



Digital Media Literacy
for Active Citizenship



O1A2 National Report Ireland

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Project information

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Introduction

This document summarizes the needs, challenges and gaps identified from the policy and document analysis report regarding Ireland's situation on Digital and Media Literacy. Moreover, main findings from O1A1 research are presented. Finally, recommendations at National level are pointed out towards the end of this document.

General framework of Digital Media Literacy in Ireland

Digital literacy and skills for the younger population in Ireland belong mainly to the responsibility of the state's educational system, where Digital Media Literacy was just introduced in 2018 as a selective short course for the Junior Cycle. Nonetheless, Ireland ranks very well in various metrics in digital and media literacy (6th in the 2018 Digital Economy and Society index, 6th in the Media Literacy Index 2018, etc.). Good ranking are indications of a continuing improvement process, demonstrating a good level of understanding and responsiveness to the new challenges.

Irish varying set of general policies and strategies that have been implemented through the years involve the following:

- National Digital Strategy 2013,
- The National Strategy to Improve Literacy and Numeracy among Children and Young People 2011-2020,
- Teaching and Learning in Irish Higher Education.

Challenges in readiness level of young people entering formal education include (Van Dijk, 2013):

- Young people and their parents tend to overestimate their skills,
- Are not fully aware of their skills gaps,
- Are spending more time engaged in digital lifestyle skills and not "workplace" skills,
- Do not have access to media literacy education in a formal and structured manner.

However, many needed competencies related to digital skills are beginning to be addressed in the form of subjects, and depending on age, these subjects may include (Department of Education and Skills, 2015):

- Understanding how the media industry works and how media messages are constructed;
- Questioning the motivations of content producers in order to make informed choices about content selection and use;
- Recognizing different types of media content and evaluating content for truthfulness, reliability and value for money;
- Recognizing and managing online security and safety risks;
- Separating facts and opinions;
- Recognizing bias and detecting;
- Promoting democratic participation and fundamental rights;

- Addressing radicalization and hate speech online especially in multi-cultural environments

Irish government has the ambition to make Ireland's education system the best in Europe by 2026 and one of the tools for that is the "Digital Strategy for Schools 2015-2020, Enhancing Teaching, Learning and Assessment" program, which runs full-stream in all the country since September 2018 and by providing infrastructure, guidelines on digital learning, digital resources, and a professional development service for teachers, aims at the development of digital literacy.

The implementation of the policy will be supported by the Broadcasting Authority of Ireland (BAI), in a variety of ways including (Broadcasting Authority of Ireland, 2016):

- the development of an annual media literacy work plan;
- the provision of support for the development of a National Media Literacy Network;
- the provision of ongoing support for media literacy through our core activities, including
- the complaints handling process, research commissioning, sectoral development activities and programme-making grants, awarded as part of the Broadcasting Funding Scheme.

While in its very early stages it can help our project in providing a set of thematic areas to include in our Tool-kit and educational content and indicators for our assessment tool.

Lastly, Ireland in general, offers opportunities for young students to enhance their digital skills, and currently there are 12 training providers in 25 locations around the country that offer free digital skills training.

Conclusion

Media literacy is the field that should get the most attention, since it is the key to empowering people with the skills and knowledge to understand how media works in an everchanging environment. The biggest challenge is to deal with the paradox that previous generation were taught to believe that whatever they read is true. Nowadays we need to teach children that whatever they read may not be true, and give them the tools and resources to cross examine facts, hence evolving their critical thinking.

To address these challenges, we suggest focusing on certain competencies, methods and populations:

- Select most appropriate competencies and incorporate them in the last years of primary school curriculum;
- Improve the curriculum of teacher's professional development by going deeper into media literacy.

References

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