

Between protection and promotion – professionalisation in the field of early media education

by Marion Brüggemann

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ABSTRACT

The mediatization of society is changing the way children grow up which is changing the demands placed on early childhood education and care. Learning with and about media makes an invaluable contribution towards familiarising children with our mediatized world. At the same time, it is also important to protect children from risks by giving them opportunities to interact creatively, critically and constructively with media early childhood settings. Education professionals at early childhood settings are thus faced with the challenge of undergoing training in the field of media education in order to provide the best possible pedagogical support to children growing up in a mediatized world. Media education also needs to be integrated into early childhood education on an organisational level and to be understood as an important building block of the education system. This paper will briefly introduce the functions of early media education and explain what it means for the professionalisation of educators in the field

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Childhood in a
mediatised age

1. Childhood in a mediatised age

Children today are growing up in a world that is increasingly influenced by media usage. In particular, the presence of digital media in children's lives is ever greater. Children encounter the internet, apps and digital games starting at an early age. Thanks to the convergence of media services and the progressive merging of devices and applications, the boundaries between mobile phones, television and audio devices are becoming increasingly irrelevant. Parents are just as likely to use a picture book app on their phone to stimulate and entertain their children as they are a traditional picture book. The emergence of affordable, user-friendly mobile devices (especially smartphones and tablets) has meant that they end up more and more in the hands of young children; as a result, many children encounter web-based content from a young age (Grobbin et al. 2015). Digital media are dynamically influencing children's development and having a long-term impact on childhood. The process of mediatisation involves all spheres of life (Krotz 2007), referring both to the home (as the place where children first come into contact with digital media) and early childhood services (i.e., day nursery), where many children spend a significant amount of time. The concept of mediatisation takes into account both the technical transformation of media (also known as digitalisation), and the social and cultural changes resulting from the increasing digitalisation of communication in all spheres of life.

Digital media are present in children's lives from the very start. Many parents use a digital baby monitor app and, via IP cameras, supervise their children while sleeping and playing. At home, children experience media both passively and actively. They listen to music and audiobooks, read digital picture books and look at photos on their parents' smartphones. Digital (and even smart) toys have made their way into children's bedrooms. Watching TV shows as a family or making video calls with relatives are among the typical media experiences of many preschool children. For some children, playing digital games, watching children's television and listening to audiobooks are a normal part of everyday life. Increasingly, digital media services are being used by young children, including those between the ages of three and five. In a study on "Family, interaction and media" (FIM), the Southwest Research Association for Media Education (Medien-pädagogischer Forschungsverbund Südwest, or mpfs) states that: "For one quarter of children, looking at photos or videos on a smartphone is a regular leisure activity. One in every ten children either plays digital games on a PC, tablet or console, or watches DVDs, blurays or recorded programmes at least several times per week" (FIM 2016, 55).

Knowledge and social contacts are also obtained more and more via media experiences. Children thus experience the great importance of

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Early childhood services cannot shut out mediatisation

media within their home life. Today, childhood is increasingly influenced by references to media and consistent media usage in the domestic environment (SINUS Markt- und Sozialforschung 2015).

Early childhood settings participate in the media transformation through the everyday experiences of children and their families, regardless of whether it is addressed deliberately (via media education) or has simply become an accepted part of the daily routine at the centre. An increasingly mediatized environment, media practices in the home and children's acquisition of media literacy skills are all changing the way children grow up. Consequently, these factors are also changing childcare centres' work with children and parents, even when the centres do not explicitly address the "pressure to mediatise" (Brüggemann et al. 2013). There are also concepts available that childcare providers can use to introduce children to, for instance, the sciences and media consumption. However, setting priorities like these is still an exception.

Digital media are also present in early childhood education

Not only are children's everyday surroundings changing: the centres themselves are, too. The media transformation is present in childcare centres in the form of, for example, information screens in the entrance area (where pictures from daily life at the centre are displayed), heroes and stories from the media the children watch (which they integrate into play), or WhatsApp groups where parents share photos and information related to the centre and family life. Here, events, photos and information from everyday life at the centre become the subject of communication in social networks, although the centre cannot directly influence this content. The developments outlined above demand that childcare providers and education professionals develop new concepts and pedagogical skills in order to meet today's social and educational needs.

