

## The Influence of Modern Means of Mass Communication on the Upbringing and Education of Young School Children

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**Abstract:** Modern means of mass communication are used in everyday life and have a significant role in directing the interests of young people, their upbringing and education. Informal means of education that are implemented mainly through the mass media play an important role because they affect its quality, i.e., efficient learning and its outcomes. The potential influence of media on young school children can be good and bad depending on how it is used. Today audio-visual media, i.e., multimedia where almost everything is accessible are dominant thus, out of an enormous number of data addressed to various age groups, it is necessary to carefully choose contents that a child will watch, listen or read. Radio, television and other electronic media have enabled fast and efficient transfer of information and the publication of any content, interesting for certain population groups. The internet has brought together the features and capabilities of the media and given man the access to an incredible amount of information whereby the communication process is improved and people from all over the world participate in it. The popularity of this topic is reflected in the fact that the media are an integral part of human life that they permeate all its activities and affect its quality directly or indirectly. Their increasing presence and influence on young school children, both positive and negative effects on their development are the subject of this study.

**Key words:** Mass media, children, young school children, upbringing and education, Serbia

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### INTRODUCTION

Modern civilization flows are directed towards the development of the information society which raises the question of the influence of information technologies and media on the child's world and the child's development in general. The media have an important place in the life of young school children are attractive and occupy their attention, affect cognition and emotion, the process of socialization and the like. As such, they are gaining a more important role in directing the interests of pupils and their educational needs. Contemporary research at school in addition to traditional didactic resources also requires the use of audiovisual resources and other types of media. New contents, the pace of life and changes require modernization of the educational process which is also conditioned by a rapid and strong development of science and technology, culture and art. Students are expected to be informed to develop their communication skills, mainly by turning on the TV set or by accessing websites. The most powerful mass media, television and the internet, have become the epicenter of everything in the world that belongs to civilization: politics, lifestyle, culture, sports,

entertainment, etc. Newspapers and radio are losing popularity, especially among young school children and youth. To a lesser extent, they are applied in a new, multimedia setting. Today, the audio-visual media such as video games, cell phones, the internet, television and film, dominate. When, we discuss the influence of the media, it is important to emphasize the importance of media literacy which includes the process of access, analysis, evaluation and creation of messages in a wide range of media types, genres and forms. It indicates navigation in the world of the media, enables obtaining the desired information and eliminating what is harmful. In this way, children can live the life they want, not the one created by the media. It is important to develop media literacy in young children because it is the sign of their proper development and the experience of the media.

Bearing in mind the enormous influence of the mass media on the development of young school children, their upbringing and education, this study will cover the possibilities of each individual media: the press, radio, television, the internet and others. All of them popularize and transmit contents important for children's development and advancement in a certain way.

## **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

Our research on the subject of this scientific research belongs to the fundamental or basic research dealing with the study of fundamental problems in the educational process; phenomena in this area are determined by it. Therefore, it was necessary to use certain knowledge along with scientific methods in order to reach scientific results. In the study, we have used general scientific methods that are applied directly or indirectly in all social sciences and scientific disciplines, hypothetico-deductive method and analytic-deductive method. In the research, the method for document analysis which is an empirical research method has been unavoidable and also the method of theoretical research. Every modern scientific research begins by applying this method because at the very beginning of conceptualization, it addresses the scientific foundation-therefore, begins to research it by using the method of (content) analysis of documents.

**The concept and historical overview of the development of means of mass communication:** The term medium is of Latin origin (*medius*-middle, in the middle) and it has been introduced to the Serbian language through English literature (*medium*-middle, *mean*, *means*) and it implies a mediator in communication or a means of getting information that facilitates communication. The mass media as a term began to be used in the nineteen twenties with the advent of the press, radio, television. It implies all the media that are designed in such a manner that a wide audience consumes them. Their main characteristic is a strong influence on the formation of a mass consumer society which is largely inconsistent with the independent attitude and decision-making. The process of communication which in fact, implies announcement, transmitting and conversation, happens and is improved through them. In the broadest sense, communication “is not only a transfer of information from one person to another but also implies people’s behavior in their mutual relations”. The meanings of the terms communication and communicate range from “announcement, reporting, notification, transfer of knowledge, interaction, exchange of thoughts, ideas, feelings, complicity in something, through the transmission of messages and information to conversation, understanding, spiritual companionship, talk and even agreement (with someone else)” (Tomic, 2003). Today, its understanding is significantly expanded and occurs in different forms: verbal, non-verbal, interpersonal, communication in larger social groups, etc. It is “a lasting and complex process that has a verbal and non-verbal dimension” (Zindovic, 1994). In

