Media Education Within the National Strategy for Citizenship Education: A Study with Portuguese Schools Integrating the Project for Autonomy and Curriculum Flexibility

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ABSTRACT

As a part of the COMEDIG project, this qualitative study aimed to establish to what extent media education content is present in education projects developed by Portuguese schools under the National Strategy for Citizenship Education. Data were gathered from guiding documents provided online by 227 educational establishments that were part of the Project for Autonomy and Curriculum Flexibility in the 2017/2018 academic year. Once identified, media education content was classified into the categories of access and use, critical reading and analysis, and production and expression. Media education activities were referred in guiding documents of 85 establishments; however, only 55 of them considered their implementation under the National Strategy for Citizenship Education. The classification of media education contents, possible in 20 cases, showed the diversity of implementation strategies. These findings suggest that media education is a domain still under construction in Portuguese schools, requiring a more holistic approach.

KEY WORDS

media education; citizenship education; curricular analysis; pre-school and compulsory education; autonomy and curriculum flexibility.

Educação para os Media no Âmbito da Estratégia Nacional de Educação para a Cidadania: Um Estudo com Escolas Portuguesas que Integram o Projeto de Autonomia e Flexibilidade Curricular

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RESUMO

Este estudo qualitativo, integrado no projeto COMEDIG, teve por objetivo verificar em que medida os projetos educativos desenvolvidos por escolas portuguesas no âmbito da Estratégia Nacional de Educação para a Cidadania contemplam conteúdos de educação para os *media*. Os dados foram recolhidos a partir de documentos orientadores disponibilizados *online* por 227 estabelecimentos de ensino que, no ano letivo 2017/2018, integraram o Projeto de Autonomia e Flexibilidade Curricular. Os conteúdos de interesse foram classificados nas categorias de acesso e uso, leitura e análise críticas e produção e expressão. A sua presença foi identificada em documentos orientadores de 85 estabelecimentos; contudo, apenas 55 deles enquadraram a sua implementação no âmbito da Estratégia supracitada. A classificação dos conteúdos, possível em 20 casos, mostrou a diversidade de estratégias de implementação. Estes resultados sugerem que a educação para os *media* é um domínio ainda em construção nas escolas portuguesas, exigindo uma abordagem holística.

Educación para los Medios en el Ámbito de la Estrategia Nacional de Educación para la Ciudadanía: Un Estudio con Escuelas Portuguesas que Integran el Proyecto de Autonomía y Flexibilidad Curricular

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RESUMEN

Este estudio cualitativo, integrado en el proyecto COMEDIG, tuvo como objetivo verificar en qué medida los proyectos educativos elaborados por las escuelas portuguesas en el ámbito de la Estrategia Nacional de Educación para la Ciudadanía (ENEC) contemplan contenidos de la educación para los medios. Se recogieron datos de documentos orientadores puestos a disposición en línea por 227 escuelas que, en el año académico 2017/2018, integraron el Proyecto de Autonomía y Flexibilidad Curricular. Los contenidos de interés se clasificaron en las categorías de acceso y uso, lectura y análisis críticas y producción y expresión. Su presencia ha sido identificada en documentos de 85 establecimientos, aunque solo 55 de ellos consideraron su implementación en el ámbito de la ENEC. La clasificación de los contenidos, posible en 20 casos, mostró la diversidad de estrategias de implementación. Estos resultados sugieren que la educación en medios es un dominio aún en construcción en las escuelas portuguesas, requiriendo un enfoque holístico.

PALABRAS-CLAVE

educación para los medios; educación para la ciudadanía; análisis curricular; educación preescolar y obligatoria; autonomía y flexibilidad curricular.

Media Education within the National Strategy for Citizenship Education: A Study with Portuguese Schools Integrating the Project for Autonomy and Curriculum Flexibility

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INTRODUCTION

The present study was conducted in the frame of the COMEDIG project, which stands for Digital and Media literacy Competences in Portugal (PTDC/CED-EDG/32560/2017). The COMEDIG project was designed to assess digital and media literacy competences in the Portuguese school community and based on the assessment results, to elaborate recommendations for future comprehensive intervention (https://www.uc.pt/fpce/comedig/; https://www.facebook.com/Comedig105240324157706/).

In a time of exponential growth of the information society, where communication is increasingly mediated by technologies, a sustainable transformation towards inclusive and equitable education for all requires the implementation of learner-focused initiatives that promote digital and media literacy (European Council, 2020). These initiatives are considered crucial to capacitate persons of all ages, including children and teenagers, to critically read the information provided by professionals or generated by users, and to use it effectively, safely, responsibly and ethically (Buckingham, 2007; Hobbs, 2017; Kahne & Bowyer, 2016). These initiatives are also seen as essential to empower young people for the exercise of active and full citizenship in the new media ecosystem, as they encourage them to participate in the life of society in its economic, social and cultural dimensions and improve their ability to make informed choices around socially relevant topics (European Commission, 2009; European Council, 2020; Grizzle et al., 2013; Martens & Hobbs, 2015). Another possible contribution of the referred initiatives is to make young people aware of the need to combat inequalities and situations of exclusion that exist in different areas of society's life and inspire them to support intercultural dialogue that promotes diversity and tolerance. However, to enable learners to actively participate in social dialogue, the digital and media literacy initiatives need to be developed and implemented in a systematic and comprehensive manner and with the involvement of stakeholders from different sectors. They must also be tailored to the needs and specificities of contexts in which the students live and learn, taking advantage of synergies created between the different community members and thus increasing the impact of learning experiences (European Council, 2020).

