

MEDIA AND INFORMATION LITERACY AS CRITICAL PEDAGOGY? CASE STUDY OF THE SARAJEVO HASAN KIKIĆ ELEMENTARY SCHOOL¹

MEDIJSKA I INFORMACIJSKA PISMENOST KAO KRITIČKA PEDAGOGIJA? STUDIJA SLUČAJA OSNOVNE ŠKOLE “HASAN KIKIĆ“ SARAJEVO

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Abstract

Purpose. The aim of the paper is to examine whether – and to what extent – the concept of Media and Information Literacy (hereinafter: MIL) can be understood as a possible approach to critical pedagogy in practice by examining the adequacy and comprehensibility of the content of its curriculum, previously adapted to the BiH (Bosnian and Herzegovinian) context and its fragmented education system.

Approach/methodology. The first part of the paper presents a brief framework of the concept of critical pedagogy, its relationship with media and information literacy,

¹ Rad je napisan na bosanskom jeziku.

together with the specifics of the education system of Bosnia and Herzegovina. In the second part, the paper focuses on the case study of pilot training conducted at the Sarajevo Hasan Kikić elementary school, aiming to acquaint teachers and librarians with the concept and curriculum of MIL.

Results. Although teachers and librarians have adopted skills to teach about MIL, the results point to a lack of emancipatory pedagogical practices in the existing education system which could counter various, primarily systemically produced forms of oppression.

Originality/value. The value of this paper reflects the efforts to read the concept of MIL through the theoretical lenses of critical pedagogy. Although based on the 2011 UNESCO's understanding of MIL, the originality of this approach also lies in the fact that the conducted workshops were set down on its curriculum adapted to the Bosnian and Herzegovinian context.

Practical implications. The practical implications of this research could be seen through the further processes of researching and promoting collaborative teaching and learning, encouraging thus the development of critical thinking, and thinking individuals capable of combating domination and transforming reality through pedagogy.

Social implications. Incorporating critical pedagogy while reading the adapted MIL curriculum can be used for promoting a comprehensive and active role of re-creating knowledge, enabling practices of critical attitude towards the existing social reality, and promoting and strengthening democratic practices.

Keywords: critical thinking; elementary school "Hasan Kikić", Sarajevo; Hybrid model of multi-component integration; librarians; students; teachers

Sažetak

Cilj. Cilj je propitati može li – i u kojoj mjeri – koncept medijske i informacijske pismenosti (u daljem tekstu: MIP) biti shvaćen kao mogući pristup kritičke pedagogije u praksi kroz sagledavanje adekvatnosti i razumljivosti sadržaja njegovog kurikuluma, prethodno prilagođenog bosanskohercegovačkom kontekstu i njegovom fragmentiranom obrazovnom sustavu.

Pristup/metodologija. U prvom, najkraćem, dijelu rada okvirno se predstavlja koncept kritičke pedagogije, njezin odnos s medijskom i informacijskom pismenošću, sa specifičnostima obrazovnog sustava Bosne i Hercegovine. U drugom dijelu rad se usredotočuje na studiju slučaja pilot-obuke provedene u Osnovnoj školi „Hasan Kikić“ Sarajevo, s ciljem upoznavanja nastavnika i knjižničara s konceptom i kurikulumom MIP-a.

Rezultati. Mada nastavnici i bibliotekari posjeduju znanja i vještine podučavanja o MIP-u, rezultati jednako upućuju na nedostatak emancipatorskih pedagoških praksi u postojećem bosanskohercegovačkom obrazovanju kojima bi bilo moguće suprotstaviti se različitim, u prvom redu sustavno produciranim oblicima nejednakosti.

Originalnost/vrijednost. Vrijednost ovog rada ogleda se u nastojanju čitanja koncepta MIP-a kroz teorijsku prizmu kritičke pedagogije. Iako utemeljena na UNESCO-vom razumijevanju MIP-a, originalnost ovog pristupa očituje se i u činjenici da su radionice provedene na temelju kurikulumu MIP-a prilagođenog bosanskohercegovačkom kontekstu.

Praktična primjena. Praktična primjena ovog istraživanja ogleda se kroz daljnje procese istraživanja i promicanja zajedničkog podučavanja i učenja, čime se potiče razvijanje kritičkog mišljenja i obrazovanja mislećih individua sposobnih boriti se protiv dominacije i transformacije stvarnosti kroz pedagogiju.

Društveni značaj. Inkorporiranje kritičke pedagogije uz čitanje prilagođenog kurikulumu MIP-a može se koristiti za promicanje sveobuhvatne i aktivne uloge rekreiranja znanja, omogućavajući prakse kritičkog odnosa spram postojeće društvene stvarnosti promoviranjem i jačanjem demokratskih praksi.

