



# Never too young for citizenship skills – Media education in early childhood education

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# Why Early Years' Media Education (ME)?

- Mediatization and digitalization of society and culture calls for a change in the professional content of early childhood education (ECE), if it is to be a contemporary professional practice of relevance (Hernwall, 2016).
- More and more voices from academia, governance and public discussion have been calling ME to be included also to early childhood education and care (ECEC) (Marsh et al 2017, Gillen et al 2018)
- Seeing MIL also as an emergent literacy



# A Brief Look into Finnish Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC)

- Subjective right for all children aged approx. from 9 months - 7 years.
- Holistic combination of pedagogy, education and care (Hännikäinen 2013, Broström 2006).
- Goals in curriculum are set for education, not for children. No testing.
- Finnish Act on ECE underlines the importance of pedagogy, but minimum required percentage of personnel with at least tertiary degree is 30%
  - Multiprofessional teamwork

# Policy framework in Finland

- more than 15 years of early years' ME development and support from the policy level (Rantala 2011)
- the Core Curriculum for Early Childhood Education and Care (2016), obligatory for education providers:
  - the task of ME is to support children's opportunities to be active and to express themselves in community. Children are to be familiarised with different types of media, and they must have opportunities to experiment with and produce media in a playful manner in a safe environment.
  - media literacy is also included in *multiliteracy and ICT*, one of the 7 transversal competence areas that should be promoted through all education
  - different media is also utilized in discussing and learning e.g. arts and ethics
  - media content, related to children's lives, and its veracity are reflected by and with children. Through this process, the emergent source and media criticism evolves.

# Challenges – what is ME in ECEC

- ECEC professionals have lacked education-provided competences, a knowledge base of ME research focusing on young children (Alper 2013; Chaudron et al. 2015) and curricula
- Also these days majority of Finnish pre-service teachers estimate there's not enough ME contents in their studies (Salomaa et al. 2017)
- ME has often been connected with elements which have been unfamiliar to ECEC professionals (technical connotations), hence ME has gained a rather discouraging reputation (Kupiainen et al. 2006; Pääjärvi 2009).
- Public discussions about media and children are dominated by psychological and psychiatric discourses focusing on negative media effects (Bazalgette 2010; Sintonen 2009).



# ME for Media Literacy, Media Literacy for all that we value

The extent and definitions of **media literacy** are continuously under debate (e.g. Palsa, 2015; Potter 2010). Here the term is defined broadly, not only covering abilities to access, analyse, evaluate and communicate messages (Tyner 1998), but also related to participation, social abilities, self-expression and ethics (e.g. Varis 2010; Kupiainen & Sintonen 2009; Buckingham 2007).

Media literacy is the goal, but not the intrinsic value. It promotes the general goals and values of ECEC in media culture we live in. There should be no dissonance between ME and ECEC pedagogies (Salomaa, 2016).



# ECEC

**Care**

**Education**

**Pedagogy**

Attention is paid to ECEC pedagogies and community level participation (children and adults) in planning and implementig the actions. Educational partnership combines parents' and professionals' expertice to support the children

**Nurse  
profession-  
alism**

**Teacher  
profession-  
alism**

## ME in ECEC

**Media &  
well-being**

**Sosialisation,  
participation,  
self-  
expression in  
media culture**

**Media  
Literacy  
skills and  
competences**



# Key concept: Educational Consciousness (Hirsjärvi 1981)

Why *educational consciousness*? Media education is not only about specific subject contents or pedagogical solutions, hence it won't easily fit into more widely used terms of professionalism (Vesterinen 2011).

Very briefly *educational consciousness* can be defined as an *educator's awareness of acting as an educator and the responsibilities and rights connected to that role.*

(Hirsjärvi 1981, Tahvanainen 2001)

Educational consciousness steers actions and becomes apparent in educational actions (Happo 2006, Poikolainen 2002). It is never “ready”.

**Core areas and contents of educational consciousness in ECEC's ME (Salomaa 2016,  
drawing from Hirsjärvi 1981)**

<p><b>1. Conceptions of ECEC goals and values in relation to ME</b></p>	<p>a) that are personal  b) that are shared or at least negotiated with colleagues  c) that are shared or at least negotiated with parents  d) of normative framework of professional ECEC</p>
<p><b>2. Conceptions of human, children's growth and development</b></p>	<p>a) of individuals attending ECEC  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• and the groups they form</li> </ul> b) Of the basic principles of human growth, development and learning  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• as individuals and members of communities</li> </ul> c) of human beings, especially children</p>
<p><b>3. Conceptions of media</b></p>	<p>a) as vessel  b) as language  c) as environment  as media culture: a combination of the above mentioned, a lifeworld</p>
<p><b>4. Conceptions of oneself as an media educator and the importance of ECEC for human growth in media culture</b></p>	<p>a) of oneself as an media educator and potentials for development  b) of the importance of educator and children's interaction in media cultural context: negotiation, control techniques, emotional aspects  c) of the quality and importance of environmental factors and the interaction between different environments (material, social and cultural media environments)</p>

# Uniting power for better ME

- It is essential that ME underlying conceptions are discussed in communities in order to get shared understanding on what we are doing and why.
- How universities and other providers of pre- and in-service trainings could address ME in ECEC professionals' education?
- Cooperation (libraries, museums, art centres...) for more resources and different points of view for ME
- Expertise centres can contribute with providing ECE-specific trainings and other resources (e.g. pedagogical ideas) and that are not just ready-made lesson plans but require pedagogical thinking
- Leadership in developing media education practices?
- More research is needed in order to build evidence-based ground for high-quality ECEC media pedagogies



**Thank you! Questions? Comments?**



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