The strategic importance of initiatives that keep with the technological and digital progress of the media, and that empower young people for critical and responsible participation in the new media ecosystem, has also been recognized in Portugal. At the

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end of the 20th century and in the first decade of this century, there were some significant attempts to include media-related topics in formal and informal school activities. However, the lack of a systematic, integrative and long-term approach to the implementation of proposals generated by different stakeholders has made the results obtained less impactful than expected (Pinto, Pereira, Pereira, & Ferreira, 2011; Tomé, 2016). Another relevant limitation is related to the fact that in many of these initiatives, especially in those adopted more recently, traditional or non-digital media were practically excluded from the scope of educational projects. In order to overcome the impasse, in 2009, a set of public entities working in the field of communication, education, and science created the Informal Media Literacy Group, with the goal of placing media literacy as a priority issue on the political agenda. In the document called "Declaration of Braga" (Comissão Nacional da UNESCO et al., 2011), this Group proposed a set of concrete measures to create a basis for joint action, assuming that the successful implementation of media literacy educational projects requires the participation of civil society, as well as the involvement of decision-makers who have the power to boost relevant actions in this field. In this context of recognition of the importance of promoting media education in schools, the National Education Council published the Recommendation on Education for Media Literacy (Recommendation No. 6/2011), suggesting its organizational and curricular integration in the curricular component of Education for Citizenship. Since then, new initiatives, promoted by social actors, have emerged. The set of standards associated with media literacy practices, adopted by the School Library Network, is just one of several examples of the work developed in this area (Conde, Mendinhos, Correia, & Martins, 2012). This initiative, like many others, targeted people of school age, aspiring to raise their awareness of the need for an informed and critical use of the media and to improve their practical capacities in this domain (to learn more about this and other initiatives, see: Observatório de Comunicação, 2020).

A renewed effort to equip young people with media literacy competences was also undertaken by the political agents responsible for education in Portugal (Pinto & Pereira, 2018; Tomé, 2016), although its results became more consolidated only during the process of restructuring compulsory education. The restructuring process was based on a new strategic vision, according to which the educational system must prepare young people to successfully respond to the challenges of the uncertain and rapidly changing 21st-century ecosystem (Decreto-Lei n.º 55/2018 de 6 de julho). To enable the translation of the strategic vision into educational practice, a common curricular matrix was established (Direção Geral de Educação – Ministério de Educação, 2017b) based on the recommendations on teaching and learning drawn up by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), and the Council of Europe, among others (Council of Europe, 2016; OECD, 2016; UNESCO, 2016). The curricular matrix, presented in the document entitled "The profile of students at the end of compulsory schooling" (Direção Geral de Educação – Ministério de Educação, 2017b), identified a set of principles, vision and values to be used as a guide in the learning-teaching process, and determined the areas of competences that should be achieved by students at the time of completing compulsory education. Simultaneously, the Project for Autonomy and Curriculum Flexibility (PACF) was launched, which provided basic and secondary[2] schools

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2   In Portugal, basic education consists of three sequential cycles, aimed at children aged six to 15. The first cycle lasts for four academic years and the second cycle lasts for two academic years. Both are equivalent to the first level of the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED). The third cycle lasts for three academic years, corresponding to ISCED's level 2 (lower

with the possibility of managing the school curriculum in an autonomous and flexible way (Decreto-Lei n.º 55/2018 de 6 de julho). The legal framework underlying the PACF aimed to allow educational and training offers to include pedagogical experiences that are enriching and meaningful for the social context in which the educational community is inserted, and that effectively respond to the students' needs. The contextualization of the teaching-learning process was considered fundamental for the development of quality learnings, relevant for achieving the required competences profile (Despacho n.º 5908/2017 de 5 de julho), and decisive for the establishment of inclusive education (Decreto-Lei n.º 54/2018 de 6 de julho).

In line with international agencies that have significantly influenced the restructuring of the education field around the world, the new strategic vision for compulsory education in Portugal assumed the commitment to prioritize the competences that are considered crucial in lifelong learning (European Commission, 2018; OECD, 2019), acknowledging that the development of these competences is essential for young people to be able to participate actively in society and contribute successfully to its growth (Direção Geral de Educação – Ministério de Educação, 2017b). In this context, media education appears as a privileged area of intervention, since, when implemented based on a comprehensive approach that goes beyond the promotion of technical and operational skills, it provides tools that empower young people to seek quality information and knowledge and to use them in a critical, responsible and ethical manner, thus contributing to the development of the knowledge society (Grizzle et al., 2013; Matos, Festas, & Seixas, 2016). Indeed, many of the international agencies responsible for shaping educational policies claim that media education plays a key role in the growth of society, since it enables citizens to exercise civil rights and duties in an informed way, and, therefore, the inclusion in the school curriculum of media education activities should be beyond any doubt or dispute (European Commission, 2018; Grizzle et al., 2013; OECD, 2019).

The new educational proposal, resulting from the process of restructuring Portuguese compulsory education, also recognized the importance of learnings within the curricular component of information and communication technologies (Decreto-Lei n.º 55/2018 de 6 de julho), highlighting the need for their promotion and valorisation throughout basic and secondary education. In addition, media education was considered an integral part of citizenship education and was included in the mandatory thematic domains of the Citizenship and Development curricular component (Direção Geral de Educação – Ministério de Educação, 2017a), in line with the National Education council's Recommendation on Education for Media Literacy. Finally, the School Library Network published the extended version of the set of standards associated with media literacy practices (Conde, Mendinhos, & Correia, 2017), identifying students from pre-school to secondary school as a target audience (in the previous version, secondary school students were not taken into account). The new version of the document presents concrete strategies to acquire and improve media-related knowledge and skills and also identifies the attitudes and values that should guide the students in their actions as a media consumer or producer.