Ključne riječi: bibliotekari; hibridni model višekomponentne integracije; kritičko mišljenje; nastavnici; Osnovna škola "Hasan Kikić" Sarajevo; učenici

1. Introduction

In his 1968 influential book *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, the Brazilian philosopher and educator Paulo Freire illuminates the relationship between oppression, liberation, and education, problematizing it within the problem of dehumanization. While being a concrete historical fact, still, dehumanization is "not a given destiny but the result of an unjust order that engenders violence of the oppressors, which in turn dehumanizes the oppressed" (Freire, 2000: 44). Seeing the weakness of the oppressed as a form of *false generosity*, Freire sees it, together with education, as the key site of social and political struggle. In contrast to the educational, *Ideological State Apparatuses* (Althusser, 2014) through which the state secures existing power relation *from above*, Freire, however, seeks to develop tools for liberating *from beyond* – through education – teaching and learning, in particular, combating domination due to its critical confrontation through pedagogy.

Although he does not explicitly call it such, the concept of critical pedagogy can be traced back to Freire's *pedagogy of the oppressed* as its lodestar. Critical pedagogy implies, at the same time, a philosophy of education and a social movement that sees education, teaching, and learning as political processes.² Developing and applying concepts from critical theory (Kincheloe and Steinburg, 1997: 24), critical pedagogy could be defined as an endeavor of hope that seeks "to

² Starting from the assumption that knowledge and education are not neutral but socially constructed, imposing patterns of thought, behaviour, and belief, it cannot provide liberation because political power is being reproduced through it and its institutions (cf. Bourdieu and Passeron, 1979; 1990; Bourdieu, 1984; 1996; Foucault, 1980; 1995).

understand the deep meaning, root causes, social context, ideology, and personal consequences of any action, event, object, process, organization, experience, text, subject matter, policy, mass media, or discourse” (Shor, 1991: 129; cf. Giroux, 2011). Opposing instrumental and mainstream education as the instruments of oppression, it sees a way out in *hacking* their institutions.

Education is seen as a practice of liberation that puts educational institutions on the level of transformative and emancipatory social institutions, constructing knowledge from below in dialogue and interaction, leaning on or inspiring other, similar theories of sociology of education (Lisman, Adorno and Humbolt, 2020; cf. Ilich, 1980; Ranciere, 1991; Dewey, 2004). Drawing attention between human(s) and the outer world, Freire advocated the position of *dialogue* – overcoming the contradictions between educators and the educated by a dialogical relation between the oppressed and the objective reality as the cause of their position where the change does not come from the outside world into the classroom, but *vice versa*. Hence, demonstrating the positive connection between people and the constant drive to transform themselves and the reality, intellectual liberation becomes at the same time universal – human and political liberation.

Critical observation of knowledge allows us to see how schools are not institutions excluded from the socio-economic context but represent both a “struggle for meaning and a struggle over power relations” (Giroux and McLaren, 1986: 215) – they form rationality and are an important link in the establishment and maintenance of social as well as political communities. The curriculum, therefore, cannot – nor it can – be seen just as a mere technical tool of education, but as a tool of political struggle – a form of political discourse and field of political and ideological dispute (Travitzki and Kelian, 2019: 94, cf. Apple 2012). In other words, it is “a starting point for assessing any discourse labelled as curriculum theory, the deeper political grammar that structures its view of power, sexuality and history, human nature and the future would be openly engaged and subject to critical analysis as a form of political discourse” (Aronowitz and Giroux, 1986: 140). In other words, through education and educational institutions, a certain consensus is created and reproduced, as the social contract on truths.

Critical pedagogy, as the pedagogy of the oppressed, therefore sees education as a practice of liberation against domination, anticipating shared learning as co-intentional education. As a humanizing pedagogy, it assumes that teachers and students are in a relationship with the world. Critically considering reality in common dialogue, they objectify it and act towards it through practice. In other words, knowledge is constantly, continuously created through shared thinking, criticism, and acting. Such a concept is the opposite of what Freire calls *the banking concept of education* – narrative education favored by oppressors – in which the teacher as a subject stores deposits of knowledge in the students, objectifying them as depositories (Freire 2000, 72-73). Referring to reality as an immobile given, me-

chanically memorizing the narrated content, what is called knowledge detaches itself from the totality that engendered it (ibid., 71). In this way, critical thinking is stifled, inhibiting creativity, and indoctrinating the individual to adapt it to fit into the existing reality. Instead of the banking education where a person is only in the world, but not with the world or with others, Freire opposes the problematic concept of education resolving the teacher-student confrontation, penetrates in the very power on which the oppression rests:

“Through dialogue, the teacher-of-the-students and the students-of-the-teacher cease to exist and a new term emerges teacher-student with student-teachers. The teacher is no longer merely the-one-who-teaches, but one who is himself taught in dialogue with the students (...) In this way, the problem-posing educator constantly re-forms his reflections in the reflection of the students. The students – no longer docile listeners – are now critical co-investigators in dialogue with the teacher” (Freire, 2000: 80–81).

Understanding education as a form of institutionalized social power is of particular importance for understanding plural societies and regimes, especially those witnessing the rise of authoritarian tendencies and democratic backsliding, along with the omnipresence of divided and shrinking public space (Turčilo and Buljubašić, 2017) – such as Bosnian Herzegovinian society. In such reality, or rather realities in which pluralities and the public are only occasionally touched – education has a crucial role – their diabolical positions between the means of liberation on the one, i.e., the means of disciplining and subjectivizing society on the other hand. It is the mechanism of the dominant ideology through whose “struggles of meaning” political power refracts, subjectivizing and shaping the population along with established patterns.

