by teacher 11 clearly demonstrates her confidence that her students seemed the most interested and engaged during the tasks of comparing different information sources and while creating media products of their own.

Four teachers, teacher 1, teacher 2, teacher 8 and teacher 12, related their answers to the issues connected with critical evaluation of information. However, they referred to the issue from various angles.

According to the observation by teacher 8, for instance, the most interesting topic media literacy for her students was the comparison of various information sources:

"Comparison and evaluation [of information sources] was certainly the most interesting activity for them. Also debates about how different information sources portray the same issues differently".

Teacher 2 and teacher 12 named the activities related to critical debate, along with the issues of critical evaluation of information as the most interesting topics of media literacy related activities for their students.

Teacher 2: "What I did first with my students was that I taught them about various information sources and how to question their credibility and trustworthiness. I connected these issues not only to the topic of biology, which I teach, but also to other fields of their lives in general, such as social networks which they use and the sources from where they receive the daily information. In my opinion this was the most important knowledge which I had to deliver to them and I was happy to see that it was so interesting for them. I also noticed the rise in their motivation and engagement while conducting the task of engaging in critical debates over the credibility of various information sources. They looked really excited while searching and presenting their arguments on the issues".

Teacher 12 related her response to both, the issue of critical debate and the issue of comparison of various information sources as well:

"They [the students] seemed the most interested when we discussed the issues related to the comparison of various information sources and analyzing their credibility. My students enjoy when I explain these issues in a simplified manner, so that they understand them. I also certainly observed their increased motivation and interest while engaging in critical debate over these issues. When we were comparing some movies or video clips or texts, they seemed very excited about sharing their arguments".

As the responses suggest, both teacher 2 and teacher 12, confirm their belief that engaging in critical debate over credibility of various information sources were among the most interesting tasks conducted during the media literacy related activities.

Teacher1 related her response solely to the issue of searching for information through mass media:

"They were interested practically in all the issues which we discussed. In my observation, for them the most interesting issue was the search for the credible information sources. They enjoyed the process of the search for trustworthy information".

Only one teacher, teacher 6, related her response solely to the issue of deconstruction of media messages:

"They like to analyze media products. We often engaged in critical analysis of media content and I could certainly see their excitement while uncovering hidden messages in media products. The students of the beginner level sometimes found the process of deconstruction a bit hard and they needed my assistance, but the 5th and the 6th graders approached this task with a much more motivation".

The last interviewed teacher, teacher 7, found hard to name one particular topic, due to the following reasons:

"I teach the beginner level and so I did not discuss many of the media literacy related topics as I considered them too complex for the students of such a young age. I would be lying if I named one particular topic because I did not differentiate these topics while discussing media literacy with my students. If I taught older students, then I would talk with them about all the issues of media literacy, but with young children, I must be very careful not to overwhelm them with much complicated information. A teacher must be very careful while working with such young students as complicated discussions might decrease their motivation and engagement. So I cannot name

one particular issue because I did not talk to my students about particular issues related to media literacy".

It should be mentioned that other teachers working with the beginner levels named at least one media literacy related issue which in their observation appeared to be the most interesting for their students.

As the results suggest, most of the teachers demonstrated their confidence that creation of media products and activities related to the analysis of credibility of information sources appeared to be the most interesting topics of media literacy for their students. Activities related to deconstruction of media messages were frequently mentioned in teachers' responses as well as the task of formulating students' arguments during critical debates.

4.2.3 Perceptions of advertisement

Interview question 3: Do you believe that integrating media literacy into the curriculum had an impact on students' perceptions over advertisement?

The third question of the interview intends to inquire the teacher's observations concerning the changes in students' perceptions over the advertisements in media. All of the teachers confirmed that integration of media literacy competence into their subjects had changed students' views concerning advertisements in media.

Half of the interviewed teachers (teacher 1, teacher 4, teacher 7, teacher 8, teacher 10 and teacher 11) responded that their students' perceptions over advertisement changed through the process of creating advertisements of their own. The teachers suggested that the activities related

to the creation of advertisements had been observed as the most effective instruments for rising students' awareness on the issues related to advertisement in media in general.

The six teachers described their activities related to creation of advertisements in the class as following:

Teacher 1: "We published mini posters and invitation cards about the sports festival which would virtually be organized at our school. We tried to use the techniques of persuasion such as inserting attracting photos and images into the invitation cards and also selecting attractive colors. We also prepared a story for a short video clip. During these activities the students saw and felt how advertisers work in order to attract our attention and I am confident that the students realized these issues during the activities".

Teacher 4 underlined the role of creating advertisements as well:

"We created various advertisements and I am confident that while creating these advertisements my students started to look as these issues in a different way".

Two teachers, teacher 7 and teacher 8, named which particular topics they used while preparing advertisements in the class:

Teacher 7: "My students created advertisement posters supporting forests. The main massages were to preserve our trees. They became very interested in the process of creation and I think that now they understand more about advertisements".

Teacher 8: "We related our activity to politics and we created posters asking to stop Russian occupation of Georgian territories. We created some slogans as well and we discussed formats of

advertisement and techniques for attracting attention. I think that through these kinds of activities not only students but teachers will change their perceptions over advertisements as well".

Teacher 10 focused the activities on advertisements in press:

"Now they understand better the importance and the meaning of the messages received through advertisements. I gave my students a task to prepare advertisements in a form of newspaper articles and we also created a newspaper page dedicated to advertisements. So we spent much time on working on the issues related to advertisement in press".

The last teacher relating her response to the creation of advertisements during the class, teacher 11, responded:

"I am confident that their perceptions over advertisements has changed. I gave them a task to prepare advertisements of any product of their choice. Each student had to choose a product and discuss other advertisements of that product. Afterwards we had group discussions and I could clearly see that they knew much more about advertisements in media and their influences".

Two teachers, teacher 6 and teacher 9, demonstrated their confidence that their students had developed a critical approach towards advertisement since their media literacy related activities.

Teacher 6: "They started to pay more attention and they often told me about their discoveries in the advertisements which they saw after the school. They clearly learned how to evaluate critically the messages in advertisements. They developed a critical approach to all the types of media products and especially to advertisements".

Teacher 9: "My students told me that after the media literacy interventions they pay more attention to advertisements on TV, in newspapers and the internet. They started to evaluate advertisements critically and it seems that they had much fun while doing it too".

Teacher 1 found it difficult to evaluate the changes in students' perceptions over advertisement as they had not discussed particularly the issues related to advertisement during the class; however, she demonstrated her confidence that learning about critical evaluation of information in general, would change students' views concerning advertisement as well:

"They learned about critical approach to information sources and the necessity of checking credibility and trustworthiness of any information source. I am sure that these competences will enable them to deconstruct advertisement messages as well, despite the fact that we did not discuss advertisements in particular. Now they think twice before taking for granted the messages received through media products".

