Media Competence of Students of Maritime Studies in Split

Mila Nadrljanski
Faculty of Maritime Studies – Split
Zrinsko Frankopanska 37, Split, Croatia
milamika60@yahoo.com, mila@pfst.hr

Gorana Tafro
Croatia osiguranje
Trg Hrvatske bratske zajednice 8, Split, Croatia
goranatafro@gmail.com

Ivana Čović
OŠ Manuš
Vukovarska ulica 11, Split, Croatia
covic.ivana@gmail.com

Summary

Media competences comprise a variety of skills related to media (computer literacy, film literacy, digital literacy, etc.), knowledge and skills to critically analyze the media market and the ability to use media in acquiring knowledge. In today's world, where media competences are necessary for communication and collaboration, media education, being the focus of media action, should be given more space in the education of students of Maritime Studies. Since the media have become a powerful industry focused primarily on profit, power and influence, the duty of the competent and of all those involved in the education system is to develop the students' critical awareness in order to protect them from the negative influences of media.

Key words: media competences, media market, critical awareness, Maritime Studies.

Introduction
According to pass rates, the Faculty of Maritime Studies is among the weaker elements of the University of Split. One of the main reasons for the low pass rates is insufficient media competence. The current education system lacks procedures to teach students how to interpret the theory with regard to their area. It is important to know how to use ways of developing arguments, meta-theory and paradigms in empirical research, i.e. use them in contemporary public discourse relevant to the essence of what is being studied.

This paper analyzes the role and the importance of media competence in personal development and success in college. It summarizes the process of defining media competence and the main goal is to determine whether the students of the Faculty of Maritime Studies in Split have mastered the basics of media relations, namely the techniques and tools of media relations.

Research results indicate the way in which students will develop self-awareness, critical self-assessment and willingness to participate and create a creative communication. In this way the students will use special techniques to develop their own personal role in media relations, the ability of placing their own beliefs, communication skills, information management, ability to work in a team and, of course, the ability to apply their knowledge in practice.

Analysis of the survey conducted among a target group of students will determine their attitudes toward individual and mass media in general, interpret personal prejudices, thoughts and experiences with media sources during the course of study.

The notion and the essence of competence

Competence is one of the most controversial terms in the field of general and applied communicology. Competence implies a high level of qualification, i.e. the full integration of knowledge, skills and orientations that are accepted as values of the rules of conduct, which emphasize empathy, respect, teamwork, symmetrical and proactive communication. Contemporary education therefore involves acquiring certain levels of competences, which can be defined as general, specific, specialized, methodological, social and personal.

General competences determine the ability to analyse and synthesize the basic general knowledge in a certain profession.

Specific competences are abilities related to a specific category of skills in the application of knowledge, such as the interpretation of experimental data.

Skills can be defined as specific categories of conceptual, technical, communication, interpersonal, team, intuitive and other abilities, either innate, acquired by experience or achieved with instructive exercise, that improve with consistent application in practice. They are defined with effective methods or ways in which a profession is exercised, and the basis for their effective application is provided by specific aspects of continuous knowledge. Different professions require different skill categories, but the conceptual and communication skills seem to be dominant.

Specialized competences include cognitive abilities to acquire different knowledge content and its integration into a special expertise that belongs to a particular scientific or professional discipline. Specialized knowledge can be applied only if it is based or built on a broad basis of general knowledge.

Social competence can be defined as the ability to establish relationships in communities that operate in the context of a profession, while personal compe-

tences include the ability to mobilize the personality in the exercise of professional activities.

Professional competences in a given area therefore include:

- general, specific, specialized and methodological knowledge of a wide range of action and its effective application, intelligent implementation and wise use,
- a wide range of skills for a wide range of tasks,
- singular detailed skills required for work in a particular area,
- the ability to approach things systematically or to understand the possibilities and limitations from all aspects,
- working in multidisciplinary and multicultural teams,
- the ability to take the initiative in solving problems and in developing new tasks in which a number of issues must be considered.

Methodological competence is the ability to apply specialized knowledge in dealing with professional and scientific issues in research, with the aim of achieving high competence for the successful performance of complex tasks.

