

All in all, MIL is not an entirely young study field. In fact, it is as old as the field of education and learning technologies. Though being a discipline grounded on such classical areas of study as literary or rhetoric readings, the contemporary encounters with information production and knowledge exchanges generate a completely new array of experiences that also require rethinking classical principles of democracy.

As observed, in contemporary societies, all common issues — everyday subjects in politics, education, religion, or culture — should be studied as phenomena of communication. Indeed, we are bound to communicate. But do we have the needed know-how? Do we have the competencies required for mediated democratic encounters? These are the critical issues that this book aims to answer. As commonly referred to, media literacy is synonymous with responsible and profound thinking. Still, one might suggest that thinking by itself cannot be uncritical as it requires proficiency in providing reflections, comparisons, generalisations, evaluations, and the ability to sense and recognise what is true and just. These are conventional principles that every democratic society is built on.

To sum up, *Understanding Media and Information Literacy (MIL) in the Digital Age: A question of democracy*, edited by Ulla Carlsson, reminds us that contemporary democracy, first of all, needs to be viewed as “relational” (i.e., a “communication” phenomenon). Democracies need attuned people; a happy society is built by trusting citizens. And this is the central message of the book: MIL should not be treated in isolation from human (cognitive and emotional) empowerment. For that purpose, it promotes a “situational” perspective for learning about MIL, which is presented as a qualitative indicator of contextualised societal changes. It also advocates understanding MIL as a “public right”.

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**David Buckingham (2019). *The Media Education Manifesto*. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 128 pp., ISBN: 978-1-509-53587-3.**

As the title suggests, *The Media Education Manifesto* by David Buckingham provides us with a broad overview of the situation in the field of media literacy education, calling western societies to action. David Buckingham, Emeritus Professor at Loughborough University in the UK, has been engaged with media literacy issues

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since the early 1990s, studying children's media use, in particular television culture, civic participation, consumerism, and learning. In his newest book, written for a broader audience in a popularising approach, he tries to convince his readers of the importance and urgency of the task of implementing media education in society. As the last chapter *Making it happen!* suggests, the book creates a plan of action showing in a very practical and quite detailed way what should be done, and how, to promote media education neither as an instrumental way of learning with media nor as a way of finding solutions to societal problems, but as a way of developing critical understanding in individuals.

Buckingham's main focus is on media education in schools, primarily on teaching the children, in the context of the UK. He points out that media education must be a compulsory aspect of the school curriculum from the beginning. The book draws on the author's rich experience over the past several decades and provides many references to more detailed approaches. Media education requires a much more coherent and comprehensive approach than what has been adapted by politicians and policymakers, Buckingham argues.

Who are the readers of this book? At the end of the book, Buckingham stipulates that the manifesto is not an academic text (p. 119). Nevertheless, as a summary of many recent public debates and academic arguments, the book offers sound and research-based argumentation for media professionals, and especially for education policy makers, who have the power to determine the content of curricula both in basic and higher education. Currently developing media literacy at Tallinn University, both to teach media students who could get an additional subject to teach in general education schools and future teachers of various subjects, I consider this book necessary for all those who teach and train teachers. Universities in Estonia and the Baltics as a whole have been involved in the development of media literacy, in particular by conducting several practical training courses. In 2018, we started in Tallinn with a Nordplus project FAME — Film and Media for Education to create a network involving different players from the Baltic and Nordic countries. The main goal is to share best practices, but also to learn from the countries like Finland, where there is systematic development of media literacy at the national level.

There is, indeed, an increased need for this kind of book in today's world, which Buckingham's book clearly expresses. It is hard to disagree with his recognition that it seems quite extraordinary that we should be entering the third decade of the twenty-first century with a school curriculum that does not even address the dominant forms of culture and communication of the last century — let alone those of the present one. Since the late 1990s, governments and media regulators around the world have become increasingly enthusiastic about the idea of media literacy; however, Buckingham admits that during recent years, the UK has lost the leading role they have had since the 1930s.