Teacher 3 responded that she believed that integration of media literacy competence into the curriculum had changed the students' perceptions over advertisement in media, however, her response does not provide sufficient information on the issue:

"Of course… Students remember advertisement better than adults. I think that after our activities they will think more about the real quality of the advertised products".

The only teacher believing that the media literacy integration had affected her students' perceptions over advertisement, however, admitting that the change cannot be measured by any means, was teacher 12:

"Yes, we discussed advertisement and I am confident that they [students] will approach advertisement differently now, but also I must admit that is just my opinion and desire, I have no tools to measure this change".

The last interviewed teacher, teacher 5, responded that she never discussed the advertisement related issues with her students, however, she was confident that the integration of media literacy competence into the school curriculum had changed her students' perceptions over advertisement in media:

"We did not talk about the issues of advertisement in particular as I teach history and it would not be exactly relevant. But while we talked about information sources in general, I noticed that my students had had become more critical towards advertisement as well".

As the responses to the third interview question suggest, all of the interviewed teachers demonstrate their confidence that integration media literacy competence into school curriculum had changed their students' perceptions over advertisement. It should be mentioned that half of the interviewed teachers believe that the process of advertisement creation during the class had appeared to be the most effective method for teaching students about the issues related to advertisement in media.

4.2.4 Perceptions of political news

Interview question 4: Do you believe that integrating media literacy into the curriculum had an impact on students' perceptions over political news?

The fourth question of the interview intends to inquire the teacher's observations concerning the changes in students' perceptions over the political news in media. Interestingly enough, eight teachers (teacher 1, teacher 2, teacher 3, teacher 4, teacher 6, teacher 7, teacher 11 and teacher 12) responded that they had never discussed any issue related to politics with their students and therefore, were not able to respond to the question. In all the cases, the reason was related to the young age of students. All of the six teachers believed their students to be too young to discuss politics.

One of the teachers with the experience of discussing the issues related to political news with her students, teacher 5, was confident that the changes in students' perception over political news was in direct relation to the issues discussed during the media literacy related activities:

"When we discussed speeches by Stalin and Churchill, I could clearly see the changes in their [students'] views. I teach the high grades and the students understand political issues more easily. We also discussed various angles of coverage and they saw all the differences in media coverage of political issues".

Another teacher considering her media literacy related activities to have been the major reason for the changes in students' perception over political news was teacher 9:

"Of course… We discussed free thinking and creative thinking and understanding of these issues have changed how students view political news as well as how they express their arguments concerning the political issues. I think that my students are more independent in their understanding of political news now".

Teacher 10 related the changes in students' perception over political news to the issues of critical evaluation of credibility and trustworthiness of information sources:

"We discussed how to check and analyze the credibility of information sources while receiving messages from any kind of media product. So when it comes to political news, my students are critical towards the trustworthiness of the information sources in the first place. Before [the intervention] they had no interest in daily news but, as I see, now they watch the news and enjoy using the techniques of information filtration and critical approach to the information sources.

The last interviewed teacher, teacher 8, responded that students' perceptions over political news will certainly be changed in a more critical manner if the integration of media literacy competence is conducted accurately:

"Of course their perceptions would change. According to my observation, school students do not pay much attention to political news, they are more interested in social media, but if the teacher approaches the issue in an appropriate manner, then the students' perceptions of political news will most certainly change".

As the responses to the fourth interview question suggest, more than half, eight out of twelve interviewed teachers had never discussed any issue related to politics and political news during their activities. The other four confirmed their belief that a proper approach to the topic would change students' perceptions over political news to a more critical manner.

4.2.5 Media's role in students' daily lives

Interview question 5: Do you believe that integrating media literacy into the curriculum had an impact on students' perceptions over media's role in their daily lives?

The fifth question of the interview intends to inquire the interviewed teachers' observations concerning the changes in their students' perceptions over the role of media in their daily lives.

Only two teachers, teacher 5 and teacher 6, responded in a relatively negative manner:

Teacher 5: "I cannot be sure about it. I do not believe that there would be many changes because my students are very young and they mostly use media for entertainment. Maybe there are some exceptions, students which pay more attention to analysis of media products, but my students, according to my observation, are mainly having fun with social networks".

Teacher 6: "My students are too young to think about such complex issues. With high-graders there may be more changes, but I teach the beginner level and I do not think that my students think about that".

Both teachers, teacher 5 and teacher 6, related their responses to the young age of their students. All the other interviewed teachers confirmed their belief that media literacy integration into curriculum had affected their students' perceptions over media's role in their daily lives respectively.

Four teachers, teacher 1, teacher 7, teacher 9 and teacher 11, related their response to the issues of critical evaluation of information:

Teacher 1: "I think that they will be more attentive and critical towards the received information while watching daily news on TV as well as during searching information online. They will be more critical and will manage a better filtration of the received information – they will be able to distinguish what is valuable for them and what is not. I taught them that there might be many hidden messages and agendas in media products and that they need to be very careful to examine credibility and trustworthiness of the received information".

Teacher 7: "Yes, I am quite confident that it had changed. We teach students about critical evaluation of information and so now they can better analyze media products. We even compared some tests conducted in different classes and the results showed that the students which had attended media literacy related discussions had a much more advanced understanding of media in general".

Teacher 9, while also relating her response to critical evaluation of information, touched upon the issue of self-expression as well:

"Since our activities my students express their views concerning media in a much more independent and critical way. In general, they approach every issue related to media in a much more critical manner. I clearly observe the improvements in their abilities of formulating and expressing their arguments".

Teacher 11 expressed her strong confidence in the changes of students' perceptions over media's role in their daily lives:

"It is not just my opinion but it is what I clearly see with my own eyes – their attitudes towards the role of media have certainly changed to a much critical manner".

Two teachers, teacher 3 and teacher 8, related their response to the rise of students' motivation while discussing the media:

Teacher 3: "Students demonstrated an exceptional rise in motivation while discussing the issues of media's role in our lives. I have never noticed such a motivation while discussing other issues during the class".

Teacher 8: "At first they [students] were not interested in these issues. But as we went on with discussions, I could clearly see the rise in their motivation and engagement. They certainly learned how to evaluate credibility and trustworthiness of information".

It should be mentioned that while underlining the rise in students' motivation during discussions, the answers by teacher 3 and teacher 8 do not fully respond to the interview question in the desired manner.