this context, a multicultural environment and tolerance to other cultures are important and such a multicultural environment would be a cultural canon that would take the position of a higher-order narrative which would be used for social inclusion and loosening the boundaries of closed groups which would make them more permeable (Stojanoic, 2003). There are the following elements in the process of mass communication: the communicator (the one that sends the message), the message (information), the means of transmission (film, radio, press, television) and the recipient (the audience). It denotes “the type of communicative practices within which by manipulating symbols of meaning, the educational message is spread in space and time through the mass media via instruments of mass diffusion of information that are intended for recipients” (Djordjevic, 1979). Another term important for this topic is media literacy which implies “the ability to access, analyze, evaluate and transmit messages through the media” (Bogdanic, 1996). It indicates navigation in the media world, provides the desired experience and information, enables people not to pay attention to things that are harmful to them. Media literacy is, therefore, the ability to understand, read and fathom the core of media texts, i.e., the ability to perceive, analyze, evaluate and create media messages in different ways. Potter (2008) believes that “the essence of media literacy is in keeping things under control.”

If we look back on the historical development of human society and start from the beginning of the communication process human speech was the basic communication technique, through which messages were conveyed. At the very beginning of their existence, people communicated with “tam-tam drums and somewhat later with smoke signals” (Stojanovic, 2003) and inarticulate voices. The development of society and the evolution of man led to the development of speech articulation and communication through language. The accumulation of life experience indicated the need for further development of the language and culture, thus pictorial scripts (pictography) were used for communication purposes. Ideography (communication of abstract thoughts and ideas) was the forerunner of phonetic alphabets that is syllabic alphabets and then of the alphabetic system of phonetic. The higher level of the society development kept improving and further developed the process of communication which was strengthened in mid-fifteenth century (1436) with the invention of the printing press with movable letters by Gutenberg (Johannes Gutenberg zum Gensfleisch). The emergence of the press enabled a large amount of

information to reach a larger number of readers in a short period of time. "The emergence of newspapers and large circulations stimulated a constant improvement of the press quality". Mass communication spread quickly with the press, thanks to the technical and technological discoveries (telegraph, telephone, news agencies and the like) as well as the industrial and scientific-technological revolution. For several centuries, newspapers were the only medium. After that, film emerged at the end of the nineteenth century and then radio and television in the third decade of the 19th century. Their emergence implied quick, easy and efficient transmitting and publishing information and contents of everything that was happening in the world. The emergence of the internet caused a unification of the properties and possibilities of all the media which made accessible almost an inconceivable amount of information to people where by an enormous number of people from all over the world participated in the communication. Today, the media are not only a means of conveying information but also factors of major changes in human communication that encourage greater involvement of students in the learning process and their successful adaptation and a clearer expression of thoughts and ideas. In recent years, we are faced with a "penetration of technical innovations that are based on the development of information technology" (Hawkridge, 1998) based on the development of computers, microelectronics and telecommunications.

The essence of the media application in the education process is to: "facilitate the learning process to create an appropriate intellectual environment, i.e., learning environment, to allow for a fast retrieval and presentation of information, to provide appropriate learning strategies, to process information in the most appropriate way and to be given the most acceptable, the most various forms in a word to enable the effective implementation of the educational process, i.e., learning process as its essence" (Danilovic, 2004). Upbringing and education cannot be seen outside the media framework and the changes in them, because they necessarily affect all spheres of human life and work both quantitatively and qualitatively.

**The influence of the print media on young school children:** Gutenberg's printing technology created a milestone in school and teaching because books became available to masses. "The requirement for mass use of books is mass literacy, in which school has a remarkable role" (Vilotijevic, 2007). Numerous social events and trends through historical development had an influence on the printed word, so it has always been a realistic representation of them. The press has changed the

foundations of human self-understanding, given strength to the development, identified and marked linguistic communities. Each classification of the media is based on the press, even though an "oral transmission of messages" is also discussed (Kokovic, 2007).

