

Medienbildung – Media Literacy

Renate Holubek, Dietmar Schipek

Personality development and individual abilities to cope with life are closely connected with media and their communication domains. Digital media influence young peoples' everyday life in many different ways. This raises the question as to which skills young people have to acquire in order to be able to orient themselves in our democratic society.



mediamanual.at, the interactive platform for media education of the Federal Ministry of Education, Art, and Culture encourages active, creative, and critical media work in schools. In the process, integrative media education also deepens the relationship between the school and the everyday world outside school. The primary aim of the approach is to enable young people to make well-founded, independent decisions but it is explicitly not concerned with protecting them from the media or guiding them towards a notion of eternal "truth, wisdom, and beauty".

mediamanual.at gives support to schools in the area of media education

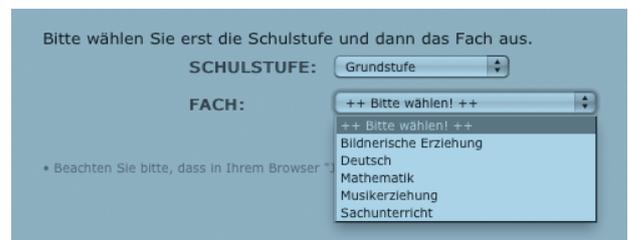
The aim of the platform is to support schools so that they are able to attain the highest possible standards in the area of media education or, as the case may be, to help achieve its long-term anchoring and thus enable high-quality interdisciplinary teaching.

"In view of the challenge posed by electronic media, schools must face up to the task of working collaboratively to form individuals with the ability to communicate and make decisions, to stimulate them to creativity and pleasure in their own creations and, in accordance with the teaching principles of 'media education', to encourage the individual's orientation in society and to endeavour to bring about a constructively critical attitude to mediated experiences." ¹



Media Literacy. *mediamanual.at* offers a comprehensive modular media handbook with learning sequences and workshops on film, radio, computer and new media.

For years a network of specialist media educators has been giving support to schools and teachers in preparing and teaching classes. In addition, the team undertakes research into learning processes and develops teaching materials and networks of knowledge production. They organize media competitions, conferences, and courses, encouraging, advising, and supporting teachers and school development projects.



After around eleven years of web presence and currently around 35,000 unique clients, the platform is a real model of success. This applies to the *media literacy award [mla]* too and is based on the fact that the new digital technologies make it possible for people to play a significant role in cultural production. The media competition, therefore, is

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an open structure in respect of content which means that the open, implicit field of school and society and the associated discourses can be investigated and symbolically explored.



The *media literacy award [mla]* is intended to “enable learning” without fear and is not limited by the primacy of a culture controlled by the need for permission but, rather, fosters a free culture which ascribes participative roles to both teachers and pupils in the context of a free and democratic society.

How can media literacy be successful in the everyday school environment?

Hundreds of teachers and thousands of students participate annually in the *media literacy award [mla]* with great commitment and enthusiasm. The media education concept was honoured in 2004 by the Gesellschaft für Pädagogik und Information e. V. (GPI) [Society for Education and Information] with the renowned Comenius Medal.

The effectiveness of the concept has also been underscored by the results of an accompanying scientific study of the *media literacy award [mla]*:

- “Circumstances that hinder learning are removed e.g. fear (group work).
- Situations are created that encourage learning and help it to take place (independent and collective learning).
- Emotion is encouraged (indifference makes learning difficult).
- Past experience and acquired skills are included (basic prerequisites for effective learning).
- Testing out possibilities is encouraged (creativity). Experimentation is positively regarded (research).
- Media tools are tried out (experience-oriented learning).
- The negotiation of meaning is stimulated (cultural codes).

- The recognition of abstract and symbolic connections is promoted.”²

All of this supports successful learning. Thus what is required is education in which media education is so embedded that it is self-evident.



Tool box. *mediamanual.at* offers a large selection of learning tools that are all available free.

Conclusion: We need schools that awaken curiosity, ask questions. Places of discussion and confrontation, where making mistakes is understood as a chance to learn and not as a flaw, where each child is individually challenged according to their abilities and where they have enough time to develop and learn in a team. Media education as an integral part of this culture of learning creates the best conditions for successful learning.

The *mediamanual.at* team sees itself as a centre of competence concerned with creating opportunities for the development of a new culture of learning and giving specific and on-going support. It is a site where information and experience of the pre-conditions and factors for success in a new culture of learning can be exchanged, in a network, as a research centre. Dialogue is important to us. We are looking forward to your ideas.

The authors

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www.mediamanual.at

¹ Decree of the Federal Ministry for Education, Science, and Culture. GZ 48.223/14–Präs. 10/01, Circular No. 64/01, 2001

² Holubek, Renate: Der MEDIA LITERACY AWARD [mla]. Eine kritische Analyse medienpädagogischer Praxis. Masters thesis, Donau-Universität Krems. Vienna 2008, page 81