The teacher responding to the topic of the rise in students' perceptions specifically over the role of media in their daily lives was teacher 10:

"I am confident that it would have changed because before you highlight these issues not only a child but a grown up person might not realize the role of media in their lives either. Now my students are much more observant and attentive to media products and I can confidently say that they also realize the role of media in their daily lives".

Two teachers, teacher 2 and teacher 4, while confirming their belief towards the changes in students' perceptions over media's role in their lives, expressed their views concerning the necessity of developing effective programs for media literacy integration into the curriculum as well:

Teacher 2: "I think that it certainly changed. But finding the right ways for integrating media literacy into the curriculum is a quite complex and hard job, so not every teacher might be able to do it effectively".

Teacher 4: "Yes, I can certainly the changes but also I might admit that it is a very hard job. It is a very progressive work to help students develop the competences for the right evaluation of the media and it all depends on the hard work of a teacher. We need very effective programs to enable

every teacher to accomplish the task of integrating media literacy competences into the curriculum".

It should be mentioned that none of the teachers were directly asked about media literacy integration programs and tools during the particular question of the interview.

The last interviewed teacher, teacher 12, underlined the changes in her own perceptions over media's role in our daily lives:

"I think that it would have changed because these discussions over media literacy related issues change perceptions over media of every person, not only students. I myself learned how to filter and critically evaluate the vast amounts of information which reaches me daily. My own perceptions about media's role in our daily lives has changed dramatically".

As the results suggest, most of the teachers (ten out of twelve) demonstrated their confidence concerning the changes in students' perceptions over media's role in their daily lives. It should be also mentioned that a number of teachers failed to respond to the question in the desired manner and mainly based their responses on various issues related to media literacy interventions rather than on the particular observations concerning the changes in students' perceptions respectively.

4.2.6   Media's role on a society

Interview question 6: Do you believe that integrating media literacy into the curriculum had an impact on students' perceptions over media's larger role on a society?

The sixth question of the interview intends to inquire interviewed teachers' observations concerning the changes in students' perceptions over the role of media on a society.

The only teacher responding in a relatively negative way was teacher 7:

"I cannot say it for sure. My students are quite young to think about these kinds of issues. I would be lying if I said yes. Maybe when they become 3-4 years older, then we could discuss these issues".

All of the other interviewed teachers confirmed their belief that the integration of media literacy into the curriculum would have changed students' perceptions concerning media's role on a society. However, most of the responses failed to provide the basis for the teachers' beliefs and to demonstrate what kind of changes did the students go through precisely.

Three teachers, teacher 3, teacher 9 and teacher 12 simply responded "Yes" without further clarifications on the topic.

Five teachers, teacher 1, teacher 4, teacher 5, teacher 6 and teacher 11, responded in a relatively more detailed manner. While providing positive responses to the question, all of the five teachers responded in a quite unclear manner:

Teacher 1: "I think that maybe just a little bit but we still managed to change their perceptions on this topic. I want to keep developing effective intervention materials to deliver more knowledge to my students".

Teacher 4: "Yes, we discussed these issues. One of our students had a problem with online gaming and I watched how the other students helped him to understand the strictures and dangers of these games. I am confident that my students look differently at all of this now".

Teacher 5: "Yes, I believe that my students perceptions would have certainly changed on that matter".

Teacher 6: "Yes, I believe that it would have changed. These discussions are very beneficial for students".

Teacher 11: "I think, yes. When you realize how media affects your personal life, then probably you realize how media affects the whole society as well".

As the results suggest, none of the five teachers managed to respond to the interview question in a detailed manner, stating which particular changes had they observed in students' perceptions over media's role on a society.

Teacher 2 related her response to the issues of media message deconstruction and critical evaluation of information:

"Yes, I am confident that it would have changed. If we teach students deconstructing media messages and critical evaluation of information sources, their perceptions over media's role in their lives and on society in general will change".

Teacher 10 related her response to the importance of critical discussions during the media literacy related activities in classrooms:

"It would certainly have changed. When we have discussions during the classes children learn the critical analysis of media products and media in general. So any member of a society would change their views concerning media's role if taught about media literacy issues properly".

The last interviewed teacher, teacher 8, confirmed her belief concerning the changes in students' perceptions over media's role on a society, however, based her response solely on the issues related to the difficulties of teaching media literacy:

"Of course it would have changed, but I see it as my own shortcoming that at our school teachers are unable to dedicate more activities to media literacy related issues. The infrastructure at our school is not adequate for conducting media literacy lessons using multimedia sources. I would like to use more electronic sources during my classes but we simply do not have appropriate technical equipment to do it. I think that we should pay special attention to this problem while discussing integration of media literacy competence into formal education".

As the results suggest, the absolute majority of the interviewed teachers demonstrated their confidence concerning the changes in students' perceptions over media's role on a society. However, it should be underlined that most of the teachers failed to clarify how precisely did the media literacy intervention affect students' perceptions respectively.

4.2.7   Creation of media products

Interview question 7: Do you believe that integrating media literacy into the curriculum had an impact on the ways your students create media products and communicate via media?

The next interview question intends to inquire the interviewed teachers' observations concerning the changes in the ways their students create and share media products after integrating media literacy into the school curriculum. All of the interviewed teachers responded positively, demonstrating their confidence in the changes respectively.

Two teachers, teacher 2 and teacher 7, underlined the rise in students' motivation of creating media products:

Teacher 2: "When I asked them to create media products concerning the ecological issues, I clearly noticed the rise in their motivation as well the sense of responsibility while working on this task. They were motivated to check the credibility and trustworthiness of every small detail which they published".

Teacher 7: "I am confident that it had changed. I noticed the rise in their motivation as well – when I asked them to install banners by their classroom, they prepared and installed a few other banners by their own initiative. I could clearly see the influence of our activities on their motivation and engagement".

Another teacher underlining the rise in students' responsibility towards shared information was teacher 5:

"I believe that their views and approaches towards media product creation has certainly changed. They [students] seem very careful as well as engaged while creating media products of their own. During one class I gave them a task to create Facebook accounts of some historical figures and to share the messages that they would have shared. They seemed quite serious while accomplishing this task and I could clearly see the high level of responsibility with which they approached the issue".

Similar to teachers 2 and 7, teacher 5 underlined students increased responsibility while creating media products as well.

Another teacher basing her response to the issue of increased responsibility in particular, was teacher 11:

"During the discussions we all saw the importance of credible information sources. Accordingly, the students will now approach the information spread by them with a higher level of responsibility, questioning the credibility and trustworthiness of the information spread by them personally".

The issues of credibility and trustworthiness of information was underlined by teacher 10 as well:

"Yes, I am absolutely confident that it would have changed. When we worked on creating and sharing media products, my students were always eager to check precisely the credibility of the information created and spread by them. I was glad to see that the initiative of checking the credibility of the information came from the students themselves, without my specific instructions".