The press in the broadest sense includes the flyer, poster, book, newspapers, comic strip and the like. The poster is a mass medium created in the first half of the nineteenth century and is used for sending verbal messages. The modern stage of the development of posters differs greatly from the traditional one, since it consists of electronic advertising boards of large dimensions (billboard-bulletin board). The flyer is a medium used for sending verbal and visual messages; it is smaller in size compared to the poster and its distribution is done from the air or by postal traffic, or direct delivery to a desired destination. Newspapers are the most dominant and the most widespread printed means intended for mass communication of people. Since their emergence (the beginning of the seventeenth century) until today, newspapers have been a powerful means of directing the interest and attention of the widest portion of the public. The comic strip is a series of images interconnected with a story. The term comic strip is linked to the US territory and originates from the words comic strip-funny strips, mostly of an entertaining nature and in the past, it had an influence in the creation of subcultural patterns in children and youth.

The print media for young school children have special significance because they are part of their growing up and have a function to satisfy the needs for information, entertainment and imagination. Children meet print media in the earliest period of their lives in the form of picture books and illustrated magazines. There are different types of magazines and newspapers that meet the needs of different age groups of children. They aim to develop and cultivate in children the habit of reading, preparing them for independent reading, learning, encouraging the development of speech, perception and reasoning. When a child starts going to school, new print media that schools possess which have an educational nature are offered to the child. These media in addition to educational have the role of fun and entertainment from which some lessons can be learned. As an illustration of magazines that have a positive influence on young school children, we will mention those with which entire generations of children grew up and were educated in Serbia: Neven (Marigold) Zmaj (Dragon) Djurdjevak (Lilly of the Valley) Politikin zabavnik (Politika's Entertainment Magazine) and so on. Skolarac (Skolarka) (Schoolboy (Schoolgirl) and Vitez (Knight) are mentioned

as examples of school magazines today that are approved by the Ministry of the Republic of Serbia for pupils from grade one to four. They foster the language through interesting and instructive articles, solve logical and mathematical problems, teach about technical developments and innovation and provide an opportunity for publishing children's researchers. Each issue of the magazines provides gifts that are amusing and instructive: books, map of Serbia, pictures of animals and plants, timetables, etc. *Mali Politikin zabavnik* (Politika's Little Entertainment Magazine) has existed since 2010. It offers contents in the area of language and other disciplines as well as numerous children's literary and art researchers, fairy tales, short stories, mathematical tasks and other topics of interest to children.

In addition to the positive, the print media can have a negative influence on children as well. Today, they are overwhelmed by contents whose quality is debatable. Those are mostly adventure and crime novels and trash literature that corrupt the existing educational influences of parents and teachers because they convey negative messages and incentives. Numerous studies in Serbia and in the world point to the fact that children read less and less and mainly they read because they have to and they replace reading with the internet and numerous social networks and websites. In addition, there is an increasing number of magazines that are rich in slang, violence, pornographic content and a decreasing number of those that are of an educational and entertaining nature. "The media today are an integral part of the decor of the private sphere" (Gonnet, 1998). Wrongly selected print for children does not educate children and it does not teach them true values. Therefore, media education that involves media literacy of which we have already discussed is vital.

**The influence of radio and television on young school children:** The term radio originates from the Latin word *radiare*-shine, radiate, emit. This is the first electronic medium of mass communication, emerged in the early twentieth century, it is very flexible and broadcasts various programs that can be listened to everywhere: at research, at home, in the yard. "Radio is a medium of mass communication that enables the establishment of the most correct direct feedback for the widest circle of recipients" (Radojkovic and Miletic, 2005). Its advantages over the other media, according to Kokovic (2007) are: radio is the fastest, the most updated and the most informative means of public communication. It broadcasts news programs frequently and can interrupt playing music at all times to inform the public about something important; radio is a lasting means of communication and the dissemination

of culture, entertainment, leisure, education and sports (the program is broadcast 24 h a day) it is not time-consuming to listen to the radio. It can be a sort of "background noise" while performing a task; radio is a powerful, expressive means of public communication because it can convey the drama of a disaster, terror, joy, fear, etc., radio is the most economical means of public communication with a variety of contents that can be selected; radio knows no limits of range and messages. In addition to the advantages listed, the same researcher points out the disadvantages of this medium which are reflected in the following: radio is immediate, a piece of information is heard or not heard, understood or not understood; it is only an auditory expression, so it does not affect other human senses and this significantly reduces its presentation power; to receive its program, it is necessary to have a receiver which can lead to difficulties, so for example, newspapers are more practical in this regard. Unlike television, radio seems to be more intimate, more personal. However, the rise of television has largely suppressed radio as a medium, so today it has a significantly smaller influence on the education of young school children. Its influence can be felt in the creation of musical tastes and developing interest in music. Today the number of children's programs on the radio is not large, due to the primacy that television and the internet have. It is evident that the habit of listening to the radio should be developed in young school children.

