

Daugavpils University

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**EDUCATORS' BELIEFS ABOUT MEDIA LITERACY AS
AGENCY COMPONENT IN THE CONTEXT OF MEDIA
EDUCATION**

Summary of Doctoral Thesis

Valdmane, L. Educators' Beliefs about Media Literacy as Agency Component
in the Context of Media Education.

Doctoral Thesis. – Daugavpils: DU publishing house Saule, 2023

Printed in accordance with the decision of the Doctoral Council “xxx”
2023, minutes No. xxx

Special gratitude to Dr.paed. prof. Zanda Rubene, Dr.paed. doc. Sandra Zariņa, Dr.psych. prof. Anita Pipere, Dr.phys. Svetlana Ignatjeva, LVA senior educationist Vineta Vaivade, head of the Safer Internet Centre Maija Katkovska, media literacy researchers and colleagues Klinta Ločmele, Rita Ruduša, Solvita Denisa-Liepniece, Kadri Ugur, Jānis Buholcs, research fellow Gints Klāsons, linguist Gunta Kļava.

The Doctoral Thesis is set for awarding a degree of PhD at Daugavpils University

The Doctoral Thesis for awarding a degree of PhD is defended in an open meeting in 2023, Daugavpils University.

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1. GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE DOCTORAL THESIS

1.1. Topicality of the research theme

The period of the end of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st century is marked by rapid changes in the world along with strengthening of ideas of multiculturalism, pluralism, and globalization, unprecedented growth of information flow and changes of communication forms. These processes lead to changes in the set of skills necessary for good quality life along with changes of the aims, approaches, and content of education.

Education process is meant to provide the knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes that people need to lead productive lives, make informed decisions, and take an active role locally and on a global scale (Education2030, 2015). Recognition of self-worth, development of self-awareness, self-actualization, motivation to succeed, aspiration and vision, ability to be open to change become the general aim of education (Blass, 2018), so that, by means of imagination, understanding, knowledge, skills, common values, intellectual and moral maturity, sense of responsibility, the world is co-created to be a better place (Schleicher, 2019). Education process, with all the above-mentioned components included, ensures person's agency in the contemporary world and leads human on the way to well-being (OECD, 2019).

Agency is a topical concept in modern social science research, which is related to a person's ability to set goals, initiative, activity, practical action, risk-taking, as well as the ability to adapt circumstances to one's needs (OECD, 2019), promoting active participation, strengthening the ability to influence and improve the world that today is permeated by media (Archer, 2003; Raithelhuber, 2016).

The rapid development of media and technologies transforms the way a person gets to know the world, decodes various symbol systems and critically evaluates media messages, is aware how media form culture, acts in a media-permeated environment – nowadays media literacy becomes an essential component of agency. However, analysis of the research on media literacy (KM, 2018, 2020; Latvijas Fakti, 2021) and implementation of media education in Latvia leads to a conclusion that media literacy is not positioned and consolidated as agency component, as an approach to education, but rather as a set of specific competencies, thus considerably narrowing the understanding and significance of media literacy (Kupiainen, 2019; OECD, 2022).

In the media literacy index of 2022 (comparing 41 European countries), Latvia ranks as 21st (Media Literacy Index, 2022). Several challenges and obstacles can be defined in Latvian society in general and in the educational space, which hinder the implementation of

high quality media education. First of all, in Latvia there has not been elaborated a unified definition of media literacy, which would clearly reveal its content and define its importance, separating it from other literacies, including digital literacy. Although the terms “digital literacy” and “media literacy” are closely interrelated, each of them has its own specific content. Media literacy comprises a deeper understanding of the use of media, the ability to reflect on how the media influence the society’s attitude towards specific things, ideas, behavior; understanding how media construct the coverage of ideas, events, people, and how this affects democratic processes; knowledge about the functioning of the media system, as well as human interaction and participation in the media culture – aspects of agency (Hobbs, 2019).

Another challenge is the too narrow view on media literacy by media policy makers, media education content creators, educators, and society in general, reducing it only to verifying false facts, exposing fake news, or, on the contrary, too broad a view, considering media literacy as a solution to all societal problems (Buckingham, 2020; Skulte, 2018).

The situation is made even more complicated by the historically developed existing paradigms of media literacy: media literacy is viewed from the paradigm of protectionism or empowerment with differentiating the audience (passive or active). If media literacy is treated just as a means of reducing risks and harms in an environment saturated with media and technologies, media literacy is ignored as a component of strengthening the subject’s agency that ensures the subject’s efficient participation in the personal, social, culture and political environment (Hobbs, 2010). Therefore, it is important to consider the concept of media literacy both in the cultural context (how media influence the formation of culture, how we engage in cultural practices through media, how our beliefs are formed, how we creatively participate in the formation of culture), in the social context (how the interaction of subjects takes place in the environment interwoven with the media), and in the context of semiotics (how we read, decode, interpret, create signs and their meanings) (Burn, Durran, 2007).

The above mentioned challenges can be prevented with a meaningful and high-quality media education policy and its implementation, therefore the Council of Europe calls on member states to elaborate and adopt appropriate legislation to strengthen media literacy, adopt a coordinated national media literacy policy and implement it using multi-year plans and involving all interested parties; to include media education in all levels of school curricula and lifelong learning cycles; encourage the mass media to promote media literacy; to ensure that state administrative institutions have opportunities and resources for strengthening the public’s media literacy (Eiropas Padome, 2020).

In order to implement media education, in which media literacy is improved as agency component, three levels must be considered: the macro level is represented by politicians and decision makers, the meso or institutional level is made up of decision makers in the field of education, the micro or individual level is formed by every representative of society, including educators (Burr, 2003). Macro and meso levels constitute the normative media education that directly influences the micro level of educating practices.

The macro-level document is “Conceptual report on the state’s strategic communication and information space security for 2023–2027” that includes three pillars: 1) effective communication of state and local government bodies with their target audiences; 2) strong and high-quality media environment and journalistic offer; 3) a skilled, educated, and involved society that is able to recognize and resist manipulations in the information space. The improvement of public media literacy is put forward in this document as one of the basic trends of action (MK, 2023).

Analysis of Latvian basic education and general secondary education standards leads to the conclusion that media literacy is not included in them, only a few media literacy elements and topics are integrated into the content of the digital multi skill and the Latvian language (MK, 2018; MK, 2019). This situation creates a risk for good quality implementation of media education in Latvia, therefore great importance is attributed to the professional competence of educators influenced not only by their knowledge and skills, but also by the beliefs about media literacy as agency component.

Views and beliefs make an essential component of educators’ professional competence that influences both the teaching practice and the way educators interpret new knowledge and experience (Brūvere, 2019; OECD, 2009). Beliefs as a component of educator’s professional competence must be regarded in parallel to the changes of the approach and content in education, as educators are the actual carriers and implementers of changes in education by adopting or rejecting new ideas and innovations. Educators’ beliefs about media literacy as agency component are vital in the implementation of media education (Hobbs, 2010; Ugur, 2010), the same as their own media literacy (Daly, Pachler, Pelletier, 2009). By understanding the beliefs of educators about media literacy as agency component, it is possible to plan and implement a targeted further education process marked by gradual improvement of educators’ beliefs, reducing barriers in the implementation of media education and improving learners’ media literacy as agency component (Brūvere, 2019).

Several media literacy studies have been produced in Latvia (KM, 2018, 2020, NEPL Padome, 2021), research on children’s and adolescents’ media literacy (KM, 2017), yet a broad

range survey of media literacy of educators was performed in Latvia in 2011 in the Latvian Language Agency study “Competence of Using Media in the Target Group of Learners and Teachers” (LVA, 2011). The only doctoral research dedicated to educators’ media literacy is the doctoral thesis “Media Competence in Sustainable Teacher Education” by Alnis Stakle in 2011, concluding that teachers in Latvia characterize media competence as based on the protectionist approach attributing to media the entertaining function, excluding the implementation of media education based on critical thinking and reflection (Stakle, 2011).

Lack of more recent investigations determine the topicality of the present research becoming a significant catalyst for treating the situation of the early 2020s in Latvia, regarding educators’ beliefs as their professional competence element and analyzing their beliefs about media literacy as agency component in the context of media education through this prism.

To analyze educators’ beliefs about media literacy as agency component in the context of media education, the Doctoral Thesis provides a tool based on Planned behaviour theory (Ajzen, 1991) for analyzing educators’ beliefs about media literacy as agency component in three segments: beliefs about behaviour, beliefs about norms, and beliefs about self-efficacy.

To set the focus and context of the research, the following notions are stated for the Doctoral Thesis: subject, agency, media education, media literacy, educators’ beliefs.

Research problem: on the public agenda and in the educational space there are regular discussions concerning the essential role of media literacy in the existence and strengthening of a democratic knowledge society; however, media education and media literacy are not attributed sufficient attention in the major education documents of Latvia. The implementation of media education depends on the professional competence of educators, including beliefs about media literacy as agency component. No research has been conducted in Latvia that would allow to determine and analyze the beliefs of educators about media literacy as agency component, nor has an instrument been developed and approved that would allow to determine and analyze the beliefs of educators about media literacy as agency component. In the present research, methods is developed for obtaining the data that make it possible to analyse educators’ beliefs about media literacy as agency component in the context of media education.

The **research object** of the Doctoral Thesis is media education, the **research subject** is educators’ beliefs about media literacy as agency component.

1.2. Research aim, questions, and objectives

The aim of the research is studying educators' beliefs about media literacy as agency component in the context of media education.

The following **questions** were set for the research:

1. What criteria allow analyzing educators' beliefs about media literacy as agency component in the context of media education?
2. What are educators' beliefs about media literacy as agency component in the context of media education and what is their relation to practice?
3. What is the influence of socially demographical indicators on educators' beliefs about media literacy as agency component in the context of media education?
4. What factors influence educators' beliefs about media literacy as agency component in the context of media education?
5. What are the views of education media literacy experts concerning factors affecting educators' beliefs about media literacy as agency component?

To reach the aim of the research, the following **objectives of the research** are set:

1. Analyzing and characterizing transformations of the notion of subject as autonomous to a subject capable of agency.
2. Elaborating a theoretical framework for regarding educators' beliefs about media literacy as agency component in the context of media education.
3. Elaborating methods for measuring and analyzing educators' beliefs about media literacy as agency component in the context of media education.
4. Applying the elaborated methods for measuring educators' beliefs, investigating educators' beliefs about media literacy as agency component in the context of media education and analyzing the obtained data.
5. Detecting beliefs of education experts, media education and media literacy experts on the factors influencing educators' beliefs about media literacy as agency component, options of affecting them and analyzing the obtained data.
6. Elaborating conclusions based on theoretical ideas and the research results.

7. To find out and analyze the recommendations of media education and media literacy experts for the improvement of pedagogues' views on media literacy as agency component.

1.3. Scientific novelty and practical significance of the research

Scientific novelty of the research

1. Based on the study of the concept of media literacy as agency component and the theory of planned behavior, criteria and aspects have been identified and characterized, which allow identifying educators' beliefs about media literacy as agency component in the context of media education.
2. The research has developed and approved methods that allows to measure and study the beliefs of educators about media literacy as agency component in the context of media education.
3. The empirical results of the research have been analyzed, characterizing the beliefs of educators about media literacy as agency component in the context of media education. Educators' beliefs about media literacy as agency component in the context of media education and the practices implemented by educators segment them into two clusters: educators who do not consider media literacy to be an agency component, focusing on the obstacles to the implementation of media education, but have a higher self-assessment of media education practice, and the other group whose representatives consider media literacy to be agency component, focus less on the obstacles to the implementation of media education and have a lower self-assessment as to the practice of media education.
4. The research identifies and analyzes the beliefs of educators about behavior, norms and self-efficacy, determining the beliefs both hindering and facilitating the implementation of media education, as well as the aspects influencing the educators' beliefs.

Practical significance of the research

The research results reveal the beliefs of educators about media literacy as agency component in the context of media education and are the basis for the improvement of media education in Latvia.

In the course of the research, methods has been developed and approved that provides for the following:

- allows to determine the beliefs of educators about media literacy as agency component in the context of media education,
- yields data for analyzing educators' beliefs about media literacy as agency component in the context of media education,
- provides understanding of the impact of educators' beliefs about media literacy as agency component in the context of media education on teaching practice,
- reveals the aspects affecting educators' beliefs about media literacy as agency component identifying beliefs hindering the implementation of media education that ought to be changed in the process of teachers' further education.

The research facilitates the awareness and advances the importance of teachers' beliefs in practice, as well as identifies the aspects influencing educators' beliefs.

1.4. Theses set for the defence

- Educators' beliefs about media literacy as agency component can be classified into four competence groups – information search and use; critical evaluation of media messages; content creation and communication; media education – defining a sub-set of statements for each of the groups.
- Educators' beliefs about media literacy as agency component can be structured and studied in three interrelated aspects: beliefs about behavior; beliefs about norms; beliefs as to self-efficacy.
- Educators' beliefs about media literacy as agency component in the context of media education and the practices implemented by educators segment them into two clusters: educators who do not consider media literacy to be an agency component, focusing on the obstacles to the implementation of media education, but have a higher self-assessment of media education practice, and the other group whose representatives consider media literacy to be agency component, are less focused and obstacles to the implementation of media education, and have a lower self-assessment in the practice of media education.

1.5. Approbation of the research results

The research is reflected in scientific publications.

1. Valdmane, L. (2022). Teachers' beliefs about media literacy as a component of agency. In *Proceedings of the 14th International Conference on Education and New Learning Technologies* (Edulearn22), pp. 9133-9139.

<https://library.iated.org/view/VALDMANE2022TEA>

2. Valdmane, L. (2020). Empowering digital and media literacy of primary school teachers in Latvia. In *Proceedings of the International Conference on Education and New Learning Technologies* (Edulearn20), pp. 4022-4029.
<https://library.iated.org/view/VALDMANE2020EMP>
3. Valdmane, L. (2016). The agency of education agents in the media space. In *Proceedings of the Conference Education Policy and Culture: Consistent and radical transformations*. Department of Educational Sciences Vilnius University. ISSN 1392-5016. ACTA PAEDAGOGICA VIINENSIA 2016 37. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.15388/ActPaed.2016.37>, <https://www.journals.vu.lt/acta-paedagogica-vilnensia/article/download/10466/8421/>
4. Valdmane, L. (2014). Mācību un mediju vide – izaicinājums mūsdienu pedagogam. Grām.: LU rakstu krājums *Pedagoģija un skolotāju izglītība*, 795. sējums, 130.-139. lpp. https://www.apgads.lu.lv/fileadmin/user_upload/lu_portal/apgads/PDF/LUR-795_Ped-skol-izgl.pdf
5. Valdmane, L., Alchieri, E., Arbutavičius, G., Coelho, D., Galati, C., D., Nogueira, S. & Volungevičiene, A. (2014). Designing open educational resources curriculum for virtual mobility. Breaking the wall. In *Vocational education: Research and reality*. Kaunas. 2014/25. <https://etalpykla.lituanistikadb.lt/object/LT-LDB-0001:J.04~2014~1467966048552/J.04~2014~1467966048552.pdf>
6. Valdmane, L. & Rubene, Z. (2013). Fear and Fascinating of Media: Discussion of the New Dimension of Educator`s Competence in Latvia. In D. Parmigiani, V. Pennazio, & A. Traverso (Eds.), *Learning & Teaching with Media & Technology: ATEE-SIREM Winter Conference Proceedings* (pp. 166-172). Genoa, Italy. ISBN 9789081563956, http://www.ateegenoa2013.sdf.unige.it/images/proceedings/proceedings_atee_genoa_2013rid.pdf

The research is reflected in conference presentations.

1. Valdmane, L. (2016). The agency of education agents in the media space. 3rd International Conference “Education Policy and Culture: Consistent and radical transformations”. Department of Educational Sciences Vilnius University. 21-22 October, 2016.
2. Valdmane, L. (2015). Kā zināt, ka viņi zina. Latvijas Universitātes 73. Zinātniskā konference, Pedagoģijas zinātnes sekcija. 12.02.2015.
3. Valdmane, L. (2015). Izglītības subjektu rīcībspēja mediju telpā. 8. starptautiskā zinātniskā konference “Pedagoģija: teorija un prakse”. Liepājas Universitāte, Pedagoģijas un sociālā

2. STRUCTURE OF THE DOCTORAL THESIS

Chapter 1. Theoretical framework of agency

In Chapter 1 of the Doctoral Thesis, the author provides an insight into transformations of the notion of subject in social science, characterizes the notion of agency in social science as well as analyzes agency as a category of education.

The notion of subject is one of the most complex basic notions of science that has received a diverse treatment in various epochs and contexts. The Doctoral Thesis regards the way the notion of the classical autonomous subject has been transformed to the present notion of a subject capable of agency.

The understanding of the classical autonomous subject developed in the philosophy of Enlightenment and regards subject as a self-sufficient phenomenon based on the spiritual and not social formation of human (Rubene, 2008). However, since the 1980s, the notion of subject in the discourse of social science has transformed and is treated in the context of human's social action including the idea of agency. Subjectivity in this discourse is regarded in the context of socialization and is understood as social agency possessed by the subject (Held, 2015; Holzkamp, 1983; Raithelhuber, 2016), addressing as important aspects of subjecthood not only active cognition but also social practice manifested as a goal-oriented impact on the subject's life world (Archer, 2003; Held, 2015; Qvortrup, 1994).

Considering different understandings of the notion of the subject, neither in the 20th century nor nowadays can one speak of a unified scientific approach in this respect. In Western Europe of the 1960-70s, significant transformations in the understanding of the subject were promoted by theories such as Existentialism, Marxism, and psychoanalysis, which in turn influenced the development of the understanding of this notion in symbolic interactionism, phenomenology, and hermeneutics (Held, 2015).

A significant part of the critical discourse related to the subject is formed by feminist theory, which expands the understanding of the notion of subject. In the context of the democratization of society, the focus of public opinion on the "other", on its right to self-determination, is promoted, as a result of which at the end of the 20th century the notion of subject had significantly expanded to include many social groups that previously had been legitimately discriminated against, such as women and children.

Childhood studies focus on the idea of child as a subject, significantly transforming the pedagogical framework, emphasizing the child-centred or learner-centred perspective in the educational discourse (Archer, 2003; Qvortrup, 1994; Raithelhuber, 2016), considering that knowledge about the child and its life world depends on the child's own experience, which is constructed in the social, political, and economic contexts of society. Thus, according to the socially constructed approach to childhood research, children are subjects capable of agency (actors) who have the same social status as adults. Children are considered as subjects who possess the potential to influence and change social processes (Dinka, 2014).

Chapter 1 of the Doctoral Thesis provides the analysis of agency treating it as an interdisciplinary and multidimensional social process (Page, Czuba, 1999). In social science this notion is accounted for in the context of subject's action – emphasizing the subject's readiness to act independently and make autonomous choices that is considered as a major indicator of social agency. Subject acts independently, thus strengthening his/her active position in relation to his/her life and society (Hurrelmann, 1989; Kaindl, 2007), manages and leads processes in the society, participates in social life (Barker, 2005). An important factor of agency is subject's assurance of being the initiator of one's actions, influencing what is happening, able to transform the world (Giddens, 1984; Sax, 2013; Synofzik, Vosgerau, Voss, 2013).

In social science the subject's agency is investigated by means of two theory groups or models – the structure model, in which the subject is in a subordinate position, and the subject agency or self-construction model, in which the subject acts as being emancipated. The structure model in accounts of subject's agency is focused on social limitations turned by the system, structure against the subject, thus subordinating it. This theoretical conception in the pedagogical thought had been observed until the 1980s, regarding learner as passive and to be improved. Subject agency in this model is limited by the structure. The other model is that of subject's self-construction, which emphasizes subject's individual self-construction and agency, regarding structure as open, flexible, prone to be formed. In this model, subject's agency is treated as a continuous process of self-construction that proceeds by way of social interaction. Subject forms interactive relations with the world and is not a passive product of one's individual and public life conditions but an active and creative interpreter and constructor of one's social life world. In the Doctoral Thesis, subject is regarded from the perspective of self-construction.

Closely related to the concept of agency is the concept of its empowerment, thus marking the important role of the educational process in the concept of agency. In Chapter 1 of

the Doctoral Thesis, agency is also analyzed as a pedagogical category. In order to empower learners' agency, it is essential to ensure such a process of education, in which learners are autonomous, active participants, and become the authors of their own learning (Bandura, 2001; Kumpulainen, Lipponen, 2010), mobilize their personal and social resources (Davies, 1990), are flexible, able to solve problems, have a command of various strategies in dealing with the tasks, are focused on solution (Cope, Kalantzis, 2000). Likewise, the process of socio-emotional learning plays an important role, strengthening such agency components as self-efficacy – confidence in one's abilities, self-awareness, understanding of one's values and priorities – and self-regulation – the ability to mobilize oneself and devote efforts to achieving the set goals (OECD, 2019).

OECD document "Education future and skills 2030" (OECD, 2019) provides a definition of learners' agency as an ability and willingness to positively affect one's life and the surrounding world, setting a goal, reflecting and taking responsible action for creating changes. For a learner to gain agency and attain wellbeing – become satisfied, healthy, and successful, a symbolical compass must be constructed in the process of education from competences, knowledge, skills, attitudes, values, transformative competences. The notion of agency occupies a central place in this compass – all the above mentioned results in learner's agency (OECD, 2019) that supports, shows, and secures the way to learner's wellbeing. Construction of this symbolical compass is the goal and objective of contemporary education (Miķelsone, Odiņa, 2020).

Agency may be constructed and consolidated in the moral, social, economic, and creative context, yet the prerequisite of its empowerment is a well-rounded subject's individual agency – subject's basic skills, attitudes, values (Bandura, 2001; Hewson, 2010; OECD, 2019) that form learners' versatile literacy (Oliņa, Namsone, France, 2018). Semantically the notion of agency is explained as individual's ability (in some sphere), understanding (of something), ability to use, for instance, information, knowledge (Tezaurs, 2021). Subjects use literacy in accordance with their agency, whereas agency affects the way subjects develop their literacy (Wedin, 2020).

Media literacy is defined as a basic kind of literacy nowadays that supports the growth of critical thinking, cooperation, and communication skills, facilitates creativity and innovations. Educator's duty is implementing a respective teaching practice recognizing the significance of individual literacies in the overall context of agency, form the process of education, suggest tasks for a learner to become aware of his/her potential, gain assurance and feel his/her agency in cooperation with others.

Studying the understanding of agency in Latvian education space, the author of the Doctoral Thesis concludes that in major education documents (MK Nr.747, 2018; MK Nr. 416, 2019; MK Nr.436, 2021) the term “agency” is not used preferring the term “proficiency”. The explanation of the term “proficiency” reveals similarity of understanding and partial overlapping of content elements with the notion of agency. Proficiency is defined as an individual’s ability to apply knowledge, skills and express attitudes in a complex way, when solving problems in the changing real-life situations. It is ability to adequately use the outcome of learning in a particular context (educational, work, personal, or socio-political). Proficiency is complex as it entails knowledge, skills, and habits related to motivation and will (Skola2030, 2019). The explanation of both proficiency and agency includes the recognition of a capable subject who solves problems in changing life situations, who has motivation and will, readiness to take risks, responsibility, challenges, the ability to lead life in the desired direction and achieve the set goals, yet agency also includes self-confidence as the initiator of actions, the ability to transform and change the world, highlighting the social context of actions.

Chapter 2. Media literacy as agency component

Chapter 2 of the Doctoral Thesis provides a detailed analysis of the leading paradigms and models of media literacy that significantly affect beliefs concerning the idea of media literacy and its content.

Analyzing media literacy as a social science concept is challenging for several reasons. Firstly, the concept of media literacy took origin only in the early 20th century, developing differently in different countries of the world in a relatively short period of time. Secondly, the study of media literacy is based on the interaction of different fields of science – media and cultural sciences, communication science, educational sciences, semiotics, psychology, journalism, anthropology; for this reason it is multidimensional and comprises a set of developing skills. Thirdly, the concept of media literacy continues to develop rapidly in line with technological changes and developments in the society. Finally, different paradigms, visions, theories, schools of understanding of media literacy exist in parallel and interact with each other, thus influencing the aim, content, and form of media education.

Addressing the formation of the concept of media literacy, the term “literacy” is analyzed. In the 20th century, the notion of literacy has mostly been associated with some of the basic skills – reading, writing, and arithmetic. As the society grew more complex, so did

the concept of literacy. An increasing volume of information and spread of the forms of communication create new challenges for society, requiring the ability to “read” and “write” images and sounds, which turn into hitherto unprecedented but currently necessary modes of literacy, including media literacy (Hobbs, 2010; Livingstone, 2004; Potter, 2010).

Initially (in the early and mid-20th century), the notion of media literacy was based on media and communication theories that provided diverse assessment of the power of media, effects created and the role of the audience (Piette, Giroux, 1997), attributing power to media and regarding the audience as passive recipient. This view was based on the dominant social psychology theory on human behaviour – behaviourism as well as Harold Lasswell’s linear communication model (Hobbs, 2010).

It was this paradigm that formed the initial – protectionist – understanding of media literacy, emphasizing the negative influence of the media: the media negatively affect values, degrade society; TV steals time for education and growth, changes people’s behaviour, making them lazy, reduces mental abilities and sensitivity; TV transmits a certain ideology, reinforces stereotypes, promotes and influences a certain world perception (Buckingham, 1998). This approach separates media from people, creating an erroneous idea that people use media just as a tool for their needs, ignoring the actual interaction of media and subjects.

As the media space developed, the models of the protectionist paradigm were transformed, starting to regard the audience as active: television and people interact, not only television affects people, but also people affect television. Thus, the task of media literacy is to help understand the motives why a person chooses certain content, to improve the skill of evaluating this content so that it meets the individually set motives and criteria, to develop critical thinking in order to be able to choose media content, and not just blindly accept the standards and values of teachers (Buckingham, 1998).

In 1982, Greenwald Declaration on Media Education was passed that emphasized the overwhelming presence of media and instead of denial or passive subjection there was a call to assess media as an element of modern culture of the world, as well as to regard media as a tool for active participation of citizens in the society. The Greenwald Declaration significantly influenced the world’s understanding of media literacy, making it globally significant (Carlsson, 2019).

In 1985 there was another turning point in the paradigm of media literacy – Len Masterman got published his book “Teaching the Media” and introduced the term of media literacy (Masterman, 1985). L. Masterman emphasizes that media construct our reality, they are the window through which we look at reality. This constructed reality threatens our

autonomy, agency, therefore it is necessary to understand who constructs the messages, what the constructed world and its values are like, how we are positioned in the message. L. Masterman lays the foundations for the paradigm of media literacy as empowering the subject, which was later developed in the Aspen Institute program as a basis for media education (Aspen institute, 1992).

In 1989, European Council passed the resolution “Information society – a challenge for the policy of education?” (Eiropas Padome, 1989). It emphasizes that Europe is growing into an information society, emphasizing the importance of education, regarding media and information technology education as a way of preparing young people for the challenges posed by the new society, as well as of strengthening democratic citizenship and political awareness. There is a call for a change of the educational process as a whole, moving from the transfer of encyclopaedic knowledge to child-centred education, in order to stipulate the learners’ ability to select information, think critically, solve problems, work in a team, form judgments, communicate and constantly assess their knowledge and skills according to the changing needs. New information technologies and media are seen as an opportunity of approximating education to the external world as well as making the process of teaching and learning more efficient.

In 1992, Aspen Institute (USA) elaborated the first common definition of media literacy that still forms the basis of understanding, content, and form of media literacy notion (Aufderheide, 1993).

With the continuing rapid development of technologies and media environment, in 1999 in Vienna UNESCO organized the conference “Educating for the Media and the Digital Age” (Vienna conference, 1999) that advanced the Greenwald Declaration proclaiming media literacy as a part of each citizen’s basic rights to freedom of speech and right for information that is essential in forming and sustaining democracy, recommending to include media education into national educational curricula as well as into higher education, non-formal education, and lifelong education. Media education is to be tended towards enhancing of all citizens’ opportunities in the society because it has a decisive role in social and political conflicts, war, natural and ecological disasters (Vienna conference, 1999).

The significance of media education has only increased due to the increasing influence of various factors: broad access to news and information flows, network communication, the spread of biased and unverified information in the Internet environment (Sauerteig, Cervera Gutierrez et al., 2019), media ecosystem creates opportunities for active participation,

expression of opinions, community building, activism, digital citizenship (Kupiainen, 2019). Media education is the basis of human rights and promotes the effective use of media in a positive, constructive, and creative way (Kupiainen, 2019), strengthens the existence of democratic society (Masterman, 1985; Thoman, Jolls, 2008), giving an opportunity for people to participate in more open and informed democratic discussions (Eiropas Komisija, 2023), and facilitates a consumer's growing into a citizen (Livingstone, 2004).

L. Masterman in 1985 emphasized significant factors related to the implementation of media education: media education changes the relations between educators and learners making them into a dialogue and encouraging exchange of know-how; facilitates self-guided learning and taking responsibility for the process of learning as well as allows to see it in a broader perspective. Media education is a holistic process; it comprises constant changes, it develops along with the changing reality. Factors defined by Masterman characterize such a process of media education that enhances the learners' media literacy as agency component.

Major obstacles for defining the content of media education and incorporating it into a unified system (Skulte, 2018) arise from the following:

- the presence of various spheres of science – media and culture studies, communication science, education sciences, semiotics, psychology, journalism, anthropology in media education (Ugur, 2010);
- constant changes in the media environment (Ptaszek, 2021);
- the existing belief that media education is a quick solution to social problems, isolating the emerged problems, treating symptoms instead of the true causes, offering fragmented solutions (Buckingham, 2020);
- presence of parallel terms of *media literacy*, *media competence*, *digital literacy*, *information literacy*, that partially overlap and cause the ambiguity of the content of the above listed literacies in the society, including among teachers;
- parallel existence of diverse media literacy models: the cognitive media literacy model (Potter, 2004), media related