Teacher 3 related her response to the issue of information credibility as well, however, in a quite unclear manner:

"Yes, of course it would have changed. If we do not teach them to pay attention, then students might not completely understand the outcomes of their activities related to creation of media products. Of course the student's attitudes will change if we teach them how to take responsibility for the trustworthiness of the information spread by them".

The response by teacher 3 is mainly based on her assumptions rather than results of an observation.

Two teachers, teacher 6 and teacher 9, responded that along with the rise of motivation of creating media products, the media literacy related discussions increased students' motivation to improve their technical skills as well.

Teacher 6: "Of course it would have changed. I clearly see their increased motivation and engagement while accomplishing the tasks related to creation of media products. I am also surprised how they try to improve their technical skills as well. The third graders have learned how to prepare Power Point presentations and they learned how to edit video clips too. More importantly, they are quite motivated to teach each other as well".

Teacher 9: "I told them about the concepts of media product creation and how to pay attention to what prepare and share. As soon as I gave them the right directions, they started to prepare posters and video clips and I also noticed how they tried to improve their technical skills of production".

As the responses suggest, both teachers observed the increase of students' motivation not only for creating media products but the increase in their motivation for improving their technical skills as well.

Four teachers, teacher 1, teacher 4, teacher 8 and teacher 12, related their responses to their roles in discussions over the information shared by their students after classes on Facebook. Teacher 1, for instance, underlined the importance of parents' engagement during the discussion over students' activities on the social networks:

Teacher 1: "I try to teach my students how to take responsibility for the information shared by them, how to check the credibility of the information before sharing. But also I try to prevent them from the dangers associated with sharing private information on Facebook. So we often discuss their posts in classes and when it is necessary, I also discuss these issues with their parents. The engagement of the parents is very important, sometimes we sit down together with students and their parents and we discuss these issues together".

Teacher 4 underlined the importance of the discussions concerning the posts on students' personal Facebook pages as well:

"I try to approach this issue in a friendly manner and I ask my students to engage in discussions over Facebook posts quite often. We analyze the contents of their posts and I try to make them think about the consequences of their posts – maybe they include too private information? Maybe they offend someone? Maybe they include untruth or controversies? As the result of these discussions, I am confident that they approach these issues in a much responsible manner".

Teacher 12 described a concrete case of discussing Facebook posts with her student in private:

"I had one sixth grader female student which in my opinion posted too sensitive details of her personality on Facebook. I heard the other students talking about her on this matter and I decided to discuss this issue with her. I explained that there are many potential people on Facebook which would like to take an advantage of the insecurities of a sixth grader girl and to be more careful about it. We discussed this issue several times and eventually she acknowledged what I was talking about. After our discussions she kept expressing herself on Facebook, but in a much more appropriate manner".

Teacher 8 underlined the role of a teacher in the discussions over the information shared by students on Facebook as well:

"I noticed once that my students were taking and sharing inappropriate videos and I decided to discuss it with them. Of course I cannot forbid them anything, especially what they do after classes, so I approached it in a friendly manner. We discussed these videos and I explained to them the issue of responsibility while spreading video clips. I think that the discussions were successful and I also realized the huge role of a media literacy instructor".

While describing certain cases of intervention, teachers 12 and 8 do not specify what in particular they considered inappropriate to post on Facebook and therefore, their responses may be approached from various angles.

As the responses to the seventh question of the interview suggest, all of the interviewed teachers demonstrated their confidence concerning the positive changes in the ways in which students create and share media products. The particular changes observed by the interviewed teachers will be further analyzed in the following sections of the thesis.

4.2.8   Benefits of the interventions

Interview question 8: Which aspects of media literacy do you personally consider to be the most beneficial for school students?

The next interview question intends to inquire the interviewed teachers' perceptions on which specific aspects of media literacy do they personally consider to be the most important and beneficial for school students.

Two teachers, teacher 1 and teacher 2, provided quite brief responses, based on the issues of the credibility of information sources:

Teacher 1: "The search and the critical analysis of information sources. This is what I believe to be the most beneficial for my students".

Teacher 2: "I am confident that it is the critical evaluation of the credibility of information sources".

Teacher 3 related her response to the same issue, in a relatively more detailed manner:

"I think that it is the promotion of the sufficient skills for critical analysis of the credibility of information sources. Deconstruction of hidden messages in media texts are important as well. But the most importantly, the ability to critically evaluate information sources".

Another teacher relating her response to the issues of credibility and trustworthiness of information sources was teacher 12:

"The most important and beneficial in my opinion is to develop the skills for comparison of various information sources and their critical evaluation. I personally observed the improvement of these skills among my students and I am confident that this is the most beneficial aspect of media literacy education".

Teacher 10 underlined the same issues in her response as well:

"The most beneficial is promotion of motivation to be more attentive and careful with information sources. Checking and critical evaluation of information sources is extremely beneficial in their daily lives".

Two teachers, teacher 4 and teacher 11, stated that the promotion of critical thinking in particular was the most beneficial aspect of media literacy education in their opinions:

Teacher 4: "I think that checking the credibility of information is crucially important, but most importantly, we must develop the skills for critical thinking among students and I am confident that media literacy interventions represent effective tools in this matter".

Teacher 11: "The process of developing the thinking skills of the beginner grades' students is very sensitive and sophisticated, so I think that the greatest benefit of media literacy education is

precisely the development of critical thinking skills among students. The modern children have access to all types of media and we must teach them the critical approach towards all of these types of media".

Teacher 7 based her response on practically the same topic, however, specifically repeating the term *analytical thinking*, rather than the critical thinking:

"I am confident that development of the analytical skills can be viewed as the most beneficial aspect of media literacy education. Analytical approach towards media is essential for the modern students".

Two teachers, teacher 6 and teacher 8, stated that the discussions and the practical exercises concerning the creation of media products was the most beneficial aspect of media literacy education for their students.

Teacher 6: "The most beneficial was teaching about creating media products. They [students] must learn about how much work and responsibility is needed to create credible and trustworthy media products. The most importantly, they must be taught about the effects and outcomes of their activities related to creating and spreading of media products".

Teacher 8, while basing her response to the same issue, underlined the importance of the skills for critical discussions as well:

"I am confident that learning about self-expressing through creation of media products in the most beneficial for them. Also, developing of the skills necessary for engagement in critical debates and discussions".

The only teacher relating her response to the issues of information management was teacher 5:

"I would name the issue of information filtration and the skills for searching the desired information. Nowadays students need to know how to find their ways in these fast amounts of information and therefore, I believe that information management is the most beneficial skill for them".