Due to its possible impact, media education addressed in the context of the Citizenship and Development curricular component deserves a little more attention. The component in question constitutes a curricular framework for the development of work in 17 domains considered a priority by the National Strategy for Citizenship

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secondary education). As for secondary education, it also lasts for three academic years, being equivalent to ISCED's level 3 (upper secondary education). It is aimed at youths aged 16 to 18. For more details, see: https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/portugal_en

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Education (NSCE), and is integrated into school curricula of all education levels (Decreto-Lei n.º 55/2018 de 6 de julho; Direção Geral de Educação – Ministério de Educação, 2017a). The acquisition of learnings within its scope is guided by the principles of the PACF. It also follows a whole-school approach, and is based on the premises that learning environments must be adjusted to the specificities, priorities and needs of the educational communities and value the expertise and experience of its members, as well as strive for students' engagement and co-responsibility in the development of personal and social skills. The Citizenship and Development curricular component is supposed to be implemented through interdisciplinary projects and in articulation with other curricular components and formative contents (Direção Geral de Educação – Ministério de Educação, 2017a), creating opportunities to integrate contributions from different branches of knowledge and link different components of school education. The priority domains are organized in three groups, each of them with different implications for educational practice. Media education is integrated into the group of domains that must be addressed in at least two of the three cycles of basic education, with its approach in secondary education being optional. To support the elaboration of formative actions that promote the acquisition of media-related knowledge and skills, the DGE provided a guiding document that identifies several work areas that can be developed at different education levels (Pereira, Pinto, Madureira, Pombo, & Guedes, 2014). However, the use of this document is optional, as schools have the autonomy to propose their own strategy in accordance with the available resources and access to learning opportunities.

The integration of the NSCE into the school curriculum is quite recent. Despite emerging as a promising strategy, at this moment, little is known about the impact of the work carried out within its context, including the work developed in the field of media education. Hence, it is necessary to identify the specific media-related practices developed by schools within the scope of the PACF, and in accordance with the assumptions and principles of the NSCE, and establish whether the framework proposed is sufficient or not for the acquisition of significant media-related knowledge and skills. It is also necessary to verify if there are formative components that, given the specificity of the topics addressed, require more attention and more effort, and, if that is the case, provide schools with evidence-based recommendations and appropriate resources for overcoming the identified gaps and improving student performance.

As a part of the COMEDIG project, the present study aimed to establish to what extent the media education content is addressed in the educational projects developed by education establishments and described in guiding documents which are shared with the educational community.

METHOD

A qualitative study employing the method of document analysis was conducted to identify and explore media education content considered in educational projects, presented in guiding documents and provided online by educational establishments attended by pre-school to secondary students.

Data were searched in a sample of 227 organic units, consisting of cluster and non-cluster schools, whether private or public, which in the 2017/2018 academic year adhered to the PACF implemented under a pedagogical experience regime (Despacho n.º 5908/2017 de 5 de julho). The choice of this sample was dictated by the need to ensure access to the largest possible number of curricular and educational projects elaborated by schools according to the principles and rules established within the scope of autonomy and curriculum flexibility, and, at the same time, by the need to reduce the risk of consulting guiding documents in which these principles and rules are still underrepresented. Of the 227 organic units, 85 were located in the Lisbon and Vale do Tejo Region, 64 in the Northern Region, 37 in the Central Region, 12 in the Alentejo, 11 in the Algarve, 10 in the Madeira island and five in the archipelago of the Azores. The sample also included three Portuguese schools abroad (Mozambique, Timor Leste, and Sao Tome and Principe). The detailed list of the 227 organic units can be consulted on the DGE official website[3].

DATA COLLECTION

Data sources consisted of guiding documents provided on the website of each of the 227 organic units sampled. The data collection process aimed to obtain information on school activities that promote knowledge and skills in the field of media education, and that are framed and operationalized in line with the NSCE. All activities that were centred on the acquisition of essential learnings associated with a specific curricular component other than Citizenship and Development were considered not to be eligible. It was also decided that national initiatives of a non-curricular character that encourage the adoption of safe and responsible practices in the use of the media (such as SeguraNet Challenges, Digital Security Seal or Digital Leaders) should be excluded from the analysis, as well as school initiatives that stimulate the creation of a cinema club, school radio or school journal. This decision is justified by the fact that the implementation of the abovementioned actions in schools is usually optional. The same refers to the participation in these actions of different members of the school community. Therefore, launching such initiatives or projects in the school environment may have limited reach, as it does not guarantee the involvement of all students.

Given the eligibility criteria, in the data collection process, the Strategic Plans for Citizenship Education elaborated by organic units were considered the primary source of information. The secondary sources of information included the Educational Projects and the Curriculum Plans or Projects, as well as (Multi)Annual Plan of Activities. The referred documents define a set of internal norms that clarify the objectives, functions and organizational structure of the school/cluster, adopted within the scope of its autonomy, and present concrete measures to guide educational action according to the needs of the school community and specificities of the local social and educational context (Decreto-Lei n.º 75/2008 de 22 de abril). Their elaboration is mandatory. In a situation where it was not possible to access the referred documents online or when the available documents did not provide

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3   http://www.dge.mec.pt/sites/default/files/Curriculo/Projeto_Autonomia_e_Flexibilidade/unidades_organicas_pafc.pdf

information on the citizenship education strategy adopted by the organic unit, other documents were considered for consultation, such as Curriculum Flexibility Projects, Projects under development in the field of Curriculum Autonomy, School Year Organization Plans, Educational Project Application Plans or Strategic Plans, among others. The data collection process was conducted on May 27-31, 2019.