The word television originates from the Greek word *tele*-far and *visio*-vision, sight, spectacle, literally means remote viewing. It is a product of the twentieth century but it has evolved to this day as evidenced by the last stage, known as digital when computers, telecomputers and the like are coming into use. As a means of mass communication, it fulfils all its functions: informative, entertaining, educational, political, economic and thus, awakens interest in viewers, i.e., wins over a large audience. Television is, therefore, "an audiovisual medium of a very complex technology and very complex organization of labor of a global nature on which it is difficult to set a national limit, because it does not only use the language (speech) as a code but also the image and it is universal" (Bogdanic, 1996). Disputed or not, it is today, along with the internet, the most influential means of mass communication. The positive effects of television on young school children refer to: the adoption of new information and concepts, expansion of knowledge, vocabulary enrichment, increase in imagination and creativity, inventiveness and the like. The most important didactic functions of television are: "approaching reality that is not available in the learning process; awakening

interest towards the subject of cognition; developing skills of observation, activity, imagination and thinking” (Djordjevic, 1979). The educational function of this media is particularly effective if television programs are viewed in a group where there is a possibility of inter-group discussions and exchange of opinions. Shows affect the rational and emotional spheres with which the following objectives of education can be reached: “providing an opportunity to acquire relevant knowledge and information necessary for the thoughtful attitude towards the environment; encouraging the development of awareness of the local and global environment; the incentive for the formation of attitudes about the personal responsible approach to the environment that surrounds us; creating healthy models of behavior towards the environment (for individuals, groups and the society as a whole)” (Music and Brdar, 2002). Thanks to its educational and informative function in the formation of a world view with specific contents in its shows, television enables children to adjust their behavior so that it is in accordance with the modern conception of the quality of life. “Not only is information conveyed via television but a certain educational effect is made on people” (Nikolic, 2003). Television uses sounds and images to show the current state of the world that surrounds us. Young school children spend a large portion of their free time in front of television sets. Children of both genders and all ages “watch it regularly and enjoy watching it and learn more from television than from any other factors in the process of socialization” (Lemis, 2008). It is a very powerful medium that is in everyday conditions, rich in commercial programs which have a negative impact on children’s development. These are numerous videos, films with crime contents (full of aggression, violence, slang) inappropriate music program, political propaganda shows and so on. The pattern of behavior that contemporary television offers to children is not desirable and undermines the efforts of parents and teachers in terms of education. If we try to analyze the programs on Serbian national and other televisions that are available to children of young school age, we will see that the number of educational programs is reduced to a minimum or it is not appropriate for them. Children’s shows that existed until recently: Neven (Marigold) Kuca za mastanje (House of Imagination) Fazoni i fore (Tips and Tricks), Metla bez drske (The Broom without a Handle), Branko Kockica, Plava ptica (Blue Bird) and so on, no longer exist. They have been replaced by a number of cartoons and animated films that are full of violence and aggression. The Serbian national television program contains in 1 week, children’s shows like: Atlas of the World, Encyclopedia for the

Curious, Neven (replay), Between Games and Mathematics, Bottomless Hat, Blue Bird and a number of animated films. These shows are of an educational nature with characters that are realistic and contents that are instructive. Young school children, watching a television program that has been carefully selected can adopt: a healthy world view, good taste and aesthetic assessment of everything that surrounds them. The number of these shows is not satisfactory if we take into account the proportion of the other contents that are being broadcast and that children watch. What is important is the daily “dosing” of television programs for children which should be used as a supplement to other activities. Excessive watching of television disturbs the function of socialization because the child has no need for live communication and eventually it gives rise to dissatisfaction, apathy, poor role models, wrong values and the like. Numerous children’s TV channels: Kanal D, Happy, Cartoon Network, Minimax, Ultra, Pink kids offer children the content whose quality is questionable and characters that are unrealistic. This reflects negatively on their intellectual, emotional and social development. Also, entertainment shows (music shows, reality shows) do not have a relaxing atmosphere but instead they send a message of aggression, interference in other people’s lives, hypocrisy and all that is contrary to the moral principles and norms taught at home and school. Increasing rates of aggression in primary schools are linked to the influence of television and the internet, because constant viewing of violent scenes awakens indifference in children after a certain time and then it awakens an incentive for violence because children identify with television characters. Scenes of violence can become a content of children’s fantasies and such fantasies increase the likelihood that the aggressive scenario will be invoked when a child is confronted with social problems. This is especially true if “the scene shows that a heroic character achieves a desired goal with the help of aggression” (Zindovic, 1994). Therefore, it is important for parents to make the selection of content that young school children should watch. In this way, children learn what is acceptable, desirable and good and what is not therefore they make a distinction between what should be done and what should not be done because the medium itself is neither a good nor bad teacher but the manner of its use should be selected to achieve the desired effect.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