The significance of media competence

The word medium indicates different means of communication. A medium implies the materialization of signs and the background of the materialization transmission. The medium gives a specific feature to the code, to its nature, structure and function, so it is often said that the medium is the message. Many scientific publications contain different definitions of the medium. Quoting some of them may help in perceiving the complexity and the importance of this phenomenon in education.

"A medium is a technical and organizational infrastructure in communication. The media include all those instruments and devices that help publishing material intended for the public." (Helbig, 2001)

"The media are the agents of human senses. This implies the place of presentation, the public, as well as transport routes for the transmission of content of a certain capacity." (Schellmann, 2002)

"The medium implies material, mechanical or energy (electrical, electromagnetic, electronic, optoelectronic) links through which data is transmitted. Informational, mechanical and electrical means for data transmission are determined according to three basic phenomena: transmission, processing and storage." (Schellmann, 2002)

The media have an influence on the formation of opinions among people and are very important for the formation of values and attitudes, especially among students. The media evolve cumulatively, i.e. they do not alternate in use – all the media that have been developed throughout history can still be found in use today.

Each medium has its own language. The language of the print media is the written word, the language of the radio is the sound, the language of film is audiovisual language and the language of the Internet is a sophisticated computer communication.

It can be argued that the media are neither harmful nor useful and that they can be both. Although the media is usually seen as a useful source of entertainment and information, the public often deals with dangerous and harmful side of the media (excessive violence, pornography, stereotypes and sensationalism). According to Rotar (2005) both aspects influence social interaction and the formation of people's identities.

The study and the evaluation of the human behaviour led by moral principles can be seen either as the default behaviour that individuals have developed, or as a kind of duty and responsibility that the society requires of its members. This can also be considered through aspects of media competence, especially its meaning.

Modern technology means constant new opportunities in the media industry and constant new requirements for the education of media users. Electronic computers have been transformed from mass data processing devices to devices for information. This is a key moment that changes the very essence of the information system (Nadrljanski, 2012).

Apart from electronic computers, other forms of media – television receivers, digital cameras and camcorders, digital radio receivers, satellite programs, etc. – also require certain knowledge of technology and its use, which in turn requires the users to expand their existing knowledge and skills, i.e. develop media literacy. Interactive television and online radio, cheaper, faster and more diverse versions of their relatives – radio and television – will bring new challenges and adapt to new needs of users, but require new knowledge. Mobile telephony, as an industry on the rise, increases the number of services every day and is becoming a more sophisticated way of human communication. The result is that nowadays there is more and more distance communication and it can be argued that the media have greatly influenced this change.

Changes have occurred in the written media as well. The written word reduces the need of direct interpersonal relationships in the transmission of ideas. One of the disadvantages of text-based communication is that the participants of this type of communication cannot properly assess other people's feelings and moods based solely on text (Nadrljanski, 2010). The Internet and the mobile phone generation faces a language that is no longer the standard language, but short, coded language, with separate sections of text that seem to eliminate all previous ideas of text-based communication. What was formerly recognized as the main body of text has been transformed into independent message structures.

Since it is only the text that defines reading and readers, and since text is no longer read but the message, it is possible to talk about recipients rather than

readers. Unusual symbols, abbreviations and funny signs are intended to provide full information and shorten time as much as possible. It can be argued that this is the absurdity of today's society – people now have everything within their reach, but lack the time to explore and to manage it all.

The technological aspect of media literacy is not the only one, as informatization and computerization are only parts of media literacy. Apart from learning about all media, their history, production and economic principles of functioning, the modern concept of media literacy also includes some important issues such as the question of who owns and controls the media and what are the consequences of media ownership (the concentration of social power, the filtering and the commercialization of content, etc.).

The media have a great social responsibility when it comes to acting in the public interest and the needs of individuals, promoting diversity and quality of program. However, the question of whether the media act accordingly is somewhat questionable, if not controversial, and it is for that reason that the modern concept of media competence must contain principles related to critical assessment.