2. Competence orientation in early childhood education and professionalisation in media education

Living environments are media environments

The changes being demanded of early childhood settings as an institution are vast. Aside from the challenges of mediatisation, they also involve in some cases a modified idea of education. Childcare centres play an increasingly important role in early education and children's acquisition of skills. For instance, Germany's *Frühe Chancen* (literally "Early Opportunities") education initiative describes the nature and duties of early childhood education institutions as follows: "Early childhood services [in Germany] shall guarantee childcare in accordance with the Child and Youth Services Act (*Kinder- und Jugendhilfegesetz*, or KJHG). The education and care mandate, which comprises the social, emotional, physical and intellectual development of the child, ap-

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**Childcare centres are
being called on to
provide early childhood
media education**

plies here. Early childhood educators working within these institutions shall comply with the mandate by utilising developed educational concepts and evaluating their implementation using appropriate methods. They shall work with the parents or legal guardians on the most important issues surrounding education and care, as well as with schools and other children's and family institutions and initiatives" (BMFSJ Initiative Frühe Chancen).

The understanding of education that often goes hand in hand with increased competence orientation must be critically questioned regarding its implications for early childhood education. Since the publication of the first PISA study in 2000, a strong wave of professionalisation has spread through the field of early childhood education. In official early childhood education plans, more importance was placed on the educational aspect than the care aspect (Neuß 2013, 36). According to the plans, children should be given the opportunity for self-directed learning in early childhood so that they are better prepared for the increasing demands of competence-based learning and are able to develop the corresponding basic skills. Marci-Boehncke et al. (2012) point to the significant way in which the preschool years and early media education impact children's educational career. Only if children from different social backgrounds are able to acquire more or less the same level of media literacy before starting primary school do they have a chance of unlocking the potential of digital media for their own educational path. In particular, this could give children who come from an educationally disadvantaged milieu a chance to offset educational differences (Marci-Boehncke et al. 2012). And so, early media education falls into the general trend towards competence orientation. According to this assessment, the acquisition of media skills is a prerequisite for equal education opportunities (ibid.). This way of thinking is recognisable in the early childhood education plans of the individual federal states as well as in a great deal of educational projects designed for early childhood education. Educational projects for childcare centres address a variety of different fields. For instance, many centres place importance on promoting early reading skills or they develop a focus on the sciences. Often, organisations and institutions that are not childcare providers bring their topics, educational concepts and activities into early childhood settings (two such institutions in Germany are Stiftung Lesen and Haus der kleinen Forscher). The acquisition of skills, e.g., in the area of media and IT, is mainly aimed at playful interaction with algorithms and miniature robots and teaches the basics of programming to children at childcare centres¹.

Neuß (2013) explains that media education is integrated into the individual federal states' education plans in different ways. Media is described at times as an interdisciplinary subject that is "interspersed" into other subjects, serving

¹ Source: <https://digikids.online/ueber-uns> (accessed on: 9.7.2018; German only). English-language references are listed at the end of the text.

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primarily as a means for acquiring other fundamental skills (Neuß 2013). Media education has until now only seldom been presented as its own educational field. In around half of the education plans, media education subjects are addressed rather indirectly (Kratsch 2016). Today, however, the education plans of many federal states are being reworked and, due to the education policy discussions described above, it is likely that (digital) media will play a more significant role in the future. In accordance with that, development and training programmes for education professionals will have to focus more on media skills. Looking at current practices, it becomes evident that in many centres media education closely mirrors employees own relationship to the subject and there is a rather reactive approach to media-related topics. For example: after the weekend, some children talk about their media experiences, which are then integrated into the educational work. It is far less common to have a structured and productively/creatively designed media education plan (Brüggemann et al. 2013).