DATA ANALYSIS

Once identified, the activities promoting media education-related content, provided in the guiding documents, were analysed and classified following a three-dimensional definition of media literacy (as proposed in the Commission Recommendation of 20 August 2009). The first classification category considered the ability to access and use media (category of access and use). The second classification category referred to the analysis, understanding and critical evaluation of different aspects of the media and media content (category of critical reading and analysis). The third classification category addressed production of media content and its communication to others (category of production and expression).

Analysis and classification of collected data were performed independently by two researchers. Any disagreements were resolved through discussion with a third researcher.

FINDINGS

The search and selection process is presented in Figure 1. Of the initial list of 227 organic units, 27 were excluded due to lack of online access to the guiding documents, which reduced the study sample to 200 cases. These 200 organic units were screened for the presence of activities aiming at the development of media-related knowledge and skills, integrated into educational action plans defined for the 2018/2019 academic year. The screening process showed that 115 organic units did not provide information related to media education in the educational projects described in the guiding documents they share online. The remaining 85 organic units presented media education content within the scope of curricular activities and/or complementary activities promoted by school libraries. Namely, in 55 organic units, media education was integrated into the curricular component of Citizenship and Development. Of those 55, 18 also proposed media education activities in collaboration with school libraries. Finally, the presentation of media education contents exclusively in the context of complementary activities developed by school libraries was verified in 30 cases.

Next, the activities integrated by 55 organic units in the curricular component of Citizenship and Development were subjected to content analysis. This analysis aimed to determine the levels of education at which the referred activities are expected to be carried out. It also intended to identify the specific objectives underlying the implementation of these activities, as well as the topics addressed within their context, and classify them into categories of access and use, critical reading and analysis, and production and expression, as mentioned before.
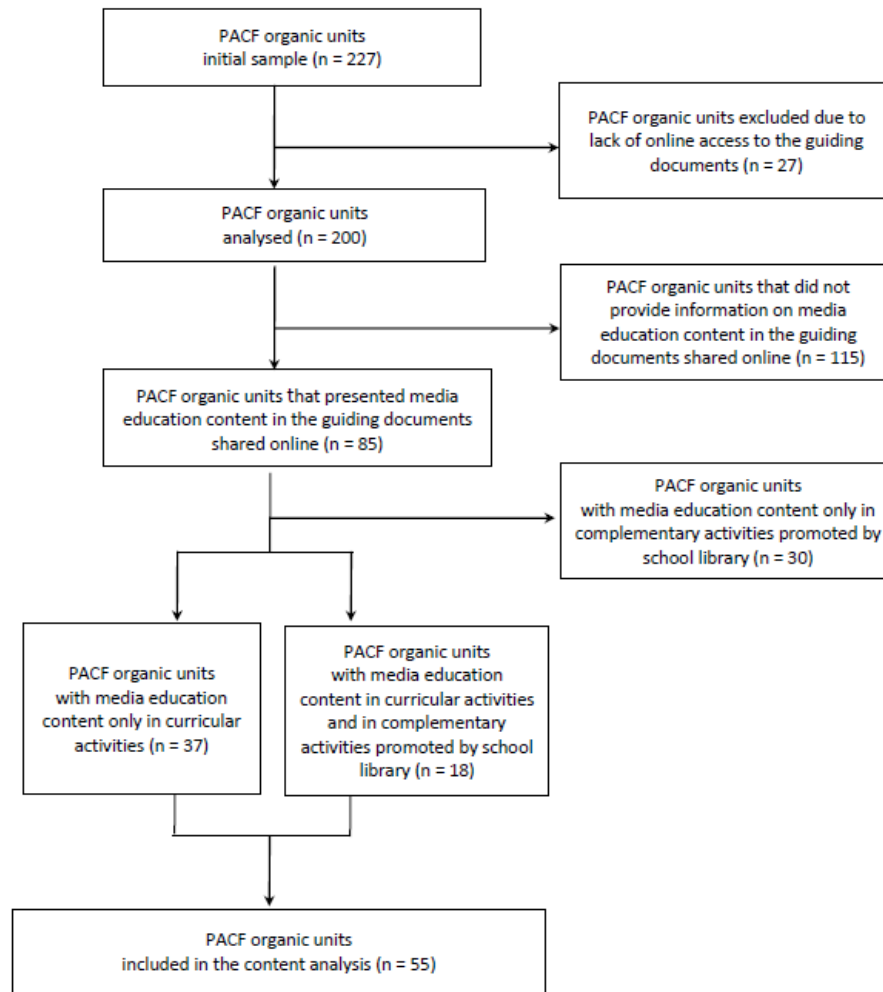
Figure 1. Flowchart of organic units selection process.
PACF: Project for Autonomy and Curriculum Flexibility

As can be seen in Table 1, the implementation of media education activities was planned for all education levels, from pre-school to secondary. The activities of interest targeting the 3rd, 2nd, and 1st cycles of basic education were presented by 33, 29, and 18 organic units, respectively. With regard to secondary education, the inclusion of media education activities was programmed by 11 organic units. As for pre-school education, only three organic units planned to work on topics related to media. Finally, six organic units showed an intention to implement media education activities; however, they did not specify the target group that would benefit from them.

