



universität
wien

MASTERARBEIT / MASTER'S THESIS

Titel der Masterarbeit / Title of the Master's Thesis

CRITICAL NEWS ASSESSMENT BY MONTESSORI, STEINER AND TRADITIONAL STUDENTS

verfasst von / submitted by

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angestrebter akademischer Grad / in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Science (MSc)

Wien, 2018 / Vienna 2018

Studienkennzahl lt. Studienblatt /
degree programme code as it appears on
the student record sheet:

A066550

Studienrichtung lt. Studienblatt /
degree programme as it appears on
the student record sheet:

Masterstudium Communication Science

Betreut von / Supervisor:

Univ.- Prof. Jörg Matthes, PhD

Introduction

Children's critical media assessment which involves "ability to access, analyse, evaluate and create messages across a variety of forms" (Aufderheide 1993, p.xx) became one of the big debates for scholars. Hobbs (2004) notes that children's critical media literacy has a crucial role in the education system. Critical media literacy is defined as "the ability to reflect on the pleasures derived from mass media and popular culture practices (e.g. radio, TV, video, movies, CDs, the internet, gang graffiti, and cyberpunk culture); the ability to choose selective among popular culture icons" (Hobbs, 2004, p. 194). He argues that critical media literacy is mostly addressed in cultural studies and it raises questions such as "who does this text address through its words, images, and sounds? Who is absent in this text, and what might explain that absence? Whose interests are served in this text? How am I positioned by it"? (p.195)

Elizabeth Thoman and Tessa Jolls (2004, p.18) discuss the importance of teaching critical media analysis at school and note that "media literacy education provides a framework and a pedagogy for the new literacy needed for living, working, and citizenship in the 21st century". They argue that "today, information about the world around us comes to us not only by words on a piece of paper but also, more and more, through the powerful images and sounds of our multimedia culture". (p.18).

Developing critical media assessment of young children at school is a crucial process but still, educators, teachers and parents have different opinions about this. According to Hobbs (2004) "educators have diverse and conflicting perspectives about the mass media. Most have a love-hate relationship with the mass media that is complex and multi-dimensional, which shapes their instructional practices in the classroom" (Hobbs 2004, p.43).

In fact, today's technological era increases children's every day internet use and their social media consumption. Social Media, such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram have become very popular among young children. (Sampasa-Kanyinga, Rosamund F. Lewis 2015). According to Leslie Haddon and Sonja Livinhstone (2012 p. 25.), EU kids online report that 60% of age 9-16-year-old children's internet consumption is almost every day. An activities and skills study showed that 59% of 9-16 year-olds have a social networking profile.

In the other study of Kleemans M, N.H. de Leeuw, Gerritsen J. & Buijzen M. (2017) found that from age 8-12 children are interested in reading news. Moreover, at this age children are capable of differentiating between negative and positive news.

Since children's critical news assessment is becoming an important task for educators and scholars, this increases the public's interest in different studies of education, such as Montessori and Steiner, which suggest different approaches of education methods and focuses on child's individual, critical and creative development. This paper will explore if different education methods have an influence on children's critical assessment of news on social media, such as Facebook. This leads the research question:

RQ: Do different study of education methods such as Montessori, Steiner and traditional influence children's critical assessment of news on social media?

Literature Review

Steiner, Montessori & Traditional Methods of Education

At the beginning of the twentieth century, Maria Montessori and Waldorf Steiner developed new study methods and made important work in education addressed to children (Grandi, 2016). Austro-Hungarian educator who studied first in Vienna (Bouchet, 2005) received

an academic education in natural science and a doctorate philosophy. Steiner gained various experience in education, as a journalist, lecturer, literary critic and scientific editor, however, he had wide views of how to educate and develop the child as an important individual (Goldshmidt, 2017). His education approach suggests that “the aesthetic, spiritual and interpersonal sensibilities of the child in ways that enrich, enliven, and reinforce intellectual knowing” (Easton, 1997 p. 87).

Steiner formulated a theory named “Anthroposophy” (Goldshmidt, 2017). He defined Anthroposophy as “a manner of acknowledgment which wishes to lead the spiritual in the human entity to the spiritual in the universe. It appears in mankind as a need of heart and emotion”. (Steiner, p. 14, 1982) He argued that if we want to “perceive the nature of the evolving man, we must begin by considering the hidden nature of man as such”(Steiner, p. 6, 1965). However, Steiner argued that if “education will be involved with spirit, soul and body we will produce a good balance between our thinking and feeling as well as our willing” (Steiner, 1965, p. 6). The main goal of Steiner’s education approach is to develop freedom among young children, but Oberski, (2011) points out that this is not a kind of chaotic freedom where most people tend to do what they want at any moment, but freedom in his education method rather means freedom of choice. According to Oberski Steiner’s “philosophy of freedom as a basis for spiritual education” argued that “what is needed in the education of children to achieve freedom is the ability to develop this kind of thinking (which involves also feeling and willing)” (Oberski, 2011 p. 14).

In Steiner’s education approach art plays a main role. “The art play a significant role in developing the capacities of each child to perceive both one’s inner and outer world. When we actively contemplate, practice, or create artistic work, we become more aware of our sensations, feelings, and thoughts”. (Easton, 1997 p. 88). Since in Steiner’s education method art was seen

as the main key to learning and teaching he suggested developing artistic skills with each child “it is for developing the creative artistic ability which every person has within (Nobel, 1997, p. 149). However study by Easton (1997) “Education with whole child Head, heart and hand” points out that after interviewing 50 students from a Waldorf school age 7 to 12 they reported that “art in the curriculum played a significant role in a process of learning to think holistically about what is important in life” (Easton, 1997, p.87)

Steiner discussed children’s developmental phases from birth to 7 years old, 7 to 14 and 14 to 21 years old. (O’Shiel & O’Flynn, 1998). He argued that in the very first stage of child’s development he/she “experiences the world through physical activity and learns, through imitation and play.” (Easton, 1997, p. 88). In the second stage a “child draws nourishment from experiences that develop consciousness of feelings and feed the imagination”(Easton, 1997, p. 88). In third age of a child’s development, Steiner considered that when the child becomes a critical thinker “high school years when the child’s capacities for abstract thinking unfold” (Easton, 1997, p. 89).

