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Where preschool children acquire information about a topic that they enjoy: giftedness-based study

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Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to uncover some of the psychological context of information literacy. It focuses on the connection between cognitive dispositions (IQ) and information behavior of preliterate children. The results show that pre-school children are able to extract information on subjects which are interesting for them from all available sources – ranging from traditional media such as books or magazines, modern digital media (computer, DVD) to natural conditions in which children live (city, nature). Surprisingly, the radio is used very rarely. If we compare subjective replies supported by the method of graphic scaling, we can see that gifted preschoolers obtain statistically significantly smaller share of information from TV or computer. It is also true that gifted children gain information on subjects interesting for them from a wider range of various media sources, they do not stick only to one of them (they do not sit “only” in front of a TV or a computer).

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1. Introduction

Contemporary society is usually referred to as information society. Its main features include prevalence of work with information, interactivity, and globalization trends. Its members must, therefore, deal with new technologies, they must adapt to the world of available information, i.e. achieve at least a basic level of information literacy (Havigerová, 2011).

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Information society requires information literacy (Doležalová, 2005). If we look for a definition of information literacy, most frequently we come across the definition provided by the American Library Association (Information Literacy, 2000), which says that it is a set of abilities requiring individuals to recognize when information is needed and have the ability to locate, evaluate, and use effectively the needed information. If information literacy is developed correctly, individuals gradually acquire information competence, which is implemented in the form of information behavior. Wilson (1996) defines information behavior as human behavior in relation to the sources and channels of information. It involves both active and passive information seeking and use of information (Wilson, 1996).

Information behavior may be further specified as:

- information seeking behavior, i.e. goal-directed seeking for information, e.g. when completing a task;
- information search behavior, e.g. establishing procedures for information search;
- information use behavior, i.e. physical and mental activities activated when integrating the information which has been found in the existing system of knowledge (Wilson, 2000).

Media literacy and media education

Originally, media education and media literacy became an issue primarily in the Anglophone area. In the last couple of decades, however, it has become a more relevant topic all over the world. The ability to understand, to distinguish, to evaluate and analyze media and information is referred to as media literacy. It is a very important skill, not only in terms of an individual, but also in terms of the whole democratic society (Bakičová, Ruß-Mohl, 2005). Information, visual and media literacy helps students select, compare, evaluate and handle excessive amount of information, various news and messages which are produced by the complex information and entertainment culture every day (Media Education in Canada, 2006).

The term 'media education' is commonly used today. Both family and school play an irreplaceable role in media education. Available professional literature presents several different models of the school's involvement as a mediator contributing to understanding media. For example Buckingham (2003) points out that a new approach / a new paradigm for media literacy education is currently being developed in Great Britain. Potter (2004) introduces four paradigms in media education, based primarily on historical concepts of media functioning and effects:

- media are a "disease", which we should "vaccinate" children against to prevent negative effects;
- not all mass media are bad, their contents being diverse. Media literacy was based on the ability to distinguish between good and poor contents;
- media literacy education, approached from the semiotic point of view, teaches people how to think critically, how to avoid yielding to false knowledge;
- individuals are to decide and choose on their own what is good or bad for them, and to form their own interpretations.

Silverblatt (1997), on the other hand, distinguishes different stages of development in media literacy education in the world, dividing countries into four stages of development:

- countries implementing programs for the development of media education on a long-term basis (e.g. Australia, England, France);
- countries where programs for the development of media literacy depend mainly on individual initiative of teachers and contributions of external institutions (e.g. USA, Germany);
- countries where media literacy education is not included in the mainstream of formal education and depends on non-governmental institutions (e.g. Japan);
- countries which are still at the initial stage, where recent political and social changes opened new possibilities for the development of media literacy education (e.g. Russia).

In the Czech Republic in 2013, we have moved away from the fourth towards the first category. Media education is supported by the government, but the specific content of this subject is still largely in the hands of individual teachers. To support this desirable direction, and to uncover some of the psychological context of

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