**The influence of the internet on young school children:**  
The internet is a worldwide network that has unified all

media. Etymologically, the term has its roots in Latin *inter* between, among and *net-net*. It was founded in the United States in 1969 by the US Department of Defense. It was called Arpanet and was Advanced Research Projects Agency Network. Today telephone networks, ISDN, ADSL, optical fiber cables, satellite links and so on are used for connecting to the internet. The internet has changed interpersonal relationships, since it has significantly accelerated communication, facilitated the access to information and created a new form of communication. There has been a change in all spheres of human life and research and the improvement of online communication, in which people can job hunt, buy, make friends, exchange opinions and ideas with the help of a computer network. "With its largeness, openness and freedom, the internet quickly won over all aspects of social life and of course, education" (Stojanovic, 2003). The internet services, according to Stojanovic (2003) are: "WWW, Email, user discussion groups, distribution lists, remote download, chat."

The advantages of the internet are: the possibility for accessing many data that are spread at the speed of light; the possibility for communicating and learning about people and their customs, the exchange of information; entertainment on the internet which consists of watching various videos, movies, playing games, listening to music; the use of the internet for the purpose of getting a job. The internet has created the possibility of the constitution of virtual schools that provide services to people of all levels of education.

Elementary school children spend most of their free time at the computer and on the internet. However, that time is mostly spent on playing games and on social networks (Facebook, My Space, Twitter, Skype, WayIDo) and little for educational and scientific purposes. These social networks are very popular and a large number of people is connected via them. However, apart from the entertainment function they do not fulfill any other, regardless of possibilities. This downgrades the socialization of children and they become isolated from the outside world, antisocial, apathetic with no desire for live communication which gives rise to a number of personality disorders that require medical treatments. Their drawback lies in the fact that there is no visual contact, body language, looking into the interlocutor's eyes which are the essential characteristics of live communication, regardless of a large number of friends. The computer fever caused by the excessive use of the internet also affects the formation of attitudes and opinions, especially among young school children. The virtual world presented via the internet is challenging and more beautiful from everyday life to children and is therefore preferable and more interesting. A careless and

continued use of the virtual world creates a dependency that can be compared with other types of addiction as well as numerous physical and psychological disorders such as: eye fatigue, sleep disturbance, poor functioning of the musculoskeletal, cardiovascular and pulmonary systems and the digestive tract and spinal cord disorders due to constant sitting and immobility. Also, children can easily become victims of immoral and unethical contents that are easily accessible on the internet.

The internet as a repository of knowledge plays an important role in the acquisition and expansion of knowledge, directing interests in young school children, meeting their educational needs, if used in an adequate manner. As with other media, the control of parents and teachers is essential in selecting the content and time limitation when using this network.

## CONCLUSION

The development of mass media made numerous technical and technological changes related to receiving and processing information as well as the manner of their use and disclosure. These include the existence of an abundance of data that can positively and negatively affect the individual, especially young school children. They are most influenced by television and the internet which they watch and use on a daily basis. Since, contents that have bad messages are presented through them, it is necessary to work on the adoption of media literacy, i.e., on directing the proper use and evaluation of the content offered.

The influence of television and the internet on the development of young school children is much greater than the influence of books, magazines and radio, since they are present in children's lives to a lesser extent. As it can be seen in the study, the mass media in Serbia offer a small number of educational and pedagogical contents that are adapted for children. Commercial, entertaining and informative and political contents are mainly being broadcast which are unsuitable for children. They undermine the effects of the research done by parents and educators, so this has to be taken into account as well as the control and selection of contents that are presented to young school children. Therefore, the media whether with disputed or critically acclaimed contents are an integral part of every man's life have an enormous share and importance in daily activities, so this is always a current topic of study.

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