2. Digital challenges to the analogue education system in Bosnia and Herzegovina

The prevailing educational system³ of Bosnia and Herzegovina echoes the decentralized political system of Bosnia and Herzegovina.⁴ During the wartime, schools – at least those that were still working and operating – were divided ac-

³ This refers to the entire education system, which includes preschool, primary, secondary and higher education. Our work, however, focuses on the issue of primary education, and the term “education system” in the following refers primarily to this dimension.

⁴ The Dayton Peace Agreement in 1995 established a kind of consociational power-sharing among the three main ethnic groups. It is constituted of two subnational, federal units – the entity of the Bosniak-Croat dominated Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (FBiH) made up of 10 semi-independent Cantonal governments and the Serb-dominated entity of Republika Srpska (RS) with a centralized government, together with District Brčko (BD) as an independent, self-governing unit. They closely reflect the ethnic structure of the country as well as the architecture of

ording to the military positions, so that the governance in control of the area also regulated the curriculum used (Torsti, 2009: 67), meaning that schooling became *de facto* divided into three different systems and maintained due to the Dayton Peace Agreement by institutionalizing the war-time educational division.⁵ With limited and shared competencies on the national level, sovereignty is in many aspects transferred to lower bodies where the narrow competencies of state institutions are compensated by numerous competencies transferred to the entities.⁶ Regulating the most significant portion of civil and political rights, it enables the concentration of political power from the state to the subnational level. In other words, subnational units have a responsibility to certain policy areas important for the everyday life of citizens such as police, welfare, health, and education.

This way, the education system does not simply reflect the political context but is also its essential component. Through a divided⁷ educational system Dayton's algorithm conforms to further promote and encourage the separation of Bosnian Herzegovinian society. Symbolic boundaries such as laws, curriculum, or textbooks exist institutionalized in extremely segregationist physical practices like the phenomena of *two schools under one roof* (Becker, 2017). Hence, the institution of the *constituency of peoples* is no longer only a political concept exhausted in representing ethnic groups yet to subjectivize them from within (Hasanović, 2020: 28–29). The close connection between education and politics is equally manifested through the active involvement of political structures within education. Subordinated to the cantonal, i.e., republican ministries of education in the case of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, i.e., Republika Srpska in controlling unions, curricula, textbook policies to the appointment of principals. An especially controversial phenomenon of such policies, therefore, is the challenge of curricular reform, where the national group of subjects (such as language and literature, geography, history, and religious education) are particularly vulnerable.⁸

The UNICEF's report on peacebuilding education, "Two Faces of education in ethnic conflict" from 2000, noted seven characteristics of the negative face of

war – the war-time frontlines became, both administratively and territorially, materialized through the geometry of Dayton Peace as our omnipresent anatomy of peace.

⁵ The practice in which the "Bosnian Serb-controlled areas started using Serbian curriculum, Bosnian Croat-controlled areas Croatian curriculum and areas under the control of the Bosnian state army quickly developed a new Bosnian curriculum" lasted until year 2000 (Torsti, 2009: 67).

⁶ The Constitution of Bosnia and Herzegovina (Annex 4 of the Dayton Peace Agreement) does not explicitly define the source of national sovereignty, indicating that the entities are subordinated to the competencies of Bosnia and Herzegovina and its institutions.

⁷ Currently, there are three curricula in Bosnia and Herzegovina – the Curriculum for Primary Schools in the RS, the Framework Curriculum of the FBiH and the Curriculum for Teaching in the Croatian Language.

⁸ For further analyses on this issue, see: Kapo, 2012; Ibrahimović, 2015; Krajišnik and Ibrahimović 2022.

education: (1) the uneven distribution of education, (2) education as a weapon in cultural repression, (3) denial of education as a weapon of war, (4) manipulating history for political purposes, (5) manipulation textbooks, (6) self-worth and hating others and (7) segregated education to ensure inequality, lowered esteem and stereotyping (Bush and Saltarelli, 2000: 9–16). While numerous earlier analyses of the education system in Bosnia and Herzegovina (cf. Žiga et al., 2015; Đipa et al., 2016; Turčilo et al., 2019) indicated that at least four (4, 5, 6, and 7) are valid for Bosnia and Herzegovina only as of the consequence of its political design. Based on this, examples of systemic denial of rights to the set of national groups of subjects (Džidić, 2015) equally showed a negative tendency of Bosnian and Herzegovinian educational system(s) to use education as a weapon in cultural repression (2). Lastly, new circumstances such as the forced digitization (cf. Almeida, 2021; Pashkus et al., 2021) under the influence of the coronavirus pandemic, have equally shown that the systemic entanglement of the education system in the existing framework sheds light on the problem of unequal access to education (1).

There is no doubt that societies, including Bosnian Herzegovinian, strive for dynamism. However, without a doubt, the existing ethnically determined and politically trapped education system in Bosnia and Herzegovina cannot provide those necessary changes. Because of decentralized competencies and uneven educational policies – the focus on the national group of subjects through the three curricula prescribe the content teachers transmit to students (Ibrahimović, 2015). By reducing education to a mere ideological aspect, it establishes the individual-in-the-world through its particular subjectification, at the same time excluding it from the world and others. This contributes to the fact that students separated on ethnic grounds are only storages of three fundamental knowledge and their unquestionable truths.