Steiner believed that it was not necessary people intervene in a child’s development, but rather observe a child’s nature. “we shall not set up programmers, but simply describe child nature From the that, the proper point of view for education will, as it were, spontaneously result” (Steiner, 1927, p. 37) In his education method “processes of thinking, feeling and willing were inextricably linked to each other and suggested that there is the same absolute interpretation in the threefold system of the physical body” (O’Shiel & O’Flynn, 1998, p. 340). Steiner argued about a child’s development and he claimed that a “child is not a creature who is born in only physical sense” (p.341). He suggested that child a “comes into the world not only with an

inherited physical body but also with a spiritual individuality” (O’Shiel & O’Flynn, 1998, p. 341).

At the beginning of 20 the century Italian educator Maria Montessori (1870-1952) developed another new teaching method as well, that was based mostly on children’s free learning environment. In her education method, children are able “to learn with joy and enthusiasm, according to their interests and above all in a self-dependent manner.”(Pouzar-Kozak, p.1 2008). Montessori’s education method focuses on a teaching and learning environment, where children should be free and be able to follow their interests and develop their imagination and creativity. In the classroom, a teacher's role is seen as a guide rather than a traditional instructor. Also in a Montessori classroom children and teachers work in cooperation with each other rather than compete with each other (Duckworth, 2006). Montessori considered the teacher as the most important figure in the classroom and argued that being a good teacher means to allow the child to participate actively and engage her/him in whatever interests they have “the child must be seen as an active participant in the educational process”. (Foschi, 2008,p. 239).

Montessori's method was considered “a peace education”. She pointed out that “if education truly develops as fully as their ability to read and write, mankind could begin hoping for a more peaceful world” (Duckworth, 2006, p.39). Maria argued that “peace is a goal that can only be attained through common accord, and the means to achieve this unity for peace are twofold: first, an immediate effort to resolve conflicts without recourse to violence – in other words, to prevent war – and second, a long-term effort to establish a lasting peace among man. Preventing conflicts is the work of politics; establishing peace is the work of education” (Montessori, 1972, p.27)

Maria Montessori discussed children's developmental stage of periods as well and pointed stages birth to 6, 6 to 12, and 12 to 18. She noted that age 6 to 12 is a "period one of the growth, but without transformation, it is a period of calm and security" (Montessori, 1949p.25). When a "child has an increased desire to break out of his limited environment and to gain social experiences within a larger group of people". (Montessori 1979b: p.32) In age 6 to 12 a "child develops his moral awareness and inner sensibility of conscience" (Montessori, 1979b:29-30) However, each of these stages of a child's life is important, because in each stage a child acquires and develops certain skills. (Pouzar-Kozak, 2008).

Montessori study methods differ in many ways to Traditional and Steiner methods. According to Montessori methods, in the classroom children are different ages (Montessori, 1964). They are active in a classroom environment which means that are able to move, change seats and talk to their peers, which also requires active movement in the classroom (Dhiksha, Shivakumara, 2015). However, Montessori has a different structure of teaching compared to a traditional school education. Her method develops student's "order, coordination, concentration, and independence. As they mature, students learn to look critically at their work, and become adept at recognizing, correcting and learning from their errors." (Dhiksha, Shivakumara, 2015 p.271)

Since the Montessori classroom environment differs from a traditional school, in the Montessori classroom teaching materials are developed specifically for each child or small group. Furthermore, in the Montessori classroom student activities are arranged for only 3-4 hours a day. Students are able to be engaged in group work or stick with individual activities. However, since the Montessori classroom is made up of children in a three-year age range it is common, in class, to ask other students to help and listen to each other's opinions. (Chattin-McNichols,1992). In

the Montessori classroom is not common using textbooks, worksheets, tests, grades, punishments or any other rewards (Haines, 1995). The main aim of the Montessori teaching method is “dialogs between observation and action” (J.McV.Hunt, Jaan Valsiner 2014. P. xiii).

Studies of Lillard, A. Else – Quest (2006) comparing Montessori school children's to traditional school children's academic and social scores in elementary school education found that Montessori school children were more likely to use “ a higher level of reasoning to referring to justice or fairness to convince the other child to relinquish the object” (p.1894) The same study revealed that 12 year old Montessori school children used better vocabulary during the writing and had better social skills. (Lillard, A. Else-Quest, 2006).

According to the study by Rathunde (2003) a comparison of Montessori and traditional school children's motivation, quality of experience and social context revealed that the Montessori children have a better quality of academic work as compared to traditional school children. “Montessori students were feeling more active, strong, excited, happy, relaxed, sociable and proud while engaged in academic work, they were also enjoying themselves more, they were more interested in what they were doing.” (Rathunde 2003, p. 24). A study by Dhiksha & Shivakumara (2015) discussed the benefits of Montessori education that “Montessori students become confident, enthusiastic, self-directed learners. They are able to think critically, work collaboratively and act boldly”(p.271).

Children and Critical assessment of media

Hobbs (1998) in her seven great debates in the Media Literacy Movement argues that critical “media literacy is a term used by a growing number of scholars and educators to refer to the process of critically analyzing and learning to create one’s own messages in print, audio, video, and multimedia”. (p.16). Livingstone (2004) argues four main components of critical

media literacy and notes that “access, analyze, evaluation and content creation – together constitute a skills-based approach to media literacy”. (p.5) She argues that each component is very important “ Learning to create content helps one to analyze the content produced professionally by others; skills in analysis and evaluation open the doors to new uses of the internet, expanding access and so forth”. (p. 5). According to Bloom’s Taxonomy (1965) Children’s critical thinking ability refers when they are capable to analyse and evaluate an information.