Critical attitude towards media education in preschool children

A survey of roughly 300 early childhood educators in Bremen shows that education professionals have an ambivalent relationship to early media education (Brüggemann et. al. 2013). They were primarily of the opinion that digital media is omnipresent in children's lives, that children spend (too much) time with media at home and that, as a result, they hardly know any other type of leisure activity. However, a majority of the educators also agreed with the statements that media was fun for children and that children were enthusiastic about working with electronic media. Some education professionals also believed that children could broaden their knowledge, i.e., that media was a suitable learning tool. However, the educators surveyed tended to have a critical attitude towards media education in early childhood. Approximately 42 percent of them rejected the statement that it was never too early to begin with media education. Another 43 percent were undecided in this regard. A mere 16 percent agreed with all these statements. One study carried out at Allensbach University (2014) also suggests that educators harbour a rather critical attitude towards early media education: according to the study, 78 percent of educators and 70 percent of parents did not consider early, targeted media education to be necessary (Allensbach 2014, 22). More than half of those surveyed in the study (which was commissioned by the Deutsche Telekom Stiftung), entitled "Digital Media Education in Primary School and Kindergarten", stated that they had little or no idea about the potential applications of digital media (Allensbach 2014). The lack of an overview on the use of digital media, which the study identified, is underpinned by a very low level of training in this field. A mere 27 percent of educators had ever taken part in media education training. Simultaneously, due to the increasing mediatisation of everyday life, many education professionals do regard media education as part of the remit of early childhood education. But the implementation of media education as standard will only be possible if educators have the necessary media education skills.

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3. The fundamentals of media education skills

What educators need to know

What do education professionals have to know and be able to do if they wish to accept the challenge of mediatisation and begin to carry out media education work at their centre? The main objectives of media education in child-care centres are, on the one hand, to promote media skills and, on the other, to support learning processes in order to achieve fundamental educational goals. The promotion of media literacy addresses a broad understanding of media literacy as formulated by the education theorist and media education expert Dieter Baacke. He outlines the four dimensions of media criticism, media knowledge, media consumption (use) and media design (Baacke 1999b)²:

- ▶ **Media criticism:** *This dimension is divided into three parts. The analytical components of media criticism consist, for example, in an individual's ability to adequately capture "problematic social processes such as consolidation tendencies" (ibid.). Media developments are not accepted unquestioningly, rather, they are judged critically based on background knowledge. The second component of media criticism is of a reflective nature and comprises the ability to analyse knowledge of the social processes within the context of one's own behaviour. The third component of media criticism is ethical reflection.*
- ▶ **Media knowledge:** *The dimension of media knowledge comprises traditional knowledge such as understanding of genre. Technical and instrumental abilities and the practical use of technical media are also part of this dimension.*
- ▶ **Media consumption (use):** *Media use consists of a "receptive/applying subdimension", which Baacke also rephrases as "programme usage skills" (Baacke 2001, 7). The interactive use of media services is also part of this dimension. Thanks to technical developments, there are ever fewer prerequisites for creating one's own media.*
- ▶ **Media design:** *This dimension is divided into subdimensions which include both an innovative and a creative component. The creative component provides the focus for the aesthetic design (Baacke 1999).*

Individual media literacy as a prerequisite for the acquisition of media education skills

The dimensions of media literacy proposed by Dieter Baacke refer to a person's individual media literacy, but not to his or her (media) education skills, which are necessary for promoting media literacy. This differentiation is important because, while individual media literacy can be considered a prerequisite for media education skills, media education skills clearly go

² Neil Selwyn is a world expert in media education, particularly in relation to teacher education. See the following for a general overview of issues: Selwyn, N. (2016). *Education and technology: Key issues and debates*. NY: Bloomsbury Publishing.

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Media education skills are made up of media education, media didactics, media integration and media skills

beyond literacy alone.

In accordance with Tulodziecki, Herzig & Grafe (2010), media education skills are divided into the areas media education, media didactics, and organisational media integration. So while an education professional's individual media literacy is critical for media education work with children, it is certainly not the only requirement. Beyond their own media literacy, it is imperative for educators to be proficient in media education and media didactics with regard to integrating media into the childcare centre context (media integration).

The main goal of media education is to learn about media. Practice-oriented media education fosters, for example, the "acquisition of insights into processes of media communication" with the aim of fostering critical, reflective interactions with media (Tulodziecki, Herzig & Grafe 2010, 167). One example of a media education goal is for children to learn to deal with advertisements in a competent manner. In other words, children should learn to identify advertisements and critically question the messages they convey. The field of media didactics is about learning and teaching with media, i.e., using media as a tool. Here, the ability of the education professional is required to "integrate media activities into teaching and learning processes in a way that fosters learning" (Tulodziecki, Herzig & Grafe 2010, 73).

One example: Children can broaden and test their knowledge via an app (used as a supplementary teaching tool), which allows them to learn about shapes and colours in a playful way. Media education skills are made up of the interplay between the three areas of media education, media didactics and media integration skills based on individual media literacy (see Fig. 1).