Such education is unlikely to provide practical and functional knowledge or skills, universal values necessary for a plural society, nor an innovative teaching approach, critical thinking, or research (Soldo et al., 2017: 11–12).⁹ Equally, a political system inefficient to changing and improving education opens the field of the commodification of knowledge in which it will be reduced to practical skills under the pretext of its dysfunctionality. This justifies education reforms encouraged by capital and market interests in which it should reflect the relationship between supply and demand with the risk of students becoming an adequate, inexpensive, and high skilled labor force through the concepts of dual education and compulsory practice.

⁹ This was proven by the results of the first participation of Bosnia and Herzegovina in the PISA test in 2018, showing the functional illiteracy of every other student. Although, one should be careful with the instrumentalization of knowledge and the reform of education so that it is only subordinated to the criteria of such or similar, external testing. In this case, we read them only as evidence of the non-existence of any vision or plan for learning outcomes and subsequent evaluation of achievement.

On the other side, *forced digitalization* influenced by the global COVID pandemic revived debates about the growing penetration of the digital into all spheres of society, including education. If we understand education, as Foucault would – as the mean for *disciplining the population* – the new offline media environment (Florida, 2016) is especially challenging in those terms. It is introducing a new variable in the perception of ourselves (who we are), redefining “our mutual relations (how we socialize), our perception of reality as well as our interactions in reality (how we act). In other words, it is important to look at logical information and communication technologies, not as mere tools, but as the “forces” of the new ecosystem” (Vajzović and Hibert, 2021: 9).

The development of technology, cyberspace, and new information and media platforms revived arguments that the future of learning is and must be digital. Incorporating technologies into teaching as an “undeniably positive step towards the “enhancement” of student learning” (Ahalt and Fecho, 2015, in Alvares 2019) – a positivist vision of technology-induced “enhancement” that has now enhanced learning and will to do so (Alvares 2019) is being imposed, lacking to question both the institutional protocols of such a neoliberal illusion on dehumanized, individualistic and personalized learning but also the place where, or on which the learning process takes place. Bosnia and Herzegovina is no exception when it comes to pumping educational discourse with phrases, slogans, and new – techno-based terms – like “skills for XXI century”, “online teaching”, “massively online open courses’ – MOOC’s”, and “digital education”, etc.

Given the rise of new challenges for the education system, both analogous and digital, a more critical integration of the concept of media and information literacy is required. Although there are no systemic and long-term strategies for the development of MIL in BiH, several publications (that partially or completely concern MIL) have been published in recent years (cf. Zgrabljčić-Rotar 2005; Dizdar et al. 2012; Turčilo et al. 2017; Halilović et al. 2017; Turčilo and Buljubašić 2017; Vajzović 2017; Hadžialić 2018; Hodžić 2019, etc.).

Hence, as there are many definitions of media and information literacy (MIL) in the literature, the authors of this paper rely on the definition given in the *Declaration on the Importance of Media and Information Literacy in Bosnia and Herzegovina* (2019), which states that:

“MIL refers to the cognitive, technical, and social skills and abilities of citizens to access, critically evaluate, use and contribute to information and media content through traditional and digital information and media platforms and technologies, with an understanding of how these platforms and technologies work, how to use their rights

and respect the rights of others, how to recognize and avoid harmful content and services, how to use information, media content and platforms to meet their communication needs and interests as individuals and as members of their communities, and to participate active and responsible in the traditional and digital public spheres and in democratic processes.” (Declaration on the Importance of Media and Information Literacy in Bosnia and Herzegovina, 2019).

Static educational institutions of the analog world are becoming unsuitable in the face of the dynamic digital environment to which students and teachers are exposed. Although we are witnessing the transformation of *homo sapiens* into *homo connectus*, the information age is marked by prejudices and misunderstandings (Ćurak and Adilović, 2021: 39). The gap that arises fills students’ lack of motivation to participate in the teaching process actively and diminishes the critical thinking skills necessary to perceive the stereotypes produced and encouraged within our very education system. Therefore, the new technological environment – as Ćurak and Adilović (2021: 40) note, requires educators and information experts to strategically adapt to the way of teaching, learning, and understanding, “emphasizing the participatory potential of new logic and the need for media and information literacy”.

Hence, strategic deliberation about the integration of MIL into the educational system, as well as into society, should be based on a comprehensive scientific research and consultation process. In this regard, we consider it important to refer to the research conducted by the Institute for Social Science Research of the Faculty of Political Sciences, University of Sarajevo (Vajzović et al., 2019) on the self-assessment of competencies of teachers and librarians on their attitudes, self-perception and readiness to teach MIL in primary and secondary schools in the Sarajevo Canton.¹⁰ The results showed that teachers know the concept in general, but many of them are not considered competent enough to teach about it and they need ad-