Hobbs (1998) argues Media Literacy in K-12 environments is an important activity, which helps students and school children to analyze and evaluate their own media usage. She notes that Media literacy is the way of “identify author, purpose, and point of view in films, commercials, television and radio programs, magazine and newspaper editorials and advertising; to identify the range of production techniques that are used communicate a point of view and shape audience response” (p.124). Alvermann, Moon, and Hagood (1999) point out that children’s critical thinking ability could be developed by guiding students. For example: teachers should teach students to start asking questions after exposing them to articles and view and listen to contents critically by asking further questions.

Hobbs (2003) points out that critical Media assessment's main aim is to increase children’s critical analyzing skills. “Analysing the setting, speech, though, and dialogue in a film scene may help students understand, identify, and evaluate those elements of character development in literature.” (p.333)

Measuring ninth-grade students critical media-analysis skills by Hobbs and Frost(1999) revealed that students whose teachers talked more about media-literacy concepts and discussed news have better reading, listening and understanding, writing and media analysis skills.

However, scholars argue that critical media literacy education at school has to become crucial but Hobbs (2004) adds that in fact “educators have diverse and conflicting perspectives about mass media. Most have a love-hate relationship with the mass media that is complex and multidimensional, which shapes their instructional practices in the classroom”.(p.43)

Children and News: Today news consumption behaviors change based on technological development, argues Wenner, (2016) and Wenner points out that today adults and young children consume news via the internet and moreover, they tend to create news media by themselves without anyone’s intervention and publish it on various social media sites. It has been argued as well, that another factor which might increases children’s internet use at an early age is the high rate of mobile phone usage among youth. (Olafsson, K Livingstone S. & Haddon L. 2013) “ Following the results of the EU kids survey, 53% of Austrian children between 9-16 accessed the internet through a mobile device. “(Olafsson, K Livingstone S. & Haddon L. 2013 p.).

However, children’s internet use is growing every year. In 2005 findings on internet access and use among 9-19 years old revealed that the majority of children have internet access at home as well as at school. (S. Livingstone, M Bober & E. Helsper 2005). Another survey of European children 9-16 found that since mobile devices give children a flexible access to go online this in particular increases children’s connection to the internet and gives them free access to various social media accounts. (Livingstone Sonja and Haddon, Leslie and Gorzig, Anke and Olafsson, Kjartan 2011). A study of children’s use of online technologies in Europe found that children go to social media sites almost every day. (Olafsson, K Livingstone S. & Haddon L. 2013p. 2).

In terms of Austrian children's consumption of news, not many pieces of literature were found, but Gunter, Furnahm & Griffiths (2000) argued the importance of news among young children and note that the news media plays a big role for society, because they need to stay aware of political social and economic information. Another study of Van Deth, Abendschon & Vollmar(2011) argue the importance of news consumption behavior from childhood and point out that it contributes to creating critical citizens and an engaged society with regards to political, cultural or economic processes. Buckingham (2000) argued that despite young children not being mature enough to understand and analyze news content, but in fact in our digital era, they do in fact consume news (Buckingham,2000). A study from "Fair and Balanced Reporting" suggests that children age 10-12, who are exposed to adult news and who read news frequently, were more knowledgeable about current news. (M. Messenger Davies, 2008).

Studies about children showed that, in general, they are interested in following news on the internet and social media and have a curiosity to know about news around them, but they prefer to see news more based on their own interests rather than adult news. (Alon-Tirosh & Lemish 2014). Moreover, the study of Huang (2009) argues that the use of news from childhood is very important and it develops a better and more critical society in the future. Another study of "the effect constructive reporting in newspaper stories for children" suggests that children from 8 to 12 are engaged in news stories and they are able to understand news content. Moreover, a study found that the children can differentiate constructive and non-constructive news stories (M. Kleemans, RNH. Leeuw, J. Gerritsen & M. Buijzen 2017).

Parental Mediation: In today's environment children are surrounded by media, at home, as well as outside, and this contributes to a child's media consumption (Livingstone, Helsper,2008.) It has been discussed by scholars that some parents are very involved in

controlling media around their children. According to Kirwil (2009) “parental mediation of children’s internet use is supported by parental strategies, techniques, and practices of childrearing and guided by parental values and attitudes”(p.395). She argued about two general strategies of parental mediation, “restrictive mediation” – which refers to setting rules for a child’s media consumption and “instructive” which means that parents are involved in interpreting, discussing and translating media content” (Kirwil, 2009). According to Livingstone and Helsper (2008) they discussed three strategies of parental regulation: (1) “Active mediation – consists of talking about media content while the child is engaging with (watching, reading, listening to)”(2) “Restrictive mediation – involves setting rules that restrict use of the medium, including restrictions on time spent, location of use or content (e.g., restricting exposure to violent or sexual content), without necessarily discussing the meaning or effects such content” (3) “Co-using signifies that the parent remains present while the child is engaged with the medium (as for co-viewing), thus sharing in the experience but without commenting on the content or its effects.” (p.583).

SES and Parental Practice: The fact that parental education and family income an influence on children was argued by Davis-Kean & Pamela E.(2005) In their study of children age 8-12, they observed that socioeconomic status specifically parental income and education, is indirectly associated with children’s high academic achievement. Another study of socioeconomic status and child development (Robert H. Bradley and Robert F. Corwyn, 2002) suggests that SES is associated with a big benefit of cognitive outcome in children. “Children’s cognitive abilities and school achievements are deeply affected by parental socioeconomic status”.(K, Jednoróg, Altarelli, I, Monzalvo K., Fluss J., Dubois J., Billard C., Dehaene-Lambertz G., Ramus F 2012 p.1). Parental practice and interaction with children, as well as

house environment defines the child's development and thinking ability. (Hoff. E Laursen B. Tardif. T. 2002). Parental education plays a big role in children's interaction and practice. Parental education including the way parents talk to their children, nature of discipline in-house practicing impacts on children. (e.g., DeGarmo et al., 1999; Menaghan and Parcel, 1991), Studies of parental practices and interaction with children such as verbal interaction and direct control practice showed that higher SES mothers spent more time to talking to and discussing things with their children as compared to lower SES mothers. (Hoff. E Laursen B. Tardif. T. 2002) However, children, whose parents use a greater vocabulary and talk more to their children, have a better language development and critical thinking abilities. (Hoff. E Laursen B. Tardif. T. 2002). On the other hand, direct parental interaction with children suggests that lower SES mothers give children less autonomy, meaning that these parents are less cooperative and more restrictive as compared to high SES mothers, which also defines a child's thinking abilities. (Hoff. E Laursen B. Tardif. T. 2002).

However, research of SES status and child's development suggests that "children from different socioeconomic strata experience different parenting, but some aspect of parenting appear to be more susceptible to the influence of SES than others" (Hoff. E Laursen B. Tardif. T. 2002p.240) However, as being said that parental communication and interaction defines children's media analysis skills and their perception of news and as well as education method predicts on children's critical thinking abilities based on the literature suggestions this paper will argue if different education methods such as Montessori and Steiner have an influence of child's critical assessment of news on social media. More specifically this study will argue if the different study of education defines children's critical news assessment, evaluation and analyzing news on social media, such as Facebook.

Based on the relevant literature outline the study suggests the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis

H1: Children attending Montessori school, assess news more critically on social media than children from traditional school

H2: Children attending Steiner school assess news more critically on social media than from traditional school children.

H3: The age of children is correlated to children's critical assessment of news on social media.

H4: Children's active social media use is correlated to children's critical assessment of news on social media.

H5: Socio-economic status of children (parents) predicts high critical assessment of news.

H5a: Parental mediation is correlated to children's critical assessment of news on social media

Method

In order to measure differences between Montessori, Steiner and Traditional schools on children's critical assessments of news on social media, survey-experiment was conducted. Children from each school read one short news article and were asked to answer 10 multi-pile questions about the article they just read. The study was conducted between May and June 2018 among primary school children in Vienna, Austria aged between 9-13 years old. The study, including its consent procedure, received the ethical approval from the Vienna University Faculty of Communication Science.

Materials

The news article was written for the purpose of the study. Children included in the study were asked to identify the source of information. The news article was designed in Photoshop to appear as those published on social media sites, such as Facebook. For ethical reasons, the news story referred to animals (panda bears) in the Vienna Zoo. The length of the news story was limited to 240 words.

The news story reported on panda bears “Yang Yang” and “Long Hui”, who were gifted by China in 2003. The story informs the reader that panda bears are, at the moment, suffering from a lack of care and attention from Vienna zookeepers. However, the Chinese government, that cares about the possible extinction of panda bears, especially given that according to the World Wide Fund for Nature there are only 1,860 of these bears left in the bamboo forests, decided to take back the panda bears from Vienna and give them better care (see Annex 1).

Since the main purpose of the study was to determine how critical children are towards news on social media different types of schools, the story was created and developed to measure if they would believe the news content, if they check the news story in other sources and if they would discuss and confirm the truthfulness of the content with their parents, teachers, and friends.

Participants and procedure

After gaining consent from the heads of Montessori, Steiner and Traditional schools to conduct the research, a letter was distributed to the parents. This letter informed parents about the goal and procedures of the study. They were informed that all information would be treated confidentially and would serve only for scientific purposes. Parents were also asked to give their confirmation for their children’s participation in the research and the fill out questionnaires about their own social-economic status and social media consumption behavior. All parents who were approached did not agree to their child’s participation. Those children whose parents gave their

consent were at the start of the survey-experiment whether or not they are willing to participate. After they agreed to participate, they were given the survey-experiment on printed paper. In total, 71 children participated: 14 children from Montessori, 30 from Steiner and 24 from traditional schools, among which 36 were boys and 35 were girls. Their age ranged from 9 to 13 years old ($M=10.75$; $SD=1.41$). All but three participants were born in Austria.

Children participated in the survey-experiment during the school hours. First, they were given general instruction and a guideline of the survey-experiment. Specifically, they told the children that they will be asked questions about their internet and social media consumption and that they will read a short story, after which they would answer ten questions about the story they had just read. In order to avoid stress in the children, they also were told that they were absolutely free to answer the questions based on their knowledge and understanding. They were asked to work individually and instructed not to talk to their peers.

After this short introduction, the children started with the first questionnaires that included general questions (e.g., age, sex, weekly internet usage, whether or not they have a social media profile, news consumption behavior on social media). Then they read the news story described above. Finally, they answered questions about the news story. The whole procedure took 30-40 minutes in each class.

Measures

To measure critical assessment of news on social media, children from Montessori, Steiner and Traditional schools were given the same news article about panda bears and were asked to answer the same 10 multiple choice questions. The questions were designed based on the news story, following Hobbs (1998) media literacy in K-12 environments and Blooms Taxonomy of Education Objectives (1965) of Critical Thinking such as “Evolution” and “Analysis”.

The ten questions referred to the children's interest in reading news on social media and their critical analysis of the news story. To investigate how critical children are towards news, they were asked to answer five questions – if they would read “Panda Bear” news on social media, if they would immediately believe the content of news, and if they would discuss the content of the news with a teachers, parents or friends. Children were also asked if after reading the news, they would check the news facts on the other social media sources or with their parents, friends, teachers, and they were asked if they could identify the news source and author. The critical assessment of the news index was created using the five above described variables. A lower score on the composite measure indicated a greater critical assessment of the news.

Children's active social media use was measured by asking them if they had a personal social media profile. Children were also asked about their weekly internet usage and their daily social media use (Table 1).

I was also interested in the relationship between the critical assessment of news and children's age, sex, parental mediation and parental education. Parental mediation was measured by asking about the frequency of discussion with children about news content and the frequency of discussing a critical analysis of the news on social media.

From the parents, I also collected information about their own social media and internet use and their news reading behaviors on social media. As many as 71.4 % of parents use social media less than 1 hour per day with their child and 31% read news on social media every day.

Results

Table.1 Sample description

Type of school	n/N (%)
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Montessori	14/68 (20.6)
Steiner	30/68 (44.1)
Traditional	24/68 (35.3)
Gender	
Male	36/71 (50.7)
Female	35/71 (49.3)
Personal social media profile	
Yes	33/66 (50.0)
No	33.66 (50.0)
Weekly internet usage	
0-1 day per week	15/69 (21.7)
2-3 days per week	14/69 (20.3)
4-6 days per week	15/69 (21.7)
Every day	25/69 (36.2)
Daily social media use	
Don't use	29/68 (42.6)
Less than 1 hour	18/68 (26.5)
1 hour or more	21/68 (30.9)
	<i>M (SD)</i>
Age	10.75 (1.411)
Critical assessment of the news index	1.53 (0.969)

H1: Children attending Montessori school, assess news more critically on social media than children from traditional schools.

H2: Children attending Steiner school assess news more critically on social media than traditional school children.

To test hypotheses 1 and 2, I conducted one-way ANOVA analysis using SPSS, with the significance level set at $\alpha = .05$. In the analysis, the critical assessment of the news index was included as a dependent variable and the type of school (Montessori, Steiner and Traditional) was included as factor. The first and the second hypothesis measured if children from Montessori and Steiner schools, respectively, assess news more critically on social media compared to children from the traditional schools. The analysis suggested that there is a difference in critical news assessment between the educated children from Steiner as with the traditional method ($p = 0.023$). Children from the traditional schools were more critical in their assessment of news on social media than children from the Steiner schools (Table 2). However, given that children from the traditional school were also significantly older than children from the other two schools ($p = 0.000$) the analysis was repeated with age included in the model as a covariate. When age was included in the model, there were no significant differences between the three groups ($F = 2.643$, $p = .057$).

Table. 2 Among-group differences in the critical assessment of the news

	Montessori school (A)	Steiner school school (B)	Traditional school (C)	Among- group difference (F)
	<i>M</i> (SD)	<i>M</i> (SD)	<i>M</i> (SD)	
Critical	1.643 (1.277)	1.867 (0.937)	1.167 (0.637)	3.840*B ≠ C

assessment of the

news index

* $p = 0.027$; *Post hoc* test statistically significant at $p = 0.023$

To further investigate if there are differences between children from the three schools, additional statistical tests were conducted. They showed there were no differences with regard to believing the content of the news article. However, compared to children from Steiner, children from the traditional school were more likely to discuss news content with parents, friends or teachers ($\chi^2 = 5.116$, $df = 1$; $p = 0.042$). This relationship, however, was again not confirmed when age was included as a covariate in the model, using logistic regression analysis.

H3: The age of children is correlated to children's critical assessment of news on social media.

The third hypothesis tested whether or not children's age is correlated with their critical assessment of news on social media. First, as mentioned before, children from the traditional school were significantly older than children from either of the two other schools (Montessori $M(SD) = 10.36 (0.842)$), Steiner ($M(SD) = 10.07 (0.521)$), Traditional ($M(SD) = 11.96 (1.197)$): $F = 33.175$; $p = 0.000$ (*Post hoc* tests statistically significant at $p = 0.000$). Correlation analysis revealed no significant relationship between age and children's critical assessment of news ($p = 0.211$). However, older children were more likely to discuss the news ($r_{pb} = .278$; $p = 0.030$).

Table 3. The relationship between age and critical assessment of the news (correlation analysis)

	Critical assessment of the news	Discussing news with others
Age	0.150 ($p = 0.211$)	0.278 ($p = 0.030$)

H4: Children's active social media use is correlated to children's critical assessment of news on social media

Children's active social media use and critical assessment of news

To investigate the fourth hypothesis, t-test and correlation analysis were conducted. Children's social media use (recoded to 0 if they did not use social media and 1 if they used social media) was not related either to their critical assessment of the news on social media ($t = 1.633$, $df = 62$; $p = 0.108$) or to discussing the news ($\chi^2 = 0.990$, $df = 1$; $p = 0.320$). The weekly frequency of internet use, on the other hand, was found to be positively related to the critical assessment of the news ($r = 0.274$; $p = 0.023$), but there was no relationship between weekly frequency of internet use and discussing the news ($r_{pb} = 0.130$; $p = 0.321$).

Hypotheses 5a and 5b refer to respectively the role of socio-economic status (SES) and parental engagement in children's critical assessment of news, respectively. SES was included in the analysis as a combination of parental education and income (Table 4). Parental mediation was measured by two items – frequency of discussing news content and frequency of discussing critical analysis of the news with children – that was included in the analysis as a combination of these two items (Table 4). The analysis showed that 54.1 % of parents have a University degree and 39.4 % have a middle school education and other professional degrees. Looking at income, as many as 33.3 % of parents earned 5,000 or more Euros per month.

Table 4. Socio-economic status and parental mediation

Parent's education	n/N (%)
Middle school	3/55 (5.5)
High school	5/55 (9.1)

College	5/55 (9.1)
Educational College	4/55 (7.3)
Professional degree	12/55 (21.8)
University degree	26/55 (47.3)
Parent's monthly income	
500-1,000	1/51 (2.0)
1,000-1,500	5/51 (9.8)
1,500-2,000	3/51 (5.9)
2,000-3,000	4/51 (7.8)
3,000-5,000	21/51 (41.2)
5,000 or more	17/51 (33.3)
Socio-economic status	
Neither university education nor the highest income	20/61 (32.8)
Either a university degree or the highest income	32/61 (52.5)
Both a university degree and the highest income	9/61 (14.8)
Discussing news content with children	
Every day	4/50 (5.6)
Sometimes	31/50 (43.7)
Rarely	10/50 (14.1)

Never	5/50 (7.0)
Discussing critical analysis of the news with children	
Every day	2/49 (4.1)
Sometimes	37/49 (75.5)
Rarely	6/49 (12.2)
Never	4/49 (8.2)

There were no significant differences between children of higher SES with regard to both critical assessment of the news in general or with regard to discussing the news with others ($F = 0.327$; $p = 0.722$ and $\chi^2 = 2.557$, $df = 2$; $p = 0.279$, respectively). When assessed separately, neither parental income nor parental education were related to both critical assessment of the news and discussing news with others.

With regards to Hypothesis 5b, that parental mediation is correlated to children's critical assessment of the news, this hypothesis was also not confirmed. The analysis showed that parents sometimes discussed the news content with children. (Table 4).

However, there was no relationship between the children's critical assessment of the news and parental mediation. The lack of an association, however, could be due to lack of statistical power, since the sample size was too small.

Discussion

The current study examined the critical assessment of news on social media of children attending Montessori, Steiner and traditional schools. The data in the analysis revealed there is a difference in critical news assessment between the Steiner and the Traditional school method

educated children, therefore this study supports the theoretical notion that there should be some difference between the different educational styles.

In addition, children from the traditional school were more likely to be actively engaged on the internet. Analysis showed a positive relationship between weekly internet usage and critical assessment of the news. These findings may provide support to the assumption that children who use social media and internet more, more critically read and assess the news (Deth, Abendschon & Vollmar 2011). On the other hand, this study might serve as a starting point for further research of children's critical news assessment on social media, with regards to different educational styles and their social-economic status.

Children from Montessori and Steiner did not differ from children in traditional schools when it comes to the engagement in the news article. The first possible explanation could be that the items used to measure children's critical assessment were not applied successfully. In order to improve measurements that were used in this study future studies should use a mixed method with qualitative approach. In this way researchers can identify the critical assessment of news through a more dynamic approach, while using quantitative measurements to test the normative ability to assess news critically. The second possible explanation can be the news story used in the experiment. According to Alon-Tirosh & Lemish (2014) children tend to read and like more animal news stories than the other stories, which means they tend to be more engaged when reading articles which encompass news about animals. This was also evident in the current study experiment, as all children really liked reading about a panda bear news story. However, since children were aware of panda bears in the Vienna zoo, that might make it difficult to measure children's critical assessment of the news. The hypothesis that the age of children is correlated to children's critical assessment of news, derived from literature in this study, revealed no

significant difference; however, the study showed that children who used the internet regularly were more likely to be critical towards the news, which is an important finding. However, this finding can be explained by the fact that children from traditional schools were significantly older as compared to Steiner and Montessori. Difference in age between those three groups might have had a significant effect on this study, skewing the data. This might not be surprising and could be explained by the fact that adults are more engaged in reading the news than young children, because children are not mature enough to understand news - young children still do not have fully developed critical thinking skills and abilities (Buckingham; 2000) and older children are more interested in following the news and have greater curiosity to know what is happening around them (Alon-Tirosh&Lemish 2014). Therefore, a small difference in age might have a large effect on how interested kids are in reading news and how competent they are at assessing the news critically. However, the findings that there is a tendency for older children to be more critical, to obtain a more specific insight further research should be conducted with different study methods and more than one new article should be suggested based on the children's interests. Therefore, future researchers should include older children in order to test their abilities to assess news critically.

H4 proposed that children's active social media use is correlated to children's critical assessment of news. Drawing from the results, this hypothesis is confirmed that the children who used the internet more were more likely to be critical. However, this was also related to the age of the children, who were likely to discuss news with their parents and were more likely to check the news sources from the internet and social media sites they used. Messenger Davies's (2008) findings suggests, adults who are exposed to internet and news regularly were more knowledgeable about news and current affairs. This is another finding that supports the claim

that active internet usage and reading news with important social, economic and political information, plays a crucial role in the democratic process. (Gunter, Furnahm& Griffiths 2000). The finding that active social media use is correlated to children's ability to read and analyse news content more critically could be used by future researchers, especially when expanding the topic of news to more politically relevant and contemporary topics about society and the environment.

However, despite H4's finding that children who use the internet more are better at critical thinking when it comes to the news, this inference might suffer from error in measurement scales used in this study. A possible explanation could be that only two items were observed in the questionnaire used in this study- daily social media and daily internet usage. For future study, more items measuring children's engagement on social media and internet should be used in order to identify better what kind of social media and what kind of activities they use on internet. This finding might lead to building a better argument that children who use internet frequently and read news on social media have better critical analyzing skills.

The H5a, which included H5b suggested that the social-economic status of children predicts higher critical assessment of news and parental mediation is correlated to children's critical assessment of news was not supported.

A Suggestion by Hoff. E Laursen B. Tardif. T.(2002) on the best way to measure parental social-economic status and their interaction with children is by using survey questions. This study measured parental mediation by survey asking two multiple-response questions if they discuss news content with their children and if they discuss and talk with their children about critical thinking with regards to the news. Parental SES and mediation was collected with several items in the questionnaire such as age, sex, education, income, nationality and parental social

media behaviors and communication to children. The insignificant finding in this study could be explained by the very low sample size of respondents.

Looking at H5b that parental mediation is correlated to children's critical assessment of news, was not supported either. Parental mediation was addressed as "parental style" measurement (Hoff. E Laursen B. Tardif. T. 2002) which consists of attitudes about children and parent communication, more specifically parental discussion and interaction with children. Hoff. E Laursen B. Tardif. T. (2002) The findings suggest that parents with higher SES status discuss and spend more time with children as compared to parents with lower SES status. As the data in this study showed no significant association between parental mediation and children's critical assessment of the news, I will focus on addressing possible reasons for this outcome. A Main limitation of the study is a small sample size. The second possible reason can be explained by flawed a research method, while Gonzales, Cauce, and Mason (1996) suggested that parental communication and interaction can be measured only by direct observation of interaction between parents and children and having a qualitative method to explain this interaction and how it affects children's ability to assess news critically. Therefore, applying the quantitative research method with combined qualitative method with parents and children, will provide better insight and more reliable scientific findings. However, for future study to find out if parental mediation impacts children's ability to critically assess the of news, should be addressed, ideally, with both qualitative and quantitative methods.

Conclusion

The present study proposed that the different style of education methods, such as Montessori method, Steiner method and traditional method, is correlated with children's critical

assessment of news on social media. The study suggested a significant difference in children's critical assessment of news between children educated by the Steiner and the traditional method, but those children from traditional schools were significantly older than children from the other two schools, meaning that the age of kids might have a stronger correlation to having a good ability to assess news critically than the different style of education. However, in order to draw a more comprehensive study of children's critical assessment of news between Montessori, Steiner and the traditional style of education, future research should be conducted with both, qualitative and quantitative methods. Findings in this study indicated that older children are more likely to assess news critically. It would be more relevant to conduct a similar study with older children, measuring children's frequency of social media and internet usage. By doing so, it would be more relevant to argue if the different study of education matters in terms of assessing and analyzing news critically on social media.

Study Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

Measuring critical media assessment is quite difficult especially in the young group age. According to Ennis (2003) it was pointed out that since critical thinking is complex and multivariate it is very difficult to adapt measurements to fit into the topic of the children's competences to assess the news critically on social media. However, many factors were taken into account to avoid study limitations related to the children's ability to critically assess news, but there are few facts that I need to mention.

The first study limitation deals with the study's stimulus, news article and its multiple-choice questions measuring kid's critical assessment of news. Children were exposed to only one news article and asked only 10 multiple-choice questions. Even though children answered questions and they were asked to assess the article, identify the source of information and discuss

the content of the article, that was not a well enough adopted style of measurement to measure critical assessment of news in this study. Future researchers should apply more than 1 stimulus and develop better items that would measure kid's critical thinking ability more precisely.

I would also like to mention that developing questionnaires of critical thinking capabilities according to Kipping's model (2000) following the categories "1)questioning assumption, 2) Seeking alternative information 3)self-reflection of limitation 4) detecting bias from various sources 5) analysis of context 6)Reflection on the wider context" (Dai-Ling Chen & Rattray J. 2017, p.279-280) would be more effective to find out critical media assessment, while as pointed out critical media analysis involves an ability to analyze and synthesis rather than "memorization and reproduction of information and facts" Dai-Ling Chen & Rattray J. (2017, p.279-280). To this I would like to add that it would be better to use real news story articles taken from social media about different topics such as nature, sports, celebrities or even political news to better investigate critical news assessment among young children.

The second limitation of the study that needs to be discussed is the small sample size. Despite 50 parental consent forms being sent to each school only 14 kids participated from Montessori, 24 from Traditional and 30 kids from Steiner school. In the future, researchers who want to replicate the study or conduct a similar one have to ask more schools for participation and distribute more parental consent in order to get more respondents and improve the quality of data.

Another limitation deals with the method. The current research was conducted by a survey-experiment and the stimulus article was provided on printed black and white paper. The research field of study, critical news assessment, can benefit from combining qualitative and quantitative methods and by inviting children to the computer lab. Such methods can better provide and

investigate better the difference between differently educated children and their critical news assessment and as well as internet, news and social networking behaviors.

Another important limitation deals with the children's age group. Based on the literature children 9-12 years old have mobiles phones and have access to internet (Livingstone Sonja and Haddon, Leslie and Gorzig, Anke and Olafsson, Kjartan 2011) However, the selected age group in this study was 9 to 13 years old. For future studies on the topic of children's ability to critically assess the news on social media, it would be more effective to select a greater age range, rather than the small range, as was used in this study. With larger children's age range researchers could observe better how the different studies of education effect on children's internet and social media behaviors, as well as study children's knowledge and competence and understanding of the intent and social media. However, the current study not only provides valuable direction for future research in the field of different education methods and children's critical assessment of news on social media, but can also contribute to benefit Montessori, Steiner and Traditional education methods and children's internet knowledge, internet usage, children's social media consumption and news reading behaviors on social media.

The final limitation deals with language. Stimuli article and questionnaires for children and parents were both designed in English and afterwards this was translated into German. It can be difficult for German-speaking children to read and understand translated text rather than one created in their native language. So, to avoid this limitation for further research, researchers need to conduct a study in either English language where students speak English as a native language or create a translated stimulus by asking a group of experienced native translators. Considering these limitations researchers can be fully confident that any misunderstanding of texts and questionnaires are not caused by a translation error.

I have to address as well as that doing a research experiment with small children required to me do a pre-test first. By doing so, researchers would have a better insight if the stimulus is correctly adapted and if the translations are feasible for the research purpose.

However, in this research field, in particular, at least two most important lines of research may arise. First, it is interesting to investigate whether the different style of education approaches can affect children's internet usage and news consumption. And lastly, this research study aims to promote further research on this topic and to replicate the same study with improved research methods.

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Appendix A

News article of critical media assessment adopted in German

Schönbrunn, 1752 in Wien gegründet, ist eine der ältesten Zooanlagen Europas. Im Jahr 2003 machte die chinesische Regierung die Pandabären „Yang Yang“ und „Long Hui“ Österreich zum Geschenk. Als im Jahr 2016 „Yang Yang“ Zwillinge gebar, war die Freude der Österreicher groß. Die neugeborenen Geschwister wurden auf die Namen „Fu Ban“ und „Fu Feng“ getauft. Mutter „Yang’s“ bewundernswerte Sorge um ihre Jungen begeisterte Fans in ganz Europa.

Sie kümmert sich sorgsam und hat stets ein Auge auf die beiden, die die meiste Zeit in ihrem Gehege im Wiener Zoo spielend umhertollen.

Vor einer Woche hat der World Wildlife Fund für Natur damit aufhorchen lassen, dass nur mehr 1860 dieser wunderbaren Geschöpfe in den chinesischen Bambuswäldern leben. Es ist eine tragische Realität, dass eines Tages alle Pandabären ausgestorben sein werden. Deshalb hat die chinesische Regierung beschlossen, alle Pandabären aus dem Wiener Zoo heimzuholen. Der Grund dafür sei, dass das Wiener Zoopersonal nicht genügend auf die Pandas achten und sie darüber hinaus nicht ordentlich füttern würde, meinte ein chinesischer Regierungssprecher.

Seit letztem Jahr sieht sich der Wiener Zoo verstärkt finanziellen Problemen ausgesetzt. Bedingt durch diese Unterfinanzierung können die Pfleger den ihnen anvertrauten Tieren immer öfter nicht die gebührende Sorge zukommen lassen. Österreichs beliebteste Pandabären „Yang Yang“ und ihre entzückenden Jungen werden Österreich im Sommer 2018 verlassen.

Gestern rief die Österreichische Regierung alle Pandabär-Liebhaber dazu auf, sich zuvor noch von Wiens süßesten Tieren im Schönbrunner Zoo zu verabschieden.

Appendix B

Questions of critical media assessment adopted in German

1. Hast Du von den Pandabären “Yang Yang” und ihren Zwillingen im Wiener Zoo gehört?

☐ Ja ☐ Nein ☐ Ich weiß nicht

2. Wenn Du diese Nachricht in den sozialen Medien siehst, würdest Du auf den Link

☐ Ja ☐ Nein ☐ Ich weiß nicht

3. Glaubst Du die Nachricht, dass die Pandabären im Sommer Wien verlassen, wenn du sie in den sozialen Medien liest?

☐ Ja ☐ Nein ☐ Ich weiß nicht

4. Glaubst Du, dass sich die österreichische Regierung keine ordentliche Pflege für die Pandabären leisten kann, wenn Du diese Nachricht in den sozialen Medien liest?

☐ Ja, ich würde es glauben ☐ Nein, ich würde es nicht glauben ☐ Ich weiß nicht

5. Falls Deine Antwort “Nein, ich würde es nicht glauben” ist, könntest Du die Gründe dafür angeben (bitte in eigenen Worten):

-
6. Glaubst Du, dass die Pandabären im Wiener Zoo an einem Mangel von ordentlicher Pflege und Futter leiden?

☐ Ich glaube, weil ich davon gehört habe.

☐ Ich glaube es nicht, da ich weiß, dass die Pandabären im Wiener Zoo eine

ausgezeichnete Pflege genießen

☐ Ich weiß nicht

7. Wenn Du diese Nachricht in den sozialen Medien siehst, würdest Du mit deinen Eltern darüber diskutieren, oder mit Lehrern oder deiner Familie? (Mehrfachnennungen sind erlaubt)

☐ Ja, ich würde mit meinen Eltern darüber sprechen

- ☐ Ja, ich würde mit meinen Freunden darüber sprechen
- ☐ Ja, ich würde mit einem Lehrer darüber sprechen
- ☐ Ich würde mit niemandem darüber sprechen
- ☐ Ich weiß nicht

8. Wenn Du diese Nachricht in sozialen Medien liest, würdest Du mit deinen Eltern, Lehrern, Freunden oder mittels anderer Webseiten die Fakten checken?

- ☐ Ja, ich würde den Wahrheitsgehalt dieser Geschichte mit meinen Eltern überprüfen
- ☐ Ja, ich würde den Wahrheitsgehalt dieser Geschichte mit meinen Lehrern überprüfen
- ☐ Ja, ich würde den Wahrheitsgehalt dieser Geschichte mit meinen Freunden überprüfen
- ☐ Ja, ich würde den Wahrheitsgehalt dieser Geschichte selbst mithilfe einer anderen

Webseite überprüfen

☐ Nein, ich würde den Wahrheitsgehalt dieser Geschichte nicht überprüfen, da sie auf sozialen Medien zu finden ist und eine wahre Geschichte sein könnte

- ☐ Ich weiß nicht

9. Warum glaubst du, will China die Pandabären zurückholen?

- ☐ Weil sich China um das Aussterben der Pandabären sorgt
- ☐ Weil China glaubt, dass Österreich sich nicht genügend um die Pandabären kümmert
- ☐ Keine der Antworten ist richtig
- ☐ Ich weiß nicht

10. Kannst Du identifizieren, wo dieser Artikel veröffentlicht wurde?

- ☐ Auf sozialen Medien wie Facebook
- ☐ Auf einer Kinder Nachrichten Seite, von einem Journalisten
- ☐ Ich kann es nicht identifizieren

Abstract

Studies of different approaches in education, such as Maria Montessori's method and Rudolf Steiner's method, became more widely implemented around the world in the last few decades. Maria Montessori argued that "education is a natural process" (Montessori, 1949, p. 7) and children have to learn with joy and enthusiasm while focusing on their interests, which helps the child later to become an independent individual with the ability to think critically. Rudolf Steiner, who developed a theory of "Anthroposophy", focuses on, in his method of education, a child's spiritual development. He argued that learning by "heart and hands as well as head" helps children to become more involved and enthusiastic about learning (Easton 2009; p. 87). On the other hand in the last decades, children's ability to critically assess news, became one of the big topics for scholars. Thinking critically about the media, especially in of the era of internet requires certain skills. However, this article is exploring if the different education methods have an impact on children's skills of critical assessment of news on social media such as Facebook.

Keywords: Social media, News, Critical assessment, Montessori, Steiner, Traditional schools

Auszug

Unterschiedliche Studien auf der ganzen Welt zeigen wachsendes Interesse an den Methoden von Maria Montessori und Rudolf Steiner. Montessori meinte, Erziehung (Eduktion) sei ein „natürlicher Prozess“, (Montessori, 1949, p.7) Kinder sollten mit Freude und Enthusiasmus lernen, worauf ihr Fokus jeweils gerichtet ist. Dies würde Kindern helfen, später unabhängig zu werden und kritisch zu denken. Steiner, der die Theorie der Anthroposophie entwickelt hatte, betont die spirituelle Entwicklung des Kindes. Lernen mit „Herz, Hand ebenso wie Geist (Verstand) unterstützt Kinder“ (Easton 2009; p. 87) mehr involviert und begeistert zu sein. Andererseits wurde der Lernprozess von Kindern in den letzten Jahrzehnten zu einem bedeutsamen Thema. Kritisches Denken, speziell gegenüber Medien und der freie Zugang zum Internet erfordert bestimmte Fähigkeiten. Jedenfalls soll dieser Artikel Argumente für die unterschiedlichen pädagogischen Richtungen und die Kritikfähigkeit von Kindern gegenüber sozialen Medien wie etwa FB untersuchen.

Schlüsselbegriffe: Soziale Medien, Montessori, Steiner, Traditionelle Schulen