Achieving media competence

The importance of media education is found in the definition proposed by the International Council for Film and Television in 1973 (Nadrljanski, 2010): "Media education should include studying, teaching and educating with the help of modern means of communication, which are becoming an integral part of a specific and autonomous area of the cognition process in educational theory and practice. Attention should be paid to the different ways of using them as auxiliaries in teaching and education, but also in other areas of cognition."

"Media education" namely involves the acquisition of skills for critical consideration of any kind of media (newspapers, radio, television, etc.). The aim is to reduce the distance between the media and the users, to understand how the media function and to become familiar with their contents, as well as their way of placing themselves in different perspectives in relation to systems in which they are being developed.

The term "media education" was introduced in the 1960s in international circles dealing with problems of education, especially in circles related to UNESCO. In this period the predictions of experts focused on the apparent explosion of mass communication, especially on television. Many topics were discussed at the time, the most common of which will be mentioned here: the power of the new "magical" device in teaching literacy to the masses not included in the existing educational structures, the reluctance of teachers to embrace television as a legitimate approach to knowledge and the need for a critical assessment of hazards of media manipulation.

In all these cases, it seemed necessary to gain specific knowledge that would enable an impartial consideration of the problem. "Media education" thus gave the ability to respond to multiple expectations. However, from a range of differ-

ent issues a dominant one quickly emerged – the issue related to the method of accessing the reality through the media in order to gain knowledge and put it to good use, but in such a way that the student is taught how to distance himself enough from that reality.

Len Masterman (1985) lists seven basic reasons for the necessity of media education:

- high consumption of media and the satiety it has caused
- ideological character of the media, especially advertising
- emergence of information management in enterprises (government offices, political parties, ministries, etc.)
- increased infiltration of the media in democratic processes (elections are primarily media events)
- increased importance of visual communication and information in all areas of human life and work (except schools, which give priority to the printed material; communication systems are mainly visual)
- expectations of young people to be educated so that they can understand the period they live in (what is the meaning of education and the growth of individual culture if technological means are so carefully avoided, as is the questioning of values in today's life?)
- national and international growth of privatization of all information technologies (when information becomes product, its role and its properties are changed).

The motivation of students can be influenced from the outside and the inside. The exterior aspect of motivation is largely determined by the society, based on the known factors of motivation, such as employment, social and financial status, the possibility of promotion, and others. Interior motivation and the motivation during the studies will be greatly managed by curriculum, the quality of the educational process, working conditions and equipment (the media) and the conditions for a creative approach to work.

Teaching and learning processes are influenced by many components, but basically they mostly depend on individual abilities of students. Objectively, it is possible to improve the processes with selection of program contents, new methods of teaching and learning and the introduction and use of modern media technology.

Until recently university education has been considered as a level towards which students should not be encouraged. Changes in the European education system show that special attention is given to motivation. As one of the basic educational methods, encouragement has so far been reserved for primary and secondary schools, but today there are a number of researches and theorists who suggest that encouragement can and should be effectively used on a university level.

232

Methods of encouraging are being developed and its means are being adapted to the needs of students. The means can be divided into four areas: cognition, emotion, socialization and the active area. It is necessary to elaborate a number of means of encouragement in each area and university professors should be familiar with all of them.

The use of information and communication technology may well become the latest teaching aid in all areas of education. The possibilities of multimedia presentations and access to computer networks, especially the Internet, provide immediate access to a vast and rapidly growing number of information from all over the world. The importance of educating students for the quality use of information from the Internet has the purpose of acquiring knowledge. Notions of critical literacy and information literacy are essential for understanding the functioning of an individual in the information space available over the Internet and the skills of critical thinking are the basis for critical and information literacy.

Dynamic changes in the contemporary society have necessarily stimulated the need to change the existing fundamental tasks of universities and other institutions of higher education. The goal is to find a new paradigm that complies with the fundamental characteristics and requirements of the information society and also to find a new paradigm of a contemporary university library.

Enhanced by rapid technological and educational development of the education system, changes in higher education are the result of global processes such as:

- the democratization of education and a significant increase in the number of students
- interdisciplinary approach
- increasing diversity in age and in academic profiles of students
- the orientation of society towards lifelong learning
- collaboration between contemporary universities and the industry, where knowledge and information resources are the driving forces of companies
- more emphasis on research by the academic staff and the development of the university as a centre of scientific research, especially in smaller communities
- growth of information and communication technologies that enable a number of updated information to those who have the skills to access them and to use them.

