Chapter 7

Lifelong Education: The Media Implicit and Informal Edutainment Post–Truth Paradigm

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ABSTRACT

The Eurobarometer Standard 90 Autumn 2018 has shown that 97% of Romanians get their information from the television channels, and around 50% use mainly the online medium. Analyzing the content that is broadcast through the best rated media channels then is a matter of utmost interest for society and for the educational system, as this content strongly influences and re-molds (along with the influence of the official system of education) the members of society throughout a lifetime, with important overall impact.

INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, due to the rapid pace of the progress made in technology and in science, a myriad of sources of both formation and information are emerging. Within such a context, lifelong education (a term launched in the late 1960s, according to Tuijnman and Boström, 2002, pp. 93-110) is becoming a necessity in order to cope with these fast changes, and it also may profit from the many media sources available and emerging.

Obviously, costs of formal lifelong learning would be too high, both economically and socially, which makes governments less interested in it. Consequently, informal sources of education, like the media, have been inherently and informally covering
up the area of lifelong education, mostly recently, at the end of the 20th century and beginning with the 21st century. Nevertheless, the media, as sources of education, are informal and implicit in that they do not precisely and explicitly aim at educating, but rather they are prone to profit making in order to survive and thrive financially. Another aim, sometimes serving the interests of the ownership of the media channel, is that of informing and entertaining, in order to enhance those economic and political interests of the owner. Unfortunately, these conjunct interests may bring about post-truth content (Keyes, 2004) that satisfies the media mogul or the media issuer, but which may be somewhat harmful for society, for communities. Fake news, yellow journalism, and other such trends would best illustrate such post-truth media realities. Adding to this the fact that informal edutainment (portmanteau word first attributed to Walt Disney in 1954) through the media is usually more appealing to the audiences than the less flexible and less exciting formal education (Hewitt, 2017), the issue at stake here is quite worth being scientifically dwelt on. To account for such a situation, the Eurobarometer Standard 90 Autumn 2018 has shown that 97 percent of the Romanians get their information from the television channels and around 50 percent use the online medium in search of information. These sources provide both formation and information on the expense of the formal system that seems to have almost no important say in lifelong education.

The content that is broadcast through the best rated media channels then is a matter of utmost interest for society and for the educational system, as this content strongly influences and re-molds (after the influence of the official system of education) the “target” of formal education, that is, the members of society, with important overall impact. The analysis of the content of the best rated Romanian TV channels in the timespan 7th of September 2016 - 9th of January 2019 has shown that over 90 percent of it was infotainment. Further study on the type of media programs or content that elicit better rating figures, has lead towards identifying the most representative advantages and drawbacks of media informal and implicit edutainment.

One key conclusion that may be drawn is that some social control, like the CNA (engl., NCA, i.e., National Council of the Audiovisual) in Romania is needed for the sake of building and maintaining a satisfactory level of content in the media that inherently and implicitly becomes the main source of lifelong education. A second significant conclusion is that the formal educational system may re-think to some extent the curriculum and the strategies that would draw the actual formal representation of education closer to edutainment, in order to ensure a stronger intrinsic motivation, and combine and adjust the advantages of both informal and formal education, whilst avoiding their counterpart drawbacks.
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