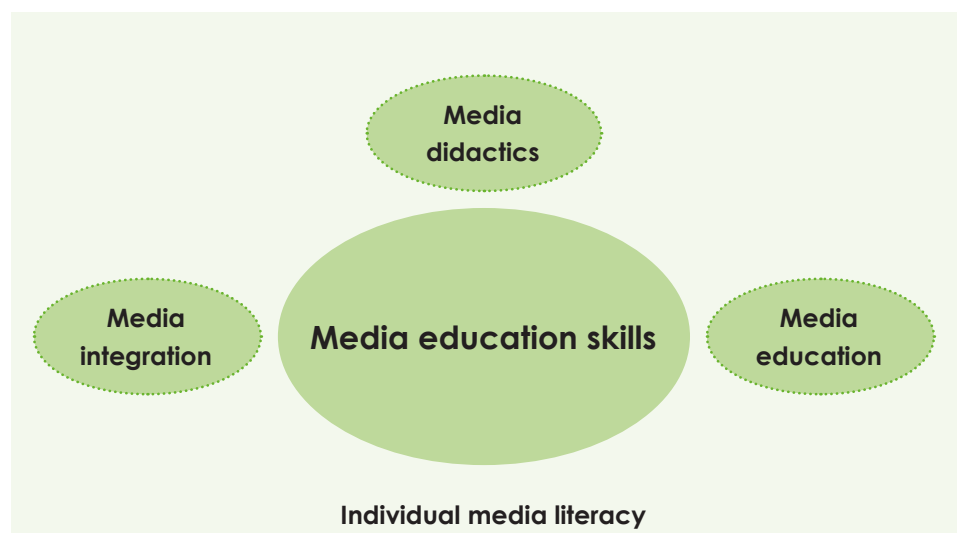


Fig. 1: Model of media education skills (author's representation)

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Basic media education training must be systematically developed

The distinction made here between media education and media didactics is purely analytical. In hands-on media work, the areas of media education and media didactics usually overlap given that media education topics are addressed by using media and media proficiency is achieved by operating media devices.

Education professionals need to undergo basic media education training to ensure that media education can become an inherent part of the work of childcare centres. When children are offered media education activities at childcare, they are frequently isolated events and projects that could be better integrated into the centre's overall concept. In many cases, a media project can be carried out using external media education expertise. A glance at current programme structures suggests that media education skills (media didactics, media education and media-related organisation development) are rather underdeveloped as a strategic goal. Although establishing media education as an important educational topic would serve to integrate media-related activities into childcare centres, the quality and effectiveness of such activities will still be linked to the media education skills of the education professionals working at the centres. In order to improve media education at a centre, the team's expert knowledge needs to be fostered and projects should not just be "bought in" from media education service providers.

4. Integration of media education in childcare centres as a key part of organisational development

The integration of media education into early childhood services has proven to be a classic organisational issue that not only concerns the specific childcare centre and childcare provider, but everyone involved in the organisation, from the centre management and parents to staff council representatives, specialist consultants and data protection officers. Furthermore, overarching conditions (such as the introduction of mandatory media education content into official education plans) as well as the professional training and development needs of education professionals both within and outside of a childcare provider's structure also play an important role. Hence we can also use the term "media integration" here.

Media integration requires the involvement of the provider

The term media integration comes from the field of media literacy promotion in schools. As an analytical approach, media integration raises awareness about the requirements of early media education, which not only pertain to the media education work itself, but go beyond it (Breiter, Welling & Stolpmann 2010, 38). The conditions that influence media education at childcare centres must be understood as part of a complex framework of conditions

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that are specific to each centre. Depending on the federal state and childcare provider, many of the conditions may resemble each other, but in order to catalyze lasting media integration, several fields of organisational development must likewise be taken into consideration (Fig. 2).

