



ISSUES OF DEVELOPING MEDIA LITERACY AND INFORMATION SECURITY SKILLS IN STUDENTS

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Abstract. This article examines contemporary issues related to the development of media literacy and information security skills among students in higher education institutions. In the digital era, students actively engage with vast amounts of online information, which increases both learning opportunities and exposure to misinformation and cyber threats. The study analyzes theoretical approaches to media literacy and digital safety education. It explores pedagogical strategies and institutional mechanisms that contribute to the formation of critical thinking and secure online behavior. The research is based on a qualitative analysis of scholarly sources and current educational practices. The findings highlight the need for an integrated curriculum approach that combines media literacy and information security competencies.

Key words: media literacy, information security, digital competence, cyber safety, higher education, critical thinking.

Introduction. The rapid development of digital technologies has significantly transformed the educational landscape. Higher education institutions are increasingly integrating online platforms, digital tools, and electronic resources into teaching and learning processes. While these innovations provide broader access to information and promote interactive learning, they also introduce new challenges related to information reliability, data privacy, and cybersecurity.

Students today are active participants in digital environments. They use social networks, online databases, learning management systems, and cloud services daily. However, the ability to access information does not automatically imply the ability to critically evaluate it. The spread of misinformation, fake news, phishing attacks, identity theft, and cyberbullying highlights the urgent need to develop both media literacy and information security skills.

Media literacy involves the ability to analyze, evaluate, create, and interact with media content critically and responsibly. Information security skills, on the other hand, include understanding digital risks, protecting personal data, using secure communication channels, and recognizing cyber threats. In modern higher education, these competencies are interconnected and essential for academic success and responsible digital citizenship.

Therefore, this article aims to explore the theoretical foundations, methodological approaches, and practical strategies for developing media literacy and information security skills among students.

Literature review and methodology. Scholarly research emphasizes that media literacy is a multidimensional concept that includes critical thinking, ethical awareness, and digital participation. Researchers argue that media literacy education helps students distinguish between credible and unreliable sources, recognize bias, and understand the socio-political context of information production.

Studies on digital competence frameworks highlight that information security is an integral component of digital literacy. International models of digital competence often include data protection, privacy management, and cybersecurity awareness as core elements. Scholars note that students frequently underestimate online risks, which makes systematic education in cybersecurity essential.

Recent publications also stress the importance of integrating media literacy and information security into university curricula rather than treating them as separate or optional subjects. Interdisciplinary approaches, combining pedagogy, information technology, and communication studies, are considered most effective.

At the same time, several researchers identify challenges such as insufficient teacher training, lack of updated instructional materials, and limited institutional policies regarding digital safety.

This study is based on qualitative research methods, including:

- Analysis of academic literature on media literacy and information security;
- Review of existing digital competence frameworks;
- Comparative analysis of educational practices in higher education institutions;
- Synthesis of theoretical and practical approaches to skill development.

The research adopts a descriptive and analytical approach to identify key problems and propose practical recommendations. The methodology focuses on conceptual analysis rather than empirical statistical data.

Discussion and Results. The analysis revealed several critical issues in developing media literacy and information security skills among students.

1. Insufficient Critical Evaluation Skills

Many students rely heavily on search engines and social media platforms without verifying information sources. Although they demonstrate high technical proficiency, their ability to critically assess content credibility remains limited. This gap leads to the spread of misinformation and academic dishonesty.

2. Low Awareness of Cybersecurity Risks

Students often lack awareness of phishing schemes, malware, password vulnerabilities, and data privacy threats. Weak passwords, unsafe Wi-Fi usage, and careless sharing of personal information increase exposure to cyberattacks.

3. Fragmented Curriculum Integration

In many institutions, media literacy and information security topics are addressed sporadically within different courses. The absence of a structured and comprehensive program reduces the effectiveness of skill development.

4. Need for Teacher Professional Development

Effective instruction in media literacy and cybersecurity requires educators to possess up-to-date digital knowledge. However, not all faculty members receive sufficient training in these areas.

Proposed Strategies

Based on the findings, the following strategies are recommended:

- 1. Curriculum Integration** – Introduce mandatory modules on media literacy and information security across disciplines.

2. **Project-Based Learning** – Engage students in analyzing real-world cases of misinformation and cyber incidents.
3. **Simulation and Practical Training** – Use cybersecurity simulations and role-playing exercises.
4. **Interdisciplinary Collaboration** – Combine expertise from IT, communication, and pedagogy departments.
5. **Continuous Professional Development** – Provide regular training for educators.

The results indicate that a systematic, practice-oriented approach significantly enhances students' critical thinking, digital responsibility, and secure online behavior.

Conclusion. In the context of rapid digital transformation, developing media literacy and information security skills among students has become a strategic priority for higher education institutions. Technical proficiency alone is insufficient; students must be equipped with critical thinking abilities and practical cybersecurity knowledge.

The study demonstrates that fragmented or optional instruction does not produce sustainable outcomes. Instead, an integrated curriculum, supported by institutional policies and teacher training, is essential for effective competence development.

Future research may focus on empirical assessments of student competencies and the evaluation of specific educational interventions. Strengthening media literacy and information security education will contribute not only to academic success but also to the formation of responsible digital citizens in the global information society

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