In relation to the content of the activities addressing media education, only 20 of the 55 organic units included in the analysis provided information that allowed their classification into categories of access and use, critical reading and analysis, and production and expression. In the remaining 35 cases, insufficient information was presented, which prevented the identification and classification of media education contents to be taught. Returning to the 20 organic units initially referred, 15 of them planned the activities aiming at the improvement of knowledge and skills in the field of access and use. The same number of organic units (15) programmed

the activities addressing analysis, understanding and critical evaluation of different aspects of the media and media messages. The activities related to production of media messages and its communication to others were defined by 10 organic units. The referred numbers demonstrate that, in some cases, the activities proposed by the organic units fell into more than one category. In fact, six organic units elaborated a holistic approach that contemplated knowledge and skills in all three dimensions of media literacy. The other 14 organic units gave priority to the activities approaching only one or two of these dimensions. Unfortunately, the level of detail of the information provided differed from school to school, with some establishments indicating only the objectives of activities or their topics and methodology to be adopted, and others presenting all these components. The lack of uniformity in the information provided prevented a more exhaustive comparison of the activities developed.

Table 1

Characterization of media education content presented in guiding documents of organic units that in the 2017/2018 academic year integrated Project for Autonomy and Curriculum Flexibility

	Pre-school Education	Basic Education			Secondary Education	Level of education not specified
		1st cycle	2nd cycle	3rd cycle		
Number of organic units that considered media education in the curricular activities	3	18	29	33	11	6
Number of organic units that did not provide information on the content of activities developed within the scope of media education	0	12	18	21	8	3
Number of organic units that provided information on the content of activities developed within the scope of media education	3	6	11	12	3	3
Number of organic units that considered in their media education strategy*:						
- all three categories	0	1	2	2	1	1
- category of access and use	2	3	8	9	1	2
- category of critical reading and analysis	1	3	7	9	2	3
- category of production and expression	1	3	5	8	3	1

* One organic unit presented a strategy for all education levels (from pre-school to the 3rd cycle of basic education), without indicating what contents will be implemented in each of them. Therefore, this organic unit was not considered in the count.

Table 2 provides an overview of the media education content proposed by the organic units, organized into categories of access and use, critical reading and analysis, and production and expression. An in-depth analysis of this content pointed to the existence of differences in the activities designated for children and youths at different levels of education. Still, some common trends in the presented approaches were identified. Namely, at all education levels (from pre-school to secondary), work around public and private space in media was suggested. The same was found for content focused on transforming information into knowledge.

Table 2

Categorization of media education content presented in guiding documents of organic units that in the 2017/2018 academic year integrated Autonomy and Curriculum Flexibility Project*

Pre-school Education

Access and use	Critical reading and analysis	Production and expression
- Introduction to ICT / Internet / Knowing available technologies and their functions - Knowing advantages of available technologies - Using different technological supports in daily activities with caution and security / Using media ethically and responsibly	- Using media ethically and responsibly / Critical spirit towards the media / Critical attitude towards technologies known and used - Knowing available technologies and their functions - Knowing advantages of available technologies - Public and private space - Collaboration with others on media consuming and producing - Transforming information into knowledge through different research instruments and communication proficiency - Aesthetic sense in appreciation of media - Civic participation and media - Social and inclusive role of the library	- Using media ethically and responsibly - Drawing application - Public and private space - Collaboration with others on media consuming and producing - Transforming information into knowledge, through different research instruments and communication proficiency - Creative use of media - Civic participation and media - Social and inclusive role of the library

1st Cycle of Basic Education

Access and use	Critical reading and analysis	Production and expression
- Introduction to ICT / Introduction to Internet / Structure and functioning of a computer system - Word processor / Drawing application / Obtaining and processing images / Digital photography / Image treatment / Multimedia presentation - Mastery in use of software suitable for learning / Mastery in use of digital tools and resources - E-mail - Using media ethically and responsibly / Using ICT consciously and responsibly Appropriate behaviours on the internet and social networks / Internet security	- Using media ethically and responsibly / Appropriate behaviours on the internet and social networks / Using ICT consciously and responsibly / Critical spirit towards the media / Critical use of media (mass media and social networks) - Public and private space / Communication and information – personal and social meaning - Consequences of media / Implications of cyberbullying - Collaboration with others on media consuming and producing - Transforming information into knowledge, through different research instruments and communication proficiency - Aesthetic sense in appreciation of media - Civic participation and media - Social and inclusive role of the library	- Using media ethically and responsibly / Using ICT consciously and responsibly - Drawing application / Obtaining and processing images / Image treatment / Digital photography / Multimedia presentation - Public and private space - Collaboration with others on media consuming and producing / Radio (languages and technics) – information and entertainment blocks created by students - Digital laboratories - Transforming information into knowledge, through different research instruments and communication proficiency - Creative use of media - Civic participation and media - Social and inclusive role of the library - Evolution of social communication

2nd Cycle of Basic Education

Access and use	Critical reading and analysis	Production and expression
- Structure and functioning of a	- Safe use of the Internet / Internet security / Internet threats / Using	- Internet threats / Using media ethically and responsibly

computer system / Physical and non-physical handling of the media / Procedures-related to ICT use / Internet

- Word processor / Multimedia presentation

- Searching articles, news and other references to the subject under study / New practice of access to knowledge

- Email

- Mastery in use of digital tools and resources / Mastery in use of software suitable for learning

- Using media ethically and responsibly / Using ICT consciously and responsibly / Appropriate behaviours on the internet and social networks / Internet security / Safe use of the Internet / Internet threats / Risks related to ICT use

- Daily use of technology / Preparation for the technological and information world in which we live

media ethically and responsibly / Using ICT consciously and responsibly / Appropriate behaviours on the internet and social networks / Critical spirit towards the media / Critical use of media (mass media and social networks)

- Public and private space / Privacy vs thoughtless exposition when using ICT

- Collaboration with others on media consuming and producing

- Daily use of technology / Preparation for the technological and information world in which we live / Consequences of media / Cyberdependency / Implications of cyberbullying / Knowing advantages of the media and reflecting on the programs seen (advertising, television, the press, mobile phone and the internet; advertising and misleading advertising; being vulnerable on the internet)