The last interviewed teacher, teacher 9, provided a quite comprehensive response, touching upon several issues related to media literacy simultaneously:

"I think that children must be educated for a mindful interaction with all the forms of media which they face in their real lives – social networks, TV channels, internet, etc. They must be taught how to deconstruct hidden meanings in media messages and must be able to formulate and express their own opinions. If a student accumulates big volumes of information but is unable to express his or her own opinions on the matters, then this kind of education has no benefits. If they [students] are able to critically analyze media messages and then express themselves through media product production, then the intervention can be considered beneficial".

As the results suggest, teachers provided quite diverse responses when asked about their opinions concerning the most beneficial aspects of media literacy for their students. The diversity of the responses will be further analyzed in the following sections of the thesis.

4.3 Effects of media literacy interventions – summarizing the findings

As discussed in section 2.3, the effects of media literacy interventions were examined in order to seek to understand the possible points of intersection of media literacy with what Jurgen

Habermas describes as the public sphere. The summary of the results analysis is presented in the following sub-sections.

4.3.1 Students' assessment

The students' interview questions were constructed according to the purpose of inquiring the effects of the media literacy intervention on their perceptions and views as well as their memories of the media literacy related issues discussed during the intervention one year prior to conducting the interviews.

The students' memories of the media literacy course were examined through the first question of the interview which aimed at inquiring at what extent did the students remember the media literacy course conducted one year earlier and which specific aspects of media literacy they remembered the most. The results showed that the absolute majority of the students related their responses to the issues of advertisement and marketing in media. Among the responses, the techniques of persuasion as well as various types of advertisements were present frequently. A number of students touched upon the issues of information management and filtration as well, however, in relation to advertising and marketing in media. It can be concluded that the results clearly demonstrate that what the absolute majority of the students remembered after one year since the completion of the course were the issues related to advertising and marketing. It should be also mentioned that most of the students demonstrated a good memory of the techniques of persuasion used by advertisers, discussed during the media literacy intervention.

Advertisement was the major topic in the students' responses on the second question of the interview as well. The question intended to inquire if the participant students believed that they had practically used the knowledge gained during the intervention in their daily lives during the one year after the completion of the media literacy course. Half of the interviewed students related their responses solely to the issues of advertisement and marketing in media. It should be mentioned that two students related their responses to political issues, stating that they had become more attentive to the media coverage of politics.

While inquiring the changes in students' perceptions concerning the issues related to advertising in particular, the absolute majority of the students clearly demonstrated the rise in their critical approach towards advertisement since the completion of the course. Moreover, the responses by most of the students demonstrated a good memory of the advertisement techniques discussed during the intervention. The analysis of the first three interview questions clearly prove the changes in the participant students' perceptions towards advertisement to a much more critical approach.

The changes in the student's perceptions over political news appeared to be more complex to inquire, as half of the interviewed students stated that they had never followed political issues in media. As noted in the personal notes during the observation, the participant students clearly demonstrated their lack of familiarity with the issues related to politics. For instance, the students had no knowledge of the meaning of the word *propaganda*. Therefore, considering the young age of the participants as well, the political issues were touched upon with a great caution during the course, discussing only the broadest and simplest aspects of the relationship of media and politics. As the results suggest, changes to a more critical approach towards political issues in media were clearly demonstrated by the students which stated that they watch political news at least

occasionally. Moreover, a number of students stated that they had become more interested with the media coverage of politics and daily news. However, it should be also mentioned, that none of the interviewed students showed any remembrance of some of the most crucial issues discussed during the course, such as the issues of interrelationship of politics with media ownership and the other major potential reasons of media bias towards political issues.

When asked about the changes in their perceptions over media in general, the most of the interviewed students related their responses to the topic of advertisement yet again. However, a number of students stated that they had become more attentive to the media in general, since the completion of the course. As noted in the personal notes during the process of observation, when asked about what is media, most of the students related their responses to social networks and online platforms rather than to the traditional media, such as TV channels, radio and press. Correspondingly, when asked about the changes in their perceptions over media in general, the majority of the students related their responses to online platforms and social networks again.

Most of the interviewed students clearly demonstrated the changes in their perceptions over the media products created and shared by them personally. The most of the responses demonstrated the increase in responsibility and attention towards the information spread by the students themselves. It should be also mentioned that, interestingly enough, two students started that they use the techniques of persuasion used by advertisers while creating and sharing media products of their own. These responses will be further discussed in relation to the research question of the thesis.

The last question of the interview aimed at inquiring which specific aspects of media literacy intervention did the students themselves consider to had been the most beneficial for them. Half of the interviewed students related their responses to the issues of advertisement yet again.

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However, the diversity of the responses of the other half touched upon some of the most crucial aspects of media literacy related issues, such as the critical evaluation of information, comparison of different information sources, a mindful engagement with online platforms, responsible creation of media products and increased attention to information received through media in general.

4.3.2 Teachers' assessment

The teachers' interview questions were constructed according to the purpose of inquiring their perceptions over the effects of media literacy interventions on their students. In order to provide the reader a better understanding of what kinds of media literacy related activities had been conducted by the teachers, brief summaries of the respective activities conducted by each participant teacher have been included in the results. As the analysis suggest, all of the interviewed teachers had managed to integrate media literacy competences into their subject curriculum at some extent.

The participant teachers were asked about their observations over which specific aspects of media literacy had been the most interesting for their students. As the analysis suggest, most of the interviewed teachers believed that creation of media products and activities related to the analysis of credibility of information sources appeared to be the most interesting topics of media literacy for their students. Activities related to deconstruction of media messages were frequently mentioned in teachers' responses as well as the task of formulating students' arguments during critical debates.

While being asked about the changes in students' perceptions over advertisement in particular, all of the interviewed teachers demonstrated their confidence that integration media literacy competence into school curriculum had changed their students' perceptions over advertisement to a much more critical manner. It should be also mentioned that half of the interviewed teachers stated that the process of advertisement creation during the class had appeared to be the most effective method for teaching students about the issues related to advertisement in media.

The participant teachers' views concerning the changes in the student's perceptions over political news appeared to be quite complex to inquire, as eight out of twelve interview teachers stated that they had never discussed any issue related to politics with their students. Interestingly enough, the reason was not the young age of the students in every cases. A number of teachers, despite teaching relatively elder students, responded that they prefer not to discuss politics during the classes. The other four teachers demonstrated their confidence that a proper approach to the topic would change students' perceptions over political news to a more critical manner.

The absolute majority of the teachers confirmed their beliefs that the media literacy interventions would have changed the students' perceptions over the role of media in their daily lives as well as media's role on a society in general. However, most of the interviewed teachers mainly based their responses on various issues related to media literacy interventions rather than on the particular observations concerning the changes in students' perceptions and failed to clarify how precisely did the media literacy intervention affect students' perceptions respectively.