¹⁰ The research team of the Institute for Social Research of the Faculty of Political Science University of Sarajevo works on the development of MIL through activities for stakeholders in the educational process from 2017. Workshops about wider MIL area were conducted for students, teachers, librarians, and journalists in several cities in Bosnia and Herzegovina. In addition to research activities, the following documents/studies were written and adopted: *Declaration on the Importance of Media and Information Literacy in Bosnia and Herzegovina* (2019), *Position Study on Media and Information Literacy in Education Systems in BiH – Hybrid Model of Multi-component Integration* (2020); and *Review Study on Media and Information Literacy Policies and Strategies Bosnia and Herzegovina* (2020). *Edition Media and Information Literacy*, published by the Faculty of Political Science UNSA is a result of a few years efforts of the research team and it consists of the following books: (1) *Media and information literacy: research and development* (Vajzović, 2020); (2) *Media and information literacy: learning design for the digital age* (Vajzović et al., 2021); (3) *Regional review of the development and integration of media and information literacy* (Vajzović et al., 2021); (4) *Growing up of learning: Society, culture, religion in the digital age* (Vajzović and Hibert, 2021).

ditional education and training. The results of the mentioned, but also many other research show that it is necessary to train teachers to teach contemporary topics and apply contemporary methods in teaching for the integration of the MIL into the educational system. Using Freire's conceptual framework – this indicates the rigidity of the banking concept of education, its unwillingness to cope with the dynamic needs of society and the possibility of such an initiative by the very actors of the education process.

3. Methodological framework

3.1. Purpose

In the context of a decentralized and fragmented education system in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the paper focuses on presenting the content of the MIL curriculum adapted to the BiH context for teachers and librarians at the Sarajevo Hasan Kikić elementary school. The aim is to examine its adequacy and comprehensibility on a concrete example, to see if – and to what extent – teaching about it can function as a possible embodiment of critical pedagogy in practice.

In addition to exchanging views on the importance of this concept in the education system, the aim of the training was to introduce teachers and librarians to the Hybrid Model of Multi-component Integration of MIL into the education system. It implied the preparation of various forms of resources (textual, visual, audio-visual) for the application of the MIL curriculum in the teaching and extracurricular process. In addition to theoretical requirements and practical solutions, the mentioned training is seen as a sustainable way of integrating MIL into the education system in BiH society (cf. Institute for Social Research FPN UNSA, 2020; Vajzović et al., 2021).

3.2. Respondents

Nine (9) participants from the Sarajevo Hasan Kikić elementary school – school principal, teachers, and librarian – took part in the pilot training, out of which most of them (7) were female. With an extensive work experience in school (four respondents have more than 10 years of work experience, one respondent has 10 years of work experience and four respondents have less than 10 years of work experience in education) their formal education included BA, BS and MA degrees (Bachelor of mathematics and informatics; teacher of chemistry and culture of living; Master of Bosnian/Croatian/Serbian language and literature; teacher of Bosnian language and literature and graduate librarian, professor

of pedagogy, professor of biology, professor of sports).¹¹ Most participants were teachers from 5th to 9th grade (6), followed by teachers from 1st to 4th grade (3) and one librarian.¹²

3.3. Procedure

After obtaining the official approval of the Ministry of Education, Science and Youth of Sarajevo Canton, the research team of the Institute for Social Science Research at the Faculty of Political Sciences in Sarajevo conducted five (5) pilot workshops¹³ for teachers and librarians of the Sarajevo Hasan Kikić elementary school during November and December of 2020.¹⁴ With the aim of acquiring skills necessary in the digital age, the workshops encompassed discussions and exchanging opinions and materials among lecturers and participants. Hence, we are using the pilot trainings – its most important topics, the structure of workshops and materials, together with their feedback – as a case study for linking the concept of media and information literacy with the theoretical and conceptual possibilities of critical pedagogy in practice.

4. Case study: Pilot training about media and information literacy for teachers and librarians of the Sarajevo Hasan Kikić elementary school

In terms of content, the concept of the workshops was based on the UNESCO Curriculum Media and Information Literacy for Teaching Staff (2011), adapted to the Bosnian and Herzegovinian context. The modules, i.e., thematic units, which are included in the UNESCO Curriculum, were adapted in the “Media and Infor-

¹¹ In addition to their formal education, participants attended professional development and education courses and trainings. Most often, they attended trainings organized by the ministries of education, pedagogical institutes, and non-governmental organizations.

¹² Participants teach following subjects: Biology, Chemistry, Culture of Living and Healthy Lifestyles, Bosnian/Croatian/Serbian language and literature, Mathematics and Informatics, Bosnian language, and literature, Physical and Health Education.

¹³ The training was conducted within the regional project Dialogue for the Future “Strengthening dialogue and social cohesion within and between Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Serbia”.

¹⁴ Faculty of Political Science University of Sarajevo is developing a strategic framework for including media and information literacy in formal and non-formal education based on the principles of feasibility and sustainability through an academic, scientific research and interdisciplinary approach. A network of key professional staff was developed, as well as a strategic concept for a systemic solution to the challenge of digital transformation of society through media and information literacy. [Cited: 2021–11–05] Available at: <https://fpn.unsa.ba/b/medijska-i-informacijska-pismenost/>

mation Literacy: Design of Learning for the Digital Age” (Vajzović et al. 2021) book, which served as a guide for the pilot training.¹⁵

The concept for discussion-based workshops, which combine the contents of several modules in order to reduce the number of workshops if needed, was created in the process of adapting the UNESCO MIL Curriculum. Thus, the workshops at the Sarajevo Hasan Kikić elementary school were realized by integrating several modules into one whole. The modules are integrated according to thematic similarity, so five workshops were created: (1) Hybrid Model of Multi-component Integration of the MIL into the education system in BiH; (2) MIL and Guided Inquiry Design; (3) The role of media and journalism in the democratic development of society; (4) Media reality, media language and audience, and (5) Information literacy in the digital/online age.

