

Should we jump from the engine coming towards us?

Young people are more and more confused about what is reality and what is media content. When watching Lumière's film, viewers jumped from the engine coming towards them on the screen. Nowadays we still don't know if we do the right thing by remaining seated. We are certain that there will be media education in the future, but what we do not know is what it will be like.

"How come Motion Picture and Media Literacy are part of the national core curriculum, but there is no one to teach them?" asked a Dutch professional during the conference [Media, Education and Citizen](#), which started on Tuesday, after learning that there are only 400 media educators in Hungary. The participants tried to explain to **Gabriël Maassen** that this subject was mostly integrated into the Hungarian Language and Literature, Art and design or History lessons - that is how schools solve the issue of having to have a certain number of Motion Picture and Media Literacy lessons, which confirms the misbelief that we do not necessarily need trained media educators to teach the subject.

Several Hungarian as well as foreign professionals emphasized during the conference, organized by the [European Association for Viewers' Interests \(EAVI\)](#) and the [Visual World Foundation](#), that nowadays it is indispensable to teach children about critical media consumption. A good basis for it would be the well-developed subject of Motion Picture and Media Literacy, which became a subject in Hungary in the 1990s; by now we have course books, teaching aids, methodological aids, teacher trainings, Matura exam test sheets and good practices available.

Developing Motion Picture and Media Literacy in such details, and incorporating it in the curriculum is a success story, but there are several problems with making the subject more widespread, as well as with its adaptation to the ever-changing situation of the media. **László Hartai**, director, media educator, and one of the professional fathers of the subject, described this controversial situation, as well as that of media educators in Hungary. He gave as an example the fact that 4,000 trained media educators would be necessary, but so far only 400 are trained, of which only 40 are really innovative.

Hartai also pointed out the many obstacles to implementing media literacy as a subject. Merely the fact that exercises and teaching methods created and applied a few years ago become outdated very quickly. A media educator who wants to hold a modern lesson in line with today's expectations should divert from the requirements of the curriculum. Hartai's mentioned that, for example, there was no Facebook, Twitter or a joint media authority a few years ago. In Hartai's opinion, the inspection system coming into force soon will have to tell off those teachers that, although using more up to date measures, are not respecting the curriculum. Of course, the syllabus can be updated, but part of whatever is developed by the professionals will become obsolete in 2 or 3 years. On the other hand, funds have been lacking to allow research on the subject and for innovation for the years to come. According to Hartai neither educational policy, nor the media industry are interested in developing media literacy education. (It is worth mentioning though that **László Szabó**, Director for Communications of the Media Service Support and Asset Management Fund announced cooperation related proposals during the conference. Szabó also told the audience that within the Media Service Support and Asset Management Fund the web2 editorial staff were soon to start working, and the youth programme department would be renewed.)

András Lányi, philosopher, who was also present at the birth of the subject, emphasized in his speech that while one and a half decades ago professionals were thinking where media education should be among other disciplines, today we are looking for disciplines in the media universe. We do not know whether media is part of art, sociology, social science or IT.

Lányi said that it was very important to note that for first time in the history, children are learning the majority of their world knowledge, not from a people, but through an impersonal medium: the media. Nowadays knowledge can be downloaded and manipulated. Everything evolves far too quickly, and children can hardly differentiate between reality and the Internet universe.

For these reasons, András Lányi thinks that the presumptions of media education should be reviewed. As he said, when media education was established, the starting point was that students did not understand the media; therefore we should explain it to them. Today, however, we experience that children do not really understand the language of reality due to their extensive media experience. Today the task of media education might be to mainly show the relation between media and reality.

Lányi also reminded us of the well-known story of viewers jumping from their seats when the engine came towards them in the first Lumière film. "Are we sure that this "naivety" has disappeared by now?" Lányi asked. We still often mix up soap opera characters with their real life actors, as well as behaviour learnt in the media with real behaviour. Lányi wonders if it is good that viewers do not jump from their seats any more when engines are coming towards them on the screen. Can't the meteor threatening us on the screen be a real threat to Earth? We are living in a world where we do not know when to jump from our seats, and when to remain seated. It may turn out that the engines we face in the media will run us over sooner than real engines. Lányi reminded the audience that the opinion of credit rating agencies had a bigger impact on our lives than that of real economic processes.

What will happen to media education in the near future is yet unknown. In the break several professionals confirmed that this subject would be included in the compulsory national core curriculum being developed right now. However, its practical implementation depends on the framework curricula.

Lajos Aáry-Tamás, Commissioner for Educational Rights also gave a speech during the conference affirming how media education could also be a valuable means to handle important social issues related to the young generation: active citizenship education or the prevention of aggression in schools. The achievements introduced during the two-day conference, as well as the reactions of the foreign speakers, convinced Lajos Aáry-Tamás that the activity of Hungarian media educators was of an outstanding quality even in an international context. Aáry-Tamás reminded everyone about the importance of further development in this area. He reminded the participants about the summary document issued after the informal meeting of the education ministers of the European Union on active citizenship held during the **Hungarian EU Presidency**. The document reads as follows: "the development of media literacy education is a new element of educating active citizens, which reacts to today's challenges, and requires special attention."

One thing is certain: today almost every child has access to the Internet and uses it, pushing television into the background; 98% of 13-17 year olds have a mobile phone of their own, 43% of which are Internet-compatible. Almost every young person has a Facebook profile, with an average of 300 acquaintances. It is irresponsible to leave children alone in such a world, both as a parent or a teacher. We hope that today's educational policy will not leave it out of consideration.