All of the interviewed teachers demonstrated their confidence that integration of media literacy competence into their subject curriculums had changed their students' approach to the processes of creation and sharing of media products of their own. Among the changes, the increased responsibility towards the credibility and trustworthiness of the shared information was

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named the most frequently. Among other reasons stated by the participant teachers were the increase of motivation for self-expression through creation of media products and the increase of the motivation for improving the technical skills for media product creation.

The last interview question aimed at inquiring the participant teachers' perceptions over which particular aspects of media literacy they considered as the most beneficial for school students. The responses were exceptionally diverse, touching upon some of the most crucial issues of media literacy, such as information management, critical evaluation of information, critical approach towards the credibility of information sources, deconstruction of media messages, promotion of critical and analytical thinking, self-expression through media product creation and promotion of the skills for critical debates.

5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The main aim of this thesis is to seek to understand the possible interrelation of media literacy with what Jurgen Habermas defines as the public sphere and correspondingly, to seek the answer to the research question:

"How can media literacy serve as an instrument for promoting the public sphere?"

The effects of media literacy interventions have been examined for the purpose of further discussions concerning the potential role of media literacy education in relation to Habermas' theories of the *refeudalization* of the public sphere and communicative action. As discussed in chapter 2 (sections 2.3.1, 2.3.3, 2.3.4) after describing the rise and fall (*refeudalization*) of the public sphere, Jurgen Habermas suggests a model of free and rational communicative action as basis for rebuilding the public sphere (Groswiller, 2001). In his *Theory of Communicative Action* (1984, 1987) Habermas suggests that social action is either communicative or strategic. Communicative action aims at interpersonal communication which is oriented towards mutual understanding while participants treat each other as genuine persons and not as objects of manipulation. While communicative action is oriented on reaching understanding, the strategic action, on the other hand, aims at calculative exploitation or manipulation of others. Strategic action is focused on self-interest through the manipulation of others either openly or tacitly (Habermas, 1987).

Habermas believes that communicative action takes place within social context which he defines as the *life-world*. He suggests that the "contemporary societies are divided between a lifeworld governed by norms of communicative interaction and a system governed by "steering

imperatives" of money and power" (Kellner, 2000, p. 275). The *system*, on the other hand, represents an opposing and instrumental imperative of money and power which enable business and the state to strengthen the control over the lifeworld, "thus undermining democracy and the public sphere" (ibid.). This process is described by Habermas at the *systemic colonization of the lifeworld*.

As presented in section 2.4, this research aims at discussing if the protectionist approach of media literacy could be directed at opposing the strategic action by the system on one hand and if the participatory approach of media literacy could be directed at promoting the communicative action in the lifeworld on the other hand (figure 6: *Proposed interrelation of media literacy and the public sphere*).

The *protectionist* approach of media literacy aims at protecting media viewers from the potential threats of the media system, while the *participatory* approach of media literacy stresses the spread of social production and communication for "the development of knowledge, interactivity and dialogue" (Perez-Tornero and Varis, 2010, p. 42). Correspondingly, the potential effects of the protectionist approach of media literacy on Habermas's strategic action by the system and the potential effects of the participatory approach of media literacy on Habermas's communicative action in the lifeworld are closely examined further in this section.

Before moving to the further analysis of the field work results in relation to Habermas's theories of the public sphere, it can be helpful to one again review Habermas' suggestions concerning the effects of transformations of mass media's role and character on the public sphere, which can be summarized as the following:

1. Media became driven by commercial interests which target the public in similar ways as advertisers target consumers;

2. Political interests target the public through mass media in similar ways as advertisers target consumers;

3. Media lost the ability to serve as a domain for public's rational-critical debate and instead turned public into passive audience.

4. Mass media became a channel for the political and economic powers for obtaining public agreement and support which eventually turned critical publicity into manipulative publicity (*for detailed analysis see section 2.4*).

On the other hand, let us once again review the major goals of media literacy education. As suggested by the Centre for Media literacy, whose media literacy intervention model has been implemented throughout this study, media literacy aims at enabling youth and adults to:

- Develop critical thinking skills;

- Understand how media messages shape our culture and society;

- Identify target marketing strategies;

- Recognize what the media maker wants us to believe or do;

- Name the techniques of persuasion used;

- Recognize bias, spin, misinformation and lies;

- Discover the parts of the story that are not being told;

- Evaluate media messages based on our own experiences, skills, beliefs and values;

- Create and distribute our own messages;

- Advocate for media justice.[9]

The interview questions of the field work were constructed in accordance to the goal of inquiring the effects of media literacy interventions regarding the protectionist as well as the participatory potentials of media literacy education. Correspondingly, the interview questions aimed at inquiring the participant students' as well as the participant teachers' views concerning the effects of media literacy intervention on the following major issues:

1. The changes in learners' perceptions concerning the commercial interests in media;

2. The changes in learners' perceptions concerning the political interests in media;

3. The changes in learners' perceptions concerning media's role on a society;

4. The changes in the ways the learners create and chare media products after the media literacy interventions.

Results of each of the suggested issues are closely examined in the following sub-sections in relation to Jurgen Habermas's theories of the public sphere.

5.1   The protectionist approach of media literacy as opposed to the strategic action by the system

The research question of the thesis is intended to be inquired through discussions of two major issues: 1) if the protectionist approach of media literacy can be directed at opposing the strategic

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[9] List retrieved from www.medialiteracyproject.org on 10/03/2017.

action by the system, as suggested by Habermas; 2) if the participatory approach of media literacy can be directed at promotion of communicative action in the lifeworld.

In order to inquire the issue of the potential effects of the protectionist approach of media literacy on the strategic action by the system, the following issues have been tested through interviewing students and teachers involved in media literacy interventions:

1. The changes in learners' perceptions concerning the commercial interests in media;
2. The changes in learners' perceptions concerning the political interests in media;
3. The changes in learners' perceptions concerning media's role on a society.

Each of the issues are carefully examined through the next sub-sections, in relation to Habermas's theories of the public sphere and the theory of communicative action.

5.1.1 The changes in learners' perceptions concerning the commercial interests in media

In order to inquire the potential effects of media literacy interventions on the learners' perceptions over the commercial interests in media, the participant students as well as the participant teachers were directly asked about their views concerning advertisement in media. Both, the participant students and the participant teachers, clearly demonstrated their full confidence in the changes in learners' perceptions over the issues related to advertising to a more critical manner.