- Transforming information into knowledge, through different research instruments and communication proficiency / New practice of access to knowledge

- Aesthetic sense in appreciation of media

- Civic participation and media

- Social and inclusive role of the library

/ Using ICT consciously and responsibly

- Public and private space

- Multimedia presentation

- Collaboration with others on media consuming and producing / Intervention in blogs and forums appropriate to audience and communication situation / Presentation of the work in the wall newspaper and on the blog

- Digital laboratories

- Transforming information into knowledge, through different research instruments and communication proficiency

- Creative use of media

- Civic participation and media

- Social and inclusive role of the library

3rd Cycle of Basic Education

Access and use	Critical reading and analysis	Production and expression
- Internet / Identifying the main characteristics of Internet / Procedures related to ICT use / Knowing the main digital networks / Social network / - Knowing advantages and inconveniences of social networks / Identifying the advantages and inconvenience of mobile phones - Word processor / Spreadsheet / Image editing / Video editing / Multimedia presentation - Creation/edition of the webpage - Mastery in use of digital tools and resources / Mastery in use of software suitable for learning	- Using media ethically and responsibly / Using Internet critically, responsibly and safely / Using ICT consciously and responsibly / Critical use of media (mass media and social networks) / Critical spirit towards the media / Appropriate behaviours on the internet and social networks - Reading, appropriation and reflection - Collaboration with others on media consuming and producing - Public and private space / Distinguishing public space and private space / Privacy vs thoughtless exposition when using ICT - Reflecting about use of internet, mobile phones, videogames / Knowing advantages and inconveniences of social networks / Identifying the advantages and inconvenience of mobile phones / Knowing advantages of the media and reflecting on the programs seen (advertising, television, the press, mobile phone and the internet;	- Using media ethically and responsibly / Using ICT consciously and responsibly - Public and private space / Distinguishing public space and private space - Image editing / Video editing / Creation/edition of the webpage - Multimedia presentation - Communication, appropriation and reflexion - Collaboration with others on media consuming and producing - Knowing advantages and inconveniences of social networks - Digital laboratories - Transforming information into knowledge, through different research instruments and communication proficiency - Creative use of media - Civic participation and media

- Using media ethically and responsibly / Using ICT consciously and responsibly / Using Internet critically, responsibly and safely / Appropriate behaviours on the internet and social networks / Internet security / Risks related to ICT use - Distinguishing public space and private space - Media education	advertising and misleading advertising; being vulnerable on the internet) / Consequences of media / Knowing problems related with prolonged use of screens / Cyberdependency / Discussing the phenomena of Cyberbullying and Sexting and identifying how to combat them / Implications of cyberbullying - Understanding how the media influence the way we look at the world / Knowing what globalization is and how it shortens time and space / Reflecting about the values transmitted through videogames / Reflecting on ICT and their influence on human relationships and relationships of humans with time and space - Transforming information into knowledge, through different research instruments and communication proficiency - Aesthetic sense in appreciation of media - Civic participation and media - Social and inclusive role of the library	- Social and inclusive role of the library

Secondary education

Access and use	Critical reading and analysis	Production and expression
- Learning to make a school blog / newspaper - Encouraging the creation of a reader community in both analog and digital formats - Knowing how to create a media	- Encouraging the creation of a reader community in both analog and digital formats - Reality and representation / How the media construct reality / Media as a social construction / Understanding how and when media characters correspond to stereotypes / Influence of the media in terms of violence and sex - Knowing what audiences are and the importance of different types of audiences / Knowing what public opinion is and the purpose of its circulation and of audience measuring / Knowing what fans are for and the way (good or bad) to captivate the public - Knowing the language and the ceremonies of the media - Agenda setting and spiral of silence	- Encouraging the creation of a reader community in both analog and digital formats - Knowing how to create a media / Blog animation / Realization, edition, publication of informative, documentary and creative videos / Preparing a radio broadcast or recording a video / Learning to make a school blog and newspaper - Viewing and exploring the films - Development of communication strategies through the various media - Knowing if and how you can have a voice in the media - Knowing what audiences are and the importance of different types of audiences / Knowing what public opinion is and the purpose of its circulation and of audience measuring / Knowing what fans are for and the way (good or bad) to captivate the public - Become aware of the possibility of right of replying and right of rectification in the media - Knowing and applying the ethical principles of content creation and publication in the public space

Level of education not defined		
Access and use	**Critical reading and analysis**	**Production and expression**
- Using the Internet respectfully and safely - Types of media (characteristics, functions) / Social networks	- Using the Internet respectfully and safely - Understanding communication and information phenomena / Types of media (languages, contents, messages) / Understanding the functioning and dynamics of the main social networks - ICT (the importance of new media) / Understanding the advantages and disadvantages of social networks / Cyberbullying and Sexting: discussion of the phenomena and ways to combat them - Space of public and private communication - Publicity - Relationship between media and actual world / Understanding the relationship of the media with the current world / Debating multiple challenges of globalization - Understanding and respecting the responsible right to freedom of information and expression - Cultural activity	N/A

* Due to the lack of uniformity in the information provided by organic units, the table presents both the activities' objectives and topics, according to the information provided in the analyzed documents.
ICT: Information and communication technologies.

In relation to pre-school and basic education, a large number of organic units considered to develop activities that emphasize the responsible and safe use of media, and that allow the identification of advantages and disadvantages, as well as opportunities and threats of using media in daily life. Students from these education levels could also learn about the structure and functioning of different technologies, software and applications. However, the acquisition of advanced skills in the use of digital tools and resources became the focus of action only in basic education. In the media education activities designed for the pre-school and basic education students, the use of media for the purpose of civic participation was also considered, but in a limited manner.