Given the COVID-19 pandemic conditions in 2020, the workshops were held online, involving a combination of synchronous and asynchronous learning. As a form of synchronous work, the one-hour discussion was held during each of the five workshops while asynchronous learning involved the preparation of materials for independent learning of participants. A special website was also created, where participants had access to materials from the workshops.¹⁶ Prior to the workshops, an online entry survey about MIL was sent to the participants to gain insight into their previous knowledge in this area. By using the Likert scale (1- I completely disagree, 5- I completely agree) participants’ attitudes about the concept of media and information literacy were examined. The questionnaire pointed out that almost all the participants (8) were familiar with the MIL concept, believing it contributes to the development of critical thinking among students. Knowledge and skills acquired by MIL were considered important contemporary competencies (6 respondents fully agree, 2 respondents agree, and 1 respondent completely disagrees).

Participants were also asked to assess the level of equipment of their school for the implementation of MIL-related content. Most respondents (6 agree and 2 completely agree) believe that the school they work in has enough technical

¹⁵ The adapted (Bosnian-Herzegovinian) MIL Curriculum consists of 12 modules/units: (1) Understanding media and information literacy; (2) Information society, human rights and democratic discourse; (3) Information literacy and ethics; (4) The social role of the media; (5) Media message design; (6) User interaction with the media; (7) Internet, opportunities and challenges; (8) Digital ecology and “smart” village; (9) Data, algorithms and Artificial Intelligence: Literacy for the 21st Century; (10) Media and information literacy in the context of security; (11) Critical thinking and (12) Literacy of the future.

¹⁶ Workshops were realized in 5 steps: (1) announcement of activities and invitation to target group/participants; (2) previously prepared material (agenda, multimedia/audio-visual material, textual material, links to additional sources); (3) online event (discussion); (4) evaluation of online events with participants and (5) analysis, conclusions, and recommendations. See: Pilot training Media and Information Literacy. Sarajevo Hasan Kikić elementary school. [Cited: 2021–11–01]. Available at: <https://bit.ly/32R8eBR>

conditions/prerequisites for the implementation of content related to the MIL. On the other hand, attitudes about the representation of topics related to MIL in the content of school subjects are diverse. Three respondents do not agree while one neither agrees nor disagrees, that the topics related to MIL are sufficiently represented in the contents of the school subjects. On the other hand, five respondents believe that topics from this area are sufficiently represented in the content of subjects currently taught in their school.

A key part of the survey questionnaire was the respondents' self-assessment of their own competencies for teaching MIL, as well as their need for additional training in this regard. Participants generally assessed that they were sufficiently competent in methodological and didactic terms. On the other hand, there were those who were unsure of their MIL teaching competencies (3 of them neither agreed nor disagreed and 1 completely disagreed that he/she was competent enough to teach students in this field). Also, most respondents (5 of them agree and 2 completely agree) believe that they need additional professional training to teach MIL (2 respondents neither agree nor disagree that they need additional training).

Based on the entrance survey it is evident that teachers and librarians understand the importance of the MIL concept in the education system while at the same time showing uncertainty in their own teaching capacities. Most of the participants agreed that they needed new knowledge and education. In that regard, participants shared their expectations from the training in the last part of the questionnaire: (1) to acquire new useful knowledge, (2) to present new content with specifically defined goals and solutions, and (3) interactivity and quality discussions. Participants also stated that they expect to be (4) more qualified to teach media and information literacy after the workshops. After the analysis of the entrance survey, the project team started the realization of the workshops. Participants cooperated with a multidisciplinary team consisting of 6 lecturers – university professors and associates during the pilot training.¹⁷

4.1. Presentation and evaluation of media and information literacy workshops

The main goal of the first workshop “Hybrid Model of Multi-component Integration of Media and Information Literacy in the education system” was to present MIL as understood in Vajzović (2020) and Vajzović et al. (2021). Participants

¹⁷ Lecturers at workshops: Professor Emir Vajzović (Faculty of Political Sciences, University of Sarajevo), Professor Mario Hibert (Faculty of Philosophy, University of Sarajevo), Professor Lejla Turčilo (Faculty of Political Sciences, University of Sarajevo), Assistant Professor Vuk Vučetić (Faculty of Philosophy, University of Easter Sarajevo), Lamija Silajdžić, MA (Faculty of Political Sciences, University of Sarajevo) and Saša Madacki (University of Sarajevo).

were then introduced to a Hybrid Model of Multi-component MIL Integration into the education system which, in fact, implies both horizontal and vertical integration of MIL:

“Vertical integration means the development of science, research, and lifelong education of future teachers, which through science and research will support decision-makers, provide professional development, and work with teachers, librarians, and other actors at all levels of the education system. Horizontal integration implies cross-curricular cooperation between teachers and librarians within curricula and learning outcomes. In this context, the focus is on the principles and contents for the development of media and information literacy, as an umbrella competence, within the educational system and society.” (Vajzović et al., 2021: 71)

Participants of the workshop concluded that MIL is an indispensable part of the functional literacy of students, which after the PISA test (2019) proved to be at a very low level in BiH.¹⁸ Hence, the Hybrid Model of Multi-component Integration anticipates the school library as the centre and resource for MIL studies. The model envisages that the library will be a venue for year-round workshops, where materials for studying MIL (offline and online) are provided, i.e., a centre that will support various research conducted by teachers and students. The school library imposes itself as an ideal and logical place where this takes place because MIL needs to be integrated through the joint work of all teachers and librarians who support the learning process. Teachers also shared their experiences working with students, concluding that the improvement of teacher competencies is crucial to fill the existing gaps in the current education system.

At the second workshop “Media and Information Literacy and Guided Inquiry Design”, participants were introduced to the model of Guided Inquiry Design¹⁹ recognizing it as a tool for encouraging creativity, innovation, and learning through the research in students. If applied to a Hybrid Model of Multi-component MIL Integration, this concept could be a good framework for research tasks in which the teacher and librarian plan together and then encourage students to research and achieve a deeper understanding of a particular material. It focuses on active learning and ultimately the active participation of students in society. Guided Inquiry Design (learning), unlike previous (independent) research of students (mostly related to individual teaching units), involves professional support of teachers and librarians in monitoring, unobtrusive direction, guidance, and design of research, so that students get a reflection on the research process. The goal is, in fact, to

¹⁸ See. UNICEF BiH (2019).

¹⁹ According to Kuhlthau et al. (2019), Guided Inquiry Design is based on eight learning steps: open, immerse, explore, identify, gather, create, share, and evaluate.

make students aware of the path to a certain result during the research, and not the result itself. Through the discussion on this concept, the participants of the workshop concluded that the research preferences of students must be encouraged by learning through research while strengthening cross-curricular competencies. They shared a few examples from their own teaching experiences, through which they realized that the approach to learning through research provided much better results than frontal teaching. They also emphasized that it is necessary that, in addition to encouraging students to a different approach to learning, teachers themselves are motivated for a new way of teaching by promoting the approach without emphasizing the presentation of textbooks. The librarian cited a few examples that show that the library can become a centre for promoting ideas and creating work plans, which would ultimately lead to a solution to the situation caused by the digital transformation of society and education, in which students increasingly seek information in the digital universe by themselves. Workshop participants see it as necessary to advocate strategies, policies, and action plans to involve decision-makers in the process of an evolutive, gradual transformation of the education system.

The third workshop “The role of media and journalism in the democratic development of society” concerned the social context and responsibilities of journalism and the importance of media-mediated social interaction in the contemporary age. The aim was to make participants aware of the important role of the media as a transmitter of knowledge and information beyond our direct experience. By selecting information and news that will be published to the public, the media impose a certain system of values, worldview, and even a practical attitude towards reality (Kurtić, 2009). As a significant link in the chain of our relationship to the world and its interpretation the importance of critical thinking when interacting with media, media content and their infrastructure prove crucial.

Since the interests of ownership relations, whether governmental or corporate, lay in their background – together with the influences of other specific and localized factors within a specific society such as education, religion, or culture – the worldview that the media is going to re-produce is being determined. Shaken by the digital transformation of society, the media world faces the challenge of active recipients (no longer passive recipients of media content) of how to evaluate and valorize the content to which they are exposed.

In this regard, the aim of the fourth workshop *Media Reality, Language of the Media, and the Audience* was to make participants aware of the connection between media and information. The significance of raising awareness of the need to verify the information received through the media is being manifested by recognizing the infrastructure of media and media content as “knowledge of a specific media language, codes and (un)written conventions by which content is

created is essentially related to media and information literacy” (Vajzović et al., 2021: 163).

At the last, fifth workshop “Information Literacy in the Online Age”, participants were presented with models for information searching on the World Wide Web. Given the fact that today the flows of information on the Internet are being impossible to measure and control, and that there is no correct or safe way to find the desired information in this endless library as soon as possible, Madacki and Žarevac (2007) remind of the need to make every user on the Internet and the World Wide Web aware for a quality information search. Participants were introduced to tools, search engine targets, and finally specialized search engines, as well as information search strategy on the World Wide Web.

Mediated by prosumerist action on the Web, it is being increasingly confirmed that *cybernetic organisms* are no longer just individuals but the entire social and political field, a hybrid of machine and organism (Haraway, 1991) being the forces of the new ecosystem (Vajzović and Hibert, 2021: 9). Referring this back to the education, the importance lies in overcoming the mere idea of technology-induced enhancement of the learning process, illuminating the potentials of digital technologies, media, and information beyond the positivist, market, and capitalist narratives – being both emancipatory and methodological tools of a research process – *through* which and *with* which, both students and teachers collaboratively interact with the world. Hence, the concept of MIL, as the participants concluded, could stimulate to re-view of the school classroom as a space for opening conversations about the process of seeking and accessing knowledge and information.

In this regard, after the completion of the pilot training and the evaluation process involving the organization, methodology, and content of the workshops, the answers of the participants indicated that most of them (7) fully understood the concept, emphasizing the importance of the concept of Guided Inquiry Design and information literacy in the online environment. Within the context of approaching the critical pedagogy component to MIL, instead of autonomous coping of students in the digital environment the concept of Guided Inquiry Design demands an apomediative role of teachers and librarians who (not directly) intervene and guide students through the process of searching and evaluating information and media content. Precisely this decentres the hierarchical role of the teacher-student relationship, challenging authority and questioning the banking concept of education and its linear understanding of knowledge. It hints, on the other side, at the reflexive, dialectical endeavour of reflexive and permanent re-creation of knowledge, unmasking its connections with power and authority – between objective knowledge and domination seen as the cultural norms, values, and standards of a certain society (Darder et al., 2017: 11).

The concept of lifelong learning for MIL requires the implementation of sustainable policies and the empowerment of key actors, primarily the education system (Dudić-Sijamija and Adilović, 2021). Therefore, participants were asked what they think could motivate teachers and librarians to cooperate in implementing a Hybrid Model of Multi-component Integration of MIL in the education process. While some believe that the desire for new knowledge and progress is the best motivation, others realize that it is not enough because some teachers and librarians are not ready for the change and do not have the will to further educate themselves. However, MIL first must find an appropriate place in the education system, to be integrated into society. Recognizing the importance of this pilot training in helping them to acquire new skills and knowledge, participants showed an interest in integrating the concept of MIL within the framework of their curricula. Hence, it is extremely important that the teachers and librarians take a proactive role in the implementation and competency building of MIL through lifelong and participatory learning.

5. Conclusion

This paper presents an attempt to link the concepts of critical pedagogy and media and information literacy, examining whether and to what extent the concept of media and information literacy can be understood as a possible approach to critical pedagogy in practice. In doing so, there are two things to keep in mind. First, it is that the idea of such a reading arrives from the pilot training conducted with teachers and librarians at the Sarajevo Hasan Kikić elementary school. The pilot training did not aim to make any linkage between critical pedagogy and MIL, nor was it the purpose, but to examine the adequacy and comprehensibility of the content of the MIL Curriculum adapted to the BiH context by teachers and librarians. However, through workshops, the experiences of the participants and their responses – both lacking emancipatory pedagogical practices in the existing education system and unpreparedness for the challenges posed by the digital environment – gave the motivation to consider this relation in the broader context. Secondly, we must avoid falling into the trap of essentializing the idea of critical pedagogy in a way that is reductionist in content, through one particular theoretical model and the effort to make it applicable in practice. In contrast, critical pedagogy must, in ontological sense, avoid foundationalist grounding, remaining broad, comprehensive, and flexible enough to constant changes, re-definitions, and contingencies, encompassing all the outcomes which emerge when critical theory encounters education, as Joe Kincheloe and Shirley Steiberg defined it.

With these insights, it is clear how – though critical pedagogy does not encompass media and information literacy – we are able to examine and consolidate these two separate segments and concepts. With the integral model of MIL, it does not

reduce it to the mere skills and abilities in using media and information content, assuming the incorporation of technologies into the teaching and enhancement of learning processes. However, as the workshops have shown, having the skills to teach about MIL within the existing education system in Bosnia and Herzegovina are not enough to counter various, primarily systemically produced forms of oppression. With the demand to access, critically evaluate, and understand how these platforms and technologies work, through the here presented Hybrid Model of Multi-component Integration, it enables not only to be in the world but also with the world. Although MIL does not offer or embrace the idea of changing the world, as critical pedagogy as the pedagogy of the oppressed underlines, it however opens space for critical thinking of one's own position and authority as a teacher or librarian. In other words, affirming and promoting collaborative teaching and learning, it goes beyond the up-bottom imposed curricula, encouraging the development of critical thinking and thinking individuals, it becomes just a tool that opens the classroom as a transformative social force.

Having in mind the unpreparedness, fear, or learned conventions of authority, more implicit and hasten demands for transforming reality through pedagogy could face resistance from all sides, not only decision-makers, unions, or teachers, but also students and their parents. It follows that it is very difficult to loosen this knot of power up and disrupt the traditional, conventional role of the teacher – educated to be the the-one-who-teaches, knowledge holder, and investor, enabling students to become co-creators and co-research of knowledge, disrupting the hierarchy of the classroom space. Provoking the certainty of knowledge and questioning the absolute truths, their owners are often the owners of the symbolic space of the classroom as well, thus ensuring them safe and static through their connection with educational processes.

Hence, promoting the concept of MIL in the wider society, however, is considered both a very important but challenging step to implement. In that manner, this paper should be understood as a sketch that should open discussions in the future on how to engage the classroom in transforming reality through pedagogy in an open dialectical circuit between the human and the world, challenging thus the current, outdated educational practices in contemporary Bosnian Herzegovinian society. Incorporating critical pedagogy while reading the adapted MIL Curriculum can be used to promote a comprehensive and active role in re-creating knowledge, enabling practices of critical attitude towards the existing reality, promoting, and strengthening democratic practices.

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