The interviewed students demonstrated a strong remembrance of the particular techniques of persuasion as well as the techniques for the attraction of public's attention used by the advertisers. It should be mentioned that while responding to the questions concerning the benefits of the intervention, the absolute majority of the interviewed students underlined the increase in their critical approach towards advertisement as well. These results can be analyzed in relation to Habermas's suggestions concerning the strategic action during which the *speech act* is not aiming at reaching consensus but at realizing self-centered strategic goals (Habermas, 1987). Therefore, the strategic action which is "purposive-rational action orientated toward other persons from a utilitarian point of view" (Huttunen and Heikkinen, 1998, p. 311) and during which "the actor does not treat others as genuine persons, but as natural objects" (ibid.) could potentially be opposed by a well-developed set of skills for deconstruction and critical evaluation of the commercial messages in media. The development of such skills were clearly demonstrated by the participant students as well as the participant teachers.

Moreover, the supporting questions of the interview also demonstrated that what the participant students had remembered the most, had used during the one year since the completion of the course and believed to had been the most beneficial aspects of the course, were the issues related to the commercial messages in media particularly. The interviewed teachers demonstrated their full confidence in the changes in their students' perceptions towards the commercial messages in media as well.

While clearly demonstrating the improvements in the skills for opposing the strategic action delivered through the commercial media messages, both the participant students and the participant teachers failed to reflect on the more complex issues related to the commercial interest in media, such as the issues of media ownership and the consumer-oriented tendencies of the media. In

Habermas's analysis, the most crucial role of media in the process of the *refeudalization* of the public sphere was resulted in the saturation of the media with commercial interests, which turned the media into *the gate through which privileged private interests invaded the public sphere* (Habermas, 1989). Therefore, it can be concluded that on one hand, the media literacy interventions clearly served as an effective instrument for deconstructing and thus opposing the commercial messages with the characteristics of the strategic action spread through media, however, on the other hand, the analyzed interventions failed to promote a deeper understanding of the commercial influences in media.

5.1.2 The changes in learners' perceptions concerning the political interests in media

The changes in learners' perceptions concerning the political interests in media appeared to be more complex to analyze as half of the interviewed students stated that they had never followed the political news, while more than half, eight out of twelve interviewed teachers stated that they had never discussed politics during the classes. However, the other half of the interviewed students clearly demonstrated the development of a critical approach towards the daily political news. The four out of twelve teachers confirmed their observations concerning the changes to a more critical manner as well.

Special attention has to be payed to the responses by a number of students which demonstrated a strong remembrance of the issues related to the advertisers' techniques of persuasion and attraction of public attention used in media coverage of political figures and events. This phenomenon precisely reflects on Habermas's arguments concerning advertisement in mass media

acquiring not only commercial but political goals as well and the industry of political marketing influencing voting decisions of public through mass media by similar means as advertising aims at influencing public's buying decisions (Habermas, 1989).

The same tendencies can be observed in the responses by the teachers who had discussed politics during their classes at least occasionally – their responses concerning the deconstruction and the critical evaluation of political messages in media as well as the critical evaluation of the information sources in general can be viewed as a step towards an increased understanding of the relation between politics and the media.

It has to be mentioned that some of the most central concepts of interrelation of politics and media underlined by Habermas, such as issues of opinion management and public relations were absent in the responses of the participant students as well as of the participant teachers. However, these concepts were not discussed during the interventions considering the young age of the learners. Therefore, it can be concluded that the media literacy interventions successfully accomplished the task of rising awareness of the learners on the most crucial concept suggested by Habermas – that the Political interests target the public through mass media in similar ways as advertisers target consumers. Moreover, the analysis of the participant students' as well as the participant teachers' responses clearly demonstrated a definite increase in the learners' skills for detection and critical evaluation of the hidden messages and agendas in media texts in general.

5.1.3 The changes in learners' perceptions concerning media's role on a society

In order to inquire the potential effects of media literacy intervention on learner's perceptions over media's role on a society, the interviewed teachers were asked directly concerning their observations respectively. The interviewed students, on the other hand, were not asked the same question directly as the complexity of the question might not be appropriate considering the young age of the interviewees.

The interviewed teachers were asked two questions on the topic: 1) their observations concerning the changes in students' perceptions over the role of media in their daily lives; 2) their observations concerning the changes in students' perceptions over the role of media on a society in general. As the responses suggest, the absolute majority of the interviewed teachers demonstrated their confidence concerning the changes to a more critical approach respectively.

The participant students, considering the complexity of the question compared to their young age, were not asked the question directly and instead were asked in which sense the media literacy course was the most beneficial in their opinion and if they observed any changes in their perceptions concerning the media in general. The absolute majority of the interviewed students related their responses to the both questions to the issues of advertisement and critical evaluation of information. All of these responses by the participant students and the participant teachers may be considered as the success of media literacy interventions in promoting the protectionist approach which could potentially oppose the strategic action suggested by Habermas as they promote the skills for detection and critical evaluation of the hidden agendas in media messages.

In Habermas's analysis, during the process of *refeudalization* of the public sphere, mass media lost the ability to serve as a domain for public's rational-critical debate and instead turned public into passive audience. Furthermore, mass media became a channel for the political and economic powers for obtaining public agreement and support which eventually turned critical publicity into manipulative publicity (Habermas, 1989). Reflecting on these suggestions, it can be concluded that the protectionist approach of media literacy proved to have the potential of promotion of the public sphere as it turns the *passive audience* and the *manipulative publicity* as defined by Habermas into a public able of and motivated for critical evaluation of messages spread through media as well as detection and deconstruction of hidden messages and agendas in media products.

5.2 The participatory approach of media literacy as the promoter of the communicative action in the lifeworld

In order to inquire the potential of the participatory approach of media literacy for the promotion of the communicative action as suggested by Habermas, the effects of media literacy interventions on the creation and sharing of media products by the learners have been examined. Both, the interviewed students and the interviewed teachers clearly demonstrated their confidence concerning the changes in the ways the learners create and share media products after media literacy interventions.

Most of the interviewed students demonstrated the increase in responsibility and attention towards the information spread by them respectively. On the other hand, all of the interviewed teachers demonstrated their confidence that integration of media literacy competence into their

subject curriculums had changed their students' approach to the processes of creation and sharing of media products of their own. Among the changes, the increased responsibility towards the credibility and trustworthiness of the shared information was named the most frequently. Among other reasons stated by the participant teachers were the increase of motivation for self-expression through creation of media products and the increase of the motivation for improving the technical skills for media product creation. Moreover, when asked which particular issues of media literacy had been the most interesting and engaging for their students, most of the teachers related their responses to the issues of creation of media products.