Collaborative work, resulting in the creation of media messages, was encouraged in both basic and secondary education. However, activities aimed at the development of self-awareness as a consumer or producer of media messages were proposed only in the 3rd cycle of basic education. The students in the 3rd cycle of basic education and secondary education were also provided with opportunities to discuss the influence of media on the way they look at and interpret reality, including valuing some of its aspects and neglecting others. The theme of representation of reality through the media was further deepened in the activities targeting secondary education students. These latter activities also addressed the concepts of media audiences and media languages.

DISCUSSION

In Portugal, there is a scarcity of initiatives that, in a systematic and integrated manner, promote knowledge and skills related to digital and non-digital media (Tomé, 2016). Although significant efforts have been made to integrate such initiatives into formal and non-formal education programs, their results revealed to be, in most cases, of limited duration and outreach (Pinto & Pereira, 2018; Tomé, 2016). Recently, in the context of reforms that led to the redefinition of educational policy and the restructuring of the compulsory education core curriculum (Decreto-Lei n.º 55/2018 de 6 de julho), new opportunities have emerged to outline media education pathways. These opportunities are particularly promising in the curricular components of Information and Communication Technologies and Citizenship and Development. Considering the possible impact of the initiatives implemented in the new curricular framework, this study aimed to establish to what extent the media education content is addressed in educational projects presented in guiding documents provided online by educational establishments that serve pre-school to secondary students. The referred educational projects had to be developed within the scope of the PACF. As for the media education content, it had to be provided following the assumptions and principles of the NSCE.

The analysis of the guiding documents available online on the educational establishments' websites suggests that the number of organic units that incorporate media education content in educational projects is quite reduced. Namely, the referred content was found in the guiding documents of less than half of the organic units sampled. Moreover, among the latter, a significant part indicated only the level of education in which the activities of interest are expected to be carried out, without providing details about their objectives, topics to be addressed or methods of implementation. These findings suggest that media education is a domain still under construction in schools. Interestingly, a report (Ministério da Educação et al., 2019) on the implementation by schools of the set of standards associated with practices addressing reading, media and information literacies, corresponding to the school year that was considered in this study, showed results that point to the same conclusion. According to this report, in the academic year of 2018-2019, of 1824 schools that implemented the set of standards, only 27% proposed activities promoting media-related knowledge and skills. Moreover, in the universe of all activities developed based on the set of standards, only 17% aimed at the improvement of media literacy competences.

Currently, little is known about the factors responsible for the situation observed in the present study. It is quite probable that the lack of practical indications that explain in detail the necessary procedures for carrying out the activities in the area in question, as well as the lack of supporting educational resources, prevent media education from being integrated into the Portuguese school curricula on a large scale. Another factor may be related to the specificity of teacher training that, for many years, has privileged the development of media-related technical and operational skills, aiming at their regular and successful application only for didactic or school management purposes (Decreto-Lei n.º 22/2014 de 11 de fevereiro; Portaria n.º 731/2009 de 7 de julho; Portaria n.º 321/2013 de 28 de outubro). Indeed, the critical thinking skills adapted to media reading and writing are increasingly valued in teacher training worldwide (Wilson, Grizzle, Tuazon, Akyempong, & Cheung, 2011). In the last few years, several efforts have been made to reshape teachers' curriculum and teachers' professional development courses

in order to enhance their competences in the field of media education (UNESCO, 2018). However, concerning Portugal, a very recent report on digital education in Europe (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2019) demonstrated that the current educational policies geared towards the promotion of teachers' digital competences are still insufficient. The identified gaps contemplated, among others, the non-inclusion of digital competences in the top-level teacher competency framework and the lack of top-level regulations or recommendations that impose a common curriculum for the digital education of teachers. It should be noted that the aforementioned documents mainly focused on digital environments and supports, giving very little, if any, attention to their non-digital counterparts. We will come back to this issue later.

Other explanations for the reduced presence of media education contents in the educational projects available online should also be considered. For example, it is possible that educational establishments have detailed plans for the implementation of media education activities; however, they do not share them publicly. If that is the case, it is necessary to understand the nature of the obstacles to making these plans available, and then to elaborate the measures that could mitigate them, reducing the impact of the demands associated with working outside the network. The between-school exchange of relevant experiences in the area of media education and the joint creation of supporting resources to be used by students and teachers may enhance the visibility of the results achieved and, therefore, contribute to the valorisation and diffusion of existing innovative practices in the educational community (UNESCO, the Mahatma Gandhi Institute of Education for Peace and Sustainable Development, 2019). The involvement of the key stakeholders in sharing information about promising media-related initiatives is also seen as crucial, as it can foster the transfer of knowledge and resources to the different contexts, including those outside of schools (European Association for Viewers Interests, 2011; Grizzle et al., 2013).

Returning to the present study, the analysis of the guiding documents presenting media education content showed that the activities promoting media literacy competences are more often included in basic education projects than in projects delineated for preschool or secondary education. This finding is not surprising since it reflects the orientations provided by the NSCE (Direção Geral de Educação – Ministério de Educação, 2017a). With respect to documents that provided some details about the planned activities, they evidenced that enhancing competences of access and use, critical reading and analysis, and production and expression is considered in all education levels, from pre-school to secondary, although the strategies adopted by educational establishments are quite diverse. This diversity is expressed not only in the number of topics proposed to be addressed by different schools, but also in the existence of approaches that, in some cases, simultaneously contemplate the three dimensions of media literacy and, in other cases, prioritize only one or two of them. For example, the comprehensive approach to media education that proposes activities aiming at the three types of media competences was found in only 30% of the analysed cases. This result is particularly relevant as it demonstrates that, despite the existence of long-standing recommendations for integration into the school curricula of media education that promotes the three types of competences (Council of the European Union, 2016; European Commission, 2009), in Portuguese schools, this integration is still insufficient.