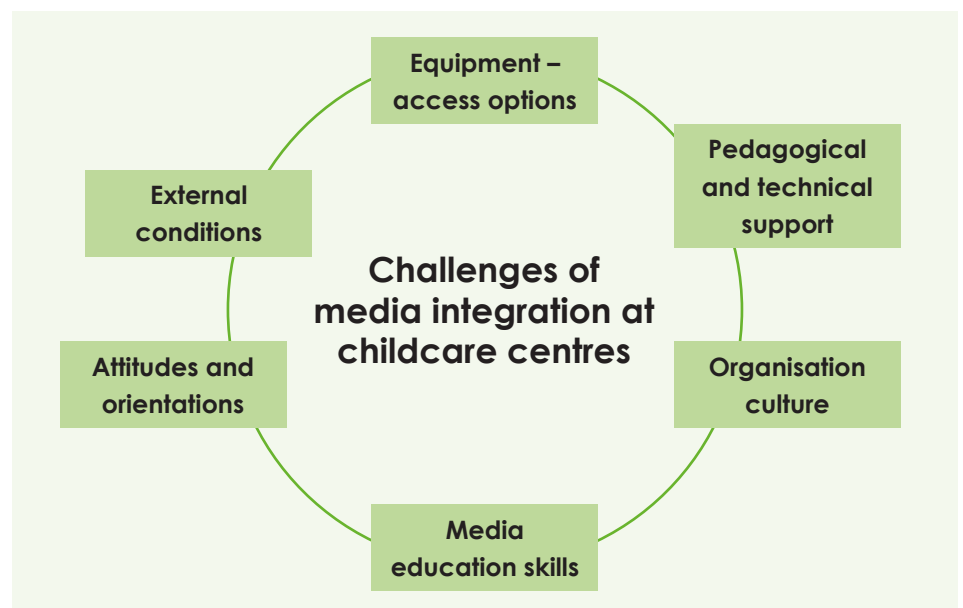


Fig. 2: Challenges of media integration at childcare centres (author's representation)

Equipment and support are needed

Complex conditions must be met for media education to succeed in childcare centres

First of all, the external conditions must be explained: the educational work of childcare centres is grounded in concepts and guiding philosophies, including at the provider and centre level. These guidelines should be reflected on in terms of their accordance with the guiding principles of media education. It is the task of education professionals to implement the objectives, often set by the childcare provider and shaped by particular mission statements, into their educational practice. The aforementioned federal states' efforts to establish differentiated and binding education plans are in turn supplemented by providers' education concepts and by special profiles of individual centres that the centres might use, for example, to advertise themselves. In order to implement the proclaimed objectives, it is necessary for education professionals to accept their "mission" and act in accordance with the educational mission statement of their childcare provider and centre. Another important aspect of media integration into childcare centres is clarifying the options for accessing equipment and (digital) media. How should access to individual devices (e.g., tablets) be organised at the centre? Should groups be equipped with a fixed number of devices or should there be a central place for borrowing them? Decisions about access and equipment concepts always have an effect on educational concepts. A childcare centre with an open, more process-oriented education approach might be more likely to argue that devices should be

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Organisation and staff development

available to the group as a matter of principle. Others might prefer to work on one major media project and be more likely to use the equipment in a rather temporary fashion. The establishment of a support system (pedagogical and technical support) is closely tied to the questions of equipment and access. Arrangements must be made to decide who will take care of defective devices or how support for educational work in childcare centres will be structured.

The way that these issues are dealt with is embedded in a centre's existing organisational culture within the provider's structure. One question that must be asked is to what extent education professionals will participate in the development of their centre or organisation in order to push forward the integration of media education (e.g., by hiring specialist consultants). It is important to point out the particular role of the centre's management here. They are responsible for ensuring appropriate forms of communication and knowledge transfer regarding media education work at the centre. Another duty that falls to the management is to anchor media education in the centre's concept (e.g., by setting priorities or developing the profile). The centre's management is central to the process of media integration. They make it possible for their employees to become more professional in the field of media education by ensuring that employees can participate in media education training courses and by promoting the acquisition of media education skills on their team. In general, the importance of promoting employees' media education skills (whether as a team or using individuals as "champions") cannot be underestimated. A centre can take different paths in order to build up skills in this area. It is important for colleagues to communicate with one another and have access to the existing knowledge and abilities at the centre. Only once the corresponding know-how at the centre is developed and shared will it be possible to structure a media education programme at the centre. In other words, if media education is to become a fixed part of their educational work, education professionals need to have the appropriate educational and didactic abilities (media education skills). To develop these skills it is, in turn, imperative that education professionals believe in the importance of early childhood media education (attitudes and orientations).

5. Media education work in early childhood education – topics, examples and projects

Promote consumption or abstinence of media?