These responses may be discussed in relation to Habermas's theories of the communicative action, which is based on trustfulness and aims at interpersonal communication which is oriented towards mutual understanding (Habermas, 1987). According to Habermas, *truth*, *truthfulness* and *rightness* represent the speech acts constituting the communicative action:

1) *Truth (Wahrheit).* A claim that refers to the objective world is valid if it is true, i.e. if it corresponds to reality.

2) *Truthfulness (Wahrhaftigkeit).* A claim that refers to the subjective world is valid if it is honest, i.e. if it has an authentic relationship with the subjective world.

3) *Rightness (Richtigkeit).* A claim which refers to the social world is valid if it does not contradict commonly agreed social norms (Habermas, 1987, p. 440).

Reflecting on these definitions, it can be concluded that the participatory approach of media literacy can be viewed as the potential promoter of the communicative action as the interviewed students as well as the interviewed teachers underlined the increase in responsibility towards precisely the trustfulness and credibility of the shared information respectively. Moreover, the

responses by the interviewed teachers suggest that apart of the increase in responsibility, the increase in learners' motivation for creation and spreading trustworthy information had been clearly demonstrated as well.

5.3 Conclusion

Jurgen Habermas's theory of the public sphere has been a subject for diversified discussions in various disciplines. His analysis over the rise and fall (*refeudalization*) of the public sphere have been widely debated and criticized as well. In his later publications Habermas himself admitted certain gaps in his analysis and offered further clarifications over his discussions; however, he preserved the validity of his historical argument. The scope of this thesis is majorly focused on Habermas's analysis over the role of the media in the processes described by the author as the rise and *refeudalization* of the public sphere.

Habermas's analysis of the invasion of the public sphere by the political and economic interests and it's *refeudalization* found continuation in his later *Theory of Communicative Action* with the discussion over *systemic colonization of the lifeworld* (Habermas, 1984, 1987, 1989). Despite the fact that while discussing the theories of communicative action Habermas downplayed the role of the media and centered his analysis on the interpersonal, face-to-face communication, authors such as Douglas Kellner (2000) suggest that Habermas later himself recognized that in the current era of technological revolution, interaction and communication, precisely the media play the increasingly important role in the economic and politic structure which Habermas defines as the *system*.

The structure of this thesis was based on the theoretical model of consolidating the theories of the public sphere and communicative action as well as Douglas Kellner's arguments concerning the role of the media in Habermas's analysis over the *systemic colonization of the lifeworld* and to seek to understand if media literacy education could be discussed as a potential promoter of the public sphere, as defined by Habermas. For this purpose, the effects of media literacy interventions have been analyzed in relation to Habermas's theories of the public sphere and communicative action, with the major goal of discussing the potential of the protectionist approach of media literacy for opposing the *strategic action* by the *system* on one hand and the potential of the participatory approach of media literacy as the promoter of the *communicative action* in the *lifeworld* on the other.

As the analysis have suggested, the protectionist approach of media literacy can clearly be discussed as the potential instrument for opposing the strategic action while the participatory approach of media literacy could potentially promote the communicative action, as suggested by Habermas. The protectionist approach of the media literacy interventions analyzed throughout this study have certainly proven to have served as an effective instrument for the development of a critical approach towards media among the learners. The interviewed students as well as the interviewed teachers have clearly demonstrated their confidence concerning the changes in the learners' perceptions, precisely in terms of improving the skills for a critical evaluation of information and detection and deconstruction of hidden messages and agendas in media texts, which correspond to Habermas's discussions concerning the role of the media in the process of *refeudalization* of the public sphere and the strategic action by the system. The participatory approach of media literacy, on the other hand, has proven to have increased the responsibility and motivation for spreading credible and truthful information among learners, which again directly

corresponds to Habermas's suggestions concerning the role of *truth*, *truthfulness* and *rightness* as the speech acts constituting the communicative action.

It has to be mentioned that the analysis has proven some of the most crucial aspects of media's role in the public sphere as suggested by Habermas to have been absent in the responses of the interviewed participants. Both, the interviewed students as well as the interviewed teachers failed to demonstrate their awareness concerning the issues related to a deeper understanding of political and economic influences on media. It has to be mentioned as well that none of the learners discussed in this study had ever been introduced to these concepts. Therefore, the answer to the research question of the thesis – how can media literacy serve as an instrument for promoting the public sphere? – could be suggested as following: by integrating media literacy competence an all levels of society – starting from the early school level up to the university level and up to the level of adult education. Most importantly, by adopting the adequate media literacy intervention programs for each target group, structuring the programs in accordance to the pre-researched intellectual backgrounds of each target group. As this study has suggested, media literacy interventions could potentially serve as the instrument for promotion of the public sphere if implemented effectively.

5.4 Suggestions for further investigations

Considering the limitation of this study to the inquiry of the perceptions of only one group of students and one group of teachers of the same nationality, it would be recommended to further extend the examination of the possible interrelation of media literacy with what Jurgen Habermas defines as the public sphere to a wider spectrum of audiences. As suggested in the concluding part of this thesis, media literacy interventions can be discussed as the potential promoters of the public sphere, if implemented effectively. Therefore, further investigations on the topic are recommended to extend the scope of observations to wider audiences, including participants from various age groups and preferably with various social and educational backgrounds.

Jurgen Habermas's theory of the public sphere and the role of the media in the process of *turning public critically reflecting on its culture into a manipulative publicity* can certainly serve as a model for further inquiries concerning the role of mass media in public life. The role and effects of the media on the modern societies require intensive and comprehensive analysis in all the parts of the world as no development and progress can be prospective without active and engaged citizenry capable of critical reflections and actions in the modern world.

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APPENDIX 1: Permission for extraction of materials from a Moodle platform

N 13/19

14.05.2019

To whom it may concern

I am Tamar Mosiashvili, Education Program Manager at Civic Development Institute. I am an author of blended online course on Media Literacy. We conducted online training on Media Literacy for Georgian teachers. We advocate Media Literacy education in General Education Schools.

I confirm that George Jologua has access to Civic Development Institute online platform moodle. He has permission to review and use the education materials in his PHD dissertation.

Sincerely,

Tamar Mosiashvili

Education Program Manager

May 14, 2019

APPENDIX 2: Letter of confirmation from the participant school

ვ. ესვანჯიას სახელობის

იტალიური ენის ცისკარი

Scuola V. Esvanjia

della Lingua Italiana

№75

13/11/2017

Confirmation

Italian school 'Tsiskari' named after V.Esvanjia confirms that based on the memorandum signed by the school and the Civic Development Institute (in future known as 'CDI'), the chairman of the CDI, George Jologua conducted a two week course in media literacy, from 23 October 2017 to 3 November 2017 for the students of the 8th grade of the aforementioned school.

Maia Lagvilava

Director