It is also important to highlight that the focus of media education activities, analysed in the frame of this study, was predominantly directed to information and communication technologies and digital environments, with their non-digital counterparts being considered in a very limited manner. This trend was observed at all

education levels, which points to the existence of a considerable gap in terms of promoting media-related knowledge and skills. The reasons that can explain this situation are several. One of them is related to the ubiquity of the digital media and technologies in everyday life, and their impact on the development of different activities in personal and social contexts, including those associated with the teaching-learning processes (Matos et al., 2016). Another reason concerns the need for citizens' constant adjustment to the changes imposed by the technological and digital progress, in order to guarantee the best use of opportunities arising from this progress and to reduce the risk of increasing the inequalities resulting from digital exclusion (European Council, 2020; Grizzle et al., 2013). Another reason refers to the Portuguese legal framework that guides educational establishments in the elaboration of education projects, pursuing to materialize an educational policy that is aligned with the educational priorities recognized at the international level (Decreto-Lei n.º 55/2018 de 6 de julho; Direção Geral de Educação – Ministério de Educação, 2017b). We would like to discuss this last reason in detail.

As mentioned before, the Citizenship and Development curricular component, which incorporates, among others, media education, is supposed to be implemented based on an interdisciplinary approach that creates opportunities to link different components of school education (Direção Geral de Educação – Ministério de Educação, 2017a). One of the curricular components that can easily articulate with media education, contributing to the elaboration of its contents, is the component of Information and Communication Technologies. This component is mandatory in all three cycles of basic education (Decreto-Lei n.º 55/2018 de 6 de julho), and is structured around work domains that include digital citizenship (only in the 1st cycle), investigation and research (all three cycles), collaboration and communication (all three cycles), creation and innovation (all three cycles), and safety, responsibility and respect in digital environments (only the 2nd cycle). According to the curricular guidelines for this component, homologated by the Despacho n.º 6944-A/2018 de 19 de julho, the strategic teaching actions implemented in the 1st cycle should be directed towards the development of basic digital competences. As for the other two cycles of basic education, the strategic teaching actions, beyond ensuring the improvement of basic digital competences, should also create opportunities for students to explore computing environments and familiarize themselves with emerging technologies in order to develop their analytical skills. In secondary education, the Information and Communication Technologies component is integrated only in the core curriculum matrices of professional courses, aiming at the acquisition and development of knowledge and skills that are required in a targeted professional profile (Decreto-Lei n.º 55/2018 de 6 de julho; Despacho n.º 8476-A/2018 de 31 de agosto). It is true that in some professional courses a multimedia approach is adopted; however, those courses constitute a minority. Considering all this information, as well as the fact that there are significant gaps in the teachers' training with regard to media literacy, especially non-digital media literacy (as discussed above), it is not surprising that in the elaboration of media education content, carried out within the Citizenship and Development projects, priority is given to the formative contents that can be provided with the help of specialists and with the use of material resources available in the school community. The question is whether this perspective can be considered adequate and satisfactory and, in the case of a negative response, what kind of solutions can be proposed to foster its significant shift towards a more comprehensive approach to media education.

The present study has some limitations that are mainly related to the data collection process. First, the sample consisted only of the organic units that in the 2018-

2019 academic year were part of the PACF project. Second, it was decided that only the guiding documents that were available online were to be consulted. These methodological options could influence the results obtained, especially with regard to the identification of common and uncommon trends in media education activities proposed for different education levels. Therefore, we recommend considering the results of this study with caution. Further studies should adopt a methodology that allows the collection of data from a larger sample.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study suggest that media education is a domain still under construction in Portuguese schools, pointing to the importance of fostering the systematic and large-scale implementation of media education strategies. These strategies should be tailored to the needs of target groups of different educational levels, offering in all cases learning opportunities that intend to enhance both technical and operational skills, and skills of critical thinking adopted for media reading and writing. These strategies should also consider digital and non-digital media and environments.

Unfortunately, the scarcity of the data obtained prevents us from drawing conclusions that could inform the definition of such strategies. As mentioned before, there is a lack of information about the activities to be developed by educational establishments with the purpose of promoting media literacy, namely in terms of objectives to be achieved, methodology to be adopted and performance indicators to be improved. Concerning the performance indicators, to ensure that they are measurable, achievable and relevant, they should be defined based on the profiles of media literacy competences that are suitable for different education levels; they should also consider the specific needs of training presented by students of different ages. The current state of knowledge does not allow for defining such profiles or identifying such needs; further studies are necessary to overcome this gap. Another limitation that needs to be addressed is related to the lack of information concerning the accomplishment of the activities proposed by the organic units in the context of the Citizenship and Development curricular component. That information is essential for analysing the evolution that has occurred over the years in the area in question, identifying facilitators and obstacles that interfere in the successful implementation of the referred activities, and enabling the evaluation of those activities' impact on the media-related knowledge and skills presented by the students. Further studies should focus on obtaining this information, as it appears to be essential to guarantee that the future guidelines created to support the development of strategic solutions for the area in question are based on evidence. It is necessary to emphasize that these future guidelines should offer opportunities for the implementation of projects that are feasible, appropriate, meaningful and efficient for the target groups of different educational levels, providing practical indications on the activities to be carried out and on the resources to be used. The creation of evidence-based guidelines will be essential for the implementation of media education strategies in a systematic and integrated way.

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