Faced with these challenges, the universities respond by re-evaluating their main goals and visions as institutions of higher education and their previous viewpoints on teaching and education, where the focus of attention is on learning and students. The tendency among universities is to convert from the traditionally structured organizations to so-called open universities, e-universities or consortia of higher education institutions, private sector and other institutions.

This emerging type of university is under the influence of the concept of virtual learning and uses the Resource Based Learning approach to education.

With the birth of the concept of the hybrid library which is based on the awareness of the importance of immediate access to information and information sources, not only in the library but also in classrooms, the entire campus and users' homes, university libraries and other information services are transformed into an active factor in the process of teaching, education and research. Libraries assume a fundamental role in the process of distance learning, particularly in relation to the construction and maintenance of electronic archives. University libraries will play a key role in supporting and improving access to network resources.

Although electronic sources will become more important for the archives of these libraries, especially those related to distance learning obtained from professional companies or created at the university, the management, development and protection of printed material will not lose its importance. Working within conditions of constant change, university libraries should accept excellence as the foundation of its development by building their own systems of improving quality and keeping the orientation to the end user with a constant individualization and differentiation of services.

Research results

A survey on media was conducted with students of the Faculty of Maritime Studies in Split who attended the course Communicology. The survey was conducted on a sample of 47 students aged 21 to 22. This is how the surveyed students relate to media:

Students read magazines once a week on average, mostly for entertainment. Among daily newspapers "24 hours" is read the most, by 87%. Even in the daily news entertainment is the most interesting section; most students do not read politics. They do not buy newspapers and magazines every day. Only 5% of the surveyed students read professional journals on a regular basis, 64% read professional journals occasionally and 31% do not read professional journals at all.

The respondents watch television three hours a day on average. Entertainment is the most preferred television content (93%), while politics is the least preferred (4%). 38% of the surveyed students use Internet on a daily basis, while 14% do not use Internet at all.

Interestingly, 63% of students believe that the media are unethical in most cases and 42% believe that political interest is related to the issue of ethical/unethical behaviour in media.

When asked whether they think the media affect their cognitive abilities, i.e. whether they believe that the media lessen intellectual abilities, the power of critical thinking and emotional engagement, 35% replied yes, 28% no, while 37% said that they are not sure. Additionally, 78% of the respondents believe that there is violence in media and over half of those respondents think that the

violence is manifested through deliberate misleading of the public by displaying modified and subsequently processed information.

Conclusion

The importance of developing critical thinking skills in the area of critical reception and in the area of critical production should be pointed out. Emphasis should be put on the role that computer science teaching plays in supporting the development of critical thinking for quality use of information from the Internet. It can be concluded that full effects can be expected only after careful correlation of computer science and communicology with other courses at the Faculty of Maritime Studies in Split. However, the application of critical thinking skills to use information from the Internet is expected regardless of faculty courses.

References

Helbig, Elke; Köhler, Winfried; Lümkemann, Andre. Medienpädagogik. Neusäß: Kieser, 2001

Masterman, Len. Teaching the media. London: Comedia, 1985

Nadrljanski, Đorđe; Nadrljanski, Mila. Informacijsko-komunikacijski sistemi i tehnologije = Information and communication systems and technologies. Split: Redak, 2012.

Nadrljanski, Mila. Komunikologija i menadžment: istraživanja komunikoloških aspekata obrazovanja menadžera = Communicology and Management: Research on communicational aspects in the education of managers. Split: Redak, 2010.

Schellmann, Bernhard. Medien verstehen, gestalten, produzieren. Haan-Gruiten: Auflage, 2002

Zgrabljić Rotar, Nada. Mediji - medijska pismenost, medijski sadržaji i medijski utjecaji = The media - media literacy, media content and media influences. *// Medijska pismenost i civilno društvo = Media Literacy and Civil Society*. Sarajevo: Mediacentar, 2005.