Compared to the UK, it must be admitted that in Estonia, as in the other Baltic countries, media literacy has never been dealt with systematically; it has been the domain of individual enthusiasts, such as school teachers and academic staff. For example, in Estonia in 2018, only 66 of 518 general-education schools had media-related subjects, with only 104 teachers involved. However, due to the developments in social media and the growing concern about misinformation, many national institutions have begun to show interest in the subject, but only from a rather narrow perspective. Educational documents tend to emphasise digital competences, suggesting a technocratic approach. Buckingham describes *media literacy* as a malleable term, and emphasises that there is actually no definition of media literacy, and thus no clear understanding of its content. The terms *digital literacy*, *information literacy*, and *media literacy* are often used interchangeably, and it is obvious that the lack of a clear concept has hindered the development of the field — including the Baltic countries.

The first of nine chapters, *Changing media environment* provides an overview of the changing world where one of the fields — the media — has become a phenomenon that involves us all. Nowadays, understanding media also encompasses what we as individuals create and produce, and how we use media to communicate with each other. The media are everywhere — like the air we breathe (p. 8). Though this ubiquity is due to new technical solutions, Buckingham warns against being too technology-driven, because these new platforms are not merely technology companies — they are also media companies. Additionally, they increasingly provide means of representation and communication indispensable to modern life. Services like Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram are not merely a means of delivering content — they are also a cultural form, shaping that content and our relationship with it in particular ways (p. 14). Buckingham provides a general picture, but also an individual user's perspective, pointing out that the devices we use are also powerful means of surveillance, gathering large amounts of data about us.

In Chapter 2, *Beyond benefit and risk*, Buckingham points out that blaming the media is a frequent response to newly identified social problems. “Fake news”, other forms of disinformation, trolling, flaming and hate speech, propaganda and online radicalisation, and filter bubbles are all part of a larger scope of social problems — the solution, Buckingham continuously stresses, is education. In chapters 3 and 4, Buckingham goes on in developing arguments related to the critical skills of citizens. He suggests that a successful democracy requires well informed media users, active citizens participating in civil society, and skilled, creative workers. In this context, media literacy is a fundamental life skill — we cannot function without it, says Buckingham. Going further, Buckingham adds that risks and benefits of media use are interconnected: those who are the most assiduous users (and thus most likely to enjoy the benefits) are often also those who are most at risk (p. 25).

Chapter 5, *Going critical*, advocates the importance of developing critical thinking in the educational process. Learning is not simply a matter of access to information — we must comprehend, interpret, and apply information in order to turn it into knowledge. Critical thinking takes us a few steps further than this — it is about how we analyse, synthesise, and evaluate information (p. 55). Buckingham describes four critical concepts related to fundamental aspects of all media: media language, representation, production, and audience.

Chapters 6 and 7 are dedicated to pedagogy. Buckingham considers how media education can work in practice, especially in relation to social media. He identifies three dimensions of media education pedagogy, showing a dynamic relationship between reading (textual analyses), writing (or creative production), and contextual analyses (the first two in a broader social context). A close textual analysis is a key dimension of media education, and should remain so, irrespective of whether we are dealing with a complex film sequence, a newspaper front page, or a short posting on a microblogging site (p. 69). Buckingham provides much practical advice and suggests starting from students' existing experience and knowledge, but he also challenges them to move beyond it and emphasises the need for critical evaluation.

Chapter 8, *Media education in practice*, concentrates on how this approach can be applied to three aspects of social media — fake news and online propaganda; cyberbullying and hate speech; and self-representation online — using the four critical concepts. Buckingham also explains why it is important not to focus only on risk and safety.

Chapter 9 gives an overview of the developments in media literacy in the UK and calls for action (“making it happen”). It is hard to disagree with Buckingham, who states in the conclusion of the book, “Media education is about purposeful, critical use of means of communication, and it should enable us not just to understand how the media work, or to cope with an intensively mediated world, but also to imagine how things might be different” (p. 115).

Concluding, Buckingham makes some interesting proposals, summarising the arguments described above:

1. A starting point for successful media education in society would be to consider the Internet as a basic public utility.
2. Companies like Google and Facebook need to be seen as media companies, irrespective of who creates the content they provide.
3. Both companies and governments need to take much greater control over the collection of our personal data and restrict how it is used.

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