The debate surrounding media in childcare centres is shaped by very different assessments of early childhood media education. Some supporters of early media education prioritise the promotion of technical skills. Economic interests are also at work here (e.g., <https://www.codingkids.de/navigator/haba-digitalwerkstatt>, accessed on 10.7.2018)³. The way they see it, children should learn

3 Cf: <http://www.codingkids.de/anfangen/haba-digitalwerkstatt> (accessed on 10.7.2018; in German) and <http://thespoke.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au/3794-2/> (accessed on 7.7.2019).

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Media education is necessary if education plans are to reflect children's everyday environments

how to use a tablet or computer early on so that they become accustomed to using digital tools. Meanwhile, opponents of early media education view media as harmful in general. They believe media should be largely absent from educational work since they can slow down and endanger brain development (Spitzer 2012). This understanding of media education is directed primarily at parents rather than children. Parents are called upon to minimise their media consumption in order to protect children from harmful influences.

In my opinion, none of these deliberately extreme approaches does justice to children's development in a mediatised society. In many cases, the educational work of childcare centres involves concepts that focus on the children's everyday environment, and addresses topics and issues that interest the children. This reference to the children's everyday environment should also extend to media-related aspects, since media can take on an important role in children's environment. A deliberate, creative and productive treatment of relevant media topics as well as work on media-related educational projects can be decisive (see e.g., Meister, Sander & Friedrichs 2015). The basis for this work could be a playful but protected approach to media, which sensitively accompanies the children's media experiences, promotes creative, productive behaviour, and makes it possible for children to voice age-appropriate media criticism.

In order to ensure the wider relevance of the media education work which takes place at childcare centres, media educators Sabine Eder and Susanne Roboom propose incorporating it into the established educational fields of the education plans. Even if these educational fields have different names in each federal state, it is possible to loosely classify media education in basic educational fields (Eder & Roboom 2016). In the following, the connection between basic educational fields and media education work will be explored using examples.

Ideas for educational fields

- ▶ *Language education, communication and writing*
- ▶ *Maths and science education and technology*
- ▶ *Aesthetic and cultural education and music*
- ▶ *Ethical religious education*
- ▶ *Practical life skills and topics*
- ▶ *Body, health, physical activity*
- ▶ *Emotional and social learning*

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Altering images and creating films with children

There are many possibilities for incorporating media education into the field of language education. One example is having children search for and take pictures of the alphabet or of certain letters in everyday life. The results can be put together as a poster or a garland, which can be used in subsequent work. The discovery, representation and photographic documentation of stories is one option for promoting literacy. In maths and sciences, children can create a photo memory game about numbers and quantities. The images can relate to one another without depicting the same thing, e.g., animals and their tracks. There are many ways to use media in the field of aesthetics and cultural education. In addition to pencils, watercolours and paints, there are apps that allow users to paint, which simultaneously encourages children to think about colours and shapes. On the one hand, experimenting with filters and playing with images shows how drawings can be manipulated; on the other, it encourages consideration of aesthetics in the media. Shooting a stop-motion film with homemade curtains and figures or play objects makes the process of film production immediately palpable to the children. Objects can change position, or an image can be drawn step by step, growing across the canvas or screen (ibid., 33).

Planning and implementing media projects

In addition to addressing educational fields, traditional media education project work has its merits. The link to relevant education objectives can be made using secondary analysis of the promoted educational fields (Neuß 2016). When addressing particular media topics or initiating additional activities, it can be helpful to have experts plan and implement projects to raise education professionals' awareness of media education. Project work demonstrates the process of media production to the greatest extent possible and gets the children and education professionals involved in different roles and with different tasks. All participants play an important role in ensuring the success of the project. It is also possible to utilise the media education specialists' expertise for the professional training of employees, for example, by doing projects (such as a film production) in tandem. A multitude of examples of inspiring topics and projects are freely available on the internet.

Ideas, materials and a newsletter on early media education in early childhood services:

www.rananmausundtablet.de

<https://www.familieundmedien-nrw.de>

<https://www.gutes-aufwachsen-mit-medien.de/kindermedien/>

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6. Summary: Media education as an interdisciplinary task

Children have a right to media education!

In the age of mediatisation, media education is the responsibility of society as a whole. This responsibility also applies to the work of childcare centres. Media education must be understood as an interdisciplinary task, which can support many aspects of early childhood education and upbringing. Access to information on media education and the demand for action based on media education become more and more visible when content adds value by linking to central educational fields. Society has an obligation to give children the chance to encounter and engage with media (and media content). This will better equip them for their everyday surroundings and promote their competent, age-appropriate, self-determined, protected and creative use of media. "Learning with and about media makes an invaluable contribution towards familiarising children with our mediatised world. At the same time, they can be better protected from risks by being given opportunities to interact creatively, critically and constructively with media from an early age" (Eder, Brüggemann & Kratsch 2017). Children have a right to media education!

7 Questions and further information

7.1 Questions and tasks for reviewing the text



Task 1: FOLLOWING MEDIA TRAILS

Think about what media "trails" you can find on a typical day at your workplace. Pick a random day and pay attention to how and where media and digital devices are present. For example, observe children's media-related play (e.g., Which media heroes are especially popular? Which of the children's media habits do you know about?) and take note of media-themed clothing and food as well as how the parents use media during drop-off and pick-up situations. Make a list of the media trails and try to categorise them.



Task 2: MEDIA-RELATED ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT AT CHILDCARE CENTRES

Why is the consideration of media in early childhood education not limited to child-oriented media education practice, but also a topic for the childcare centre management teams and childcare providers



Task 3: TAKING MEDIA EDUCATION INTO ACCOUNT :

Describe the opportunities for open work set out in the article.

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RECOMMENDED
 FURTHER READING

Studies: Children and media

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9.3 Glossary

Open work is a form of child-centred education whose origins lie in a grass-roots movement that emerged from criticism of existing conditions (in childcare centres). It revolutionised group education in group rooms through a very simple idea – turning functional corners into functional spaces – that can be implemented in any childcare centre.

Media literacy Baacke introduced the concept of media literacy into the academic discourse with a particular emphasis on what Habermas called “communicative competence”. To date, Baacke’s media literacy dimensions have shaped the debate surrounding what is meant by the concept of media literacy. According to Baacke (1999), media literacy is characterised by four dimensions: media criticism, media knowledge, media consumption (use) and media design.

Media education skills According to Tulodziecki, Herzig and Grafe (2010), media education skills are divided into the areas of media education, media didactics and organisational media integration. Tulodziecki’s concept has its origins in university teacher training, aiming to better describe the media-related demands of future teachers and give them a chance to acquire the skills they need to meet those demands. The concept can be readily applied to the training and further education of early childhood education professionals although the areas of media criticism (learning with media) and media education (learning about media) must be oriented towards the requirements of early childhood education. Although it is certainly necessary for education professionals to have their own media skills, this is far from the only prerequisite for media education work at childcare centres. In addition to their own media literacy, educators must be proficient in media education and media didactics regarding the integration of media work into the childcare centre environment (media integration skills).

Mediatisation According to Krotz (2007), the concept of mediatisation in communication and media studies describes a process at the centre of which media communication formats are becoming ever more ubiquitous in everyday life and culture. The process of mediatisation is currently being shaped by the increasing digitalisation of communication, which can be seen as a technical aspect of the media transformation. Krotz describes this development, which culminates today in the implementation of digitalised communication, including its social and cultural consequences, as a process of mediatisation. Simultaneously, mediatisation takes place on a macrotheoretical level in that it postulates the transformation of culture and society; on a mezzo level in that institutions and organisations continue to develop; and on a micro level in that the process produces changes in people’s social and communicative behaviour. In this sense, mediatisation is understood as a meta process of social transformation.

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Digital and smart toys Digital toys have interactive functions and contain software, e.g., to control movements or voices. The functionality of so-called smart toys goes beyond this because they are frequently controlled via apps, which are either automatically connected to the internet or can be connected by the user. In 2017, the German consumer organisation Stiftung Warentest tested a number of such toys and discovered that several of them established an insecure network connection that allowed strangers to communicate with the child or control the toy. Furthermore, it is not clear what happens to the data collected by the toys' software. For instance, sound recordings and photos can be transmitted to servers in foreign countries or parents can "play back" their children's games.

Source: <https://www.test.de/presse/pressemitteilungen/Smartes-Spielzeug-Spi-one-im-Kinderzimmer-5222184-0/> Accessed on: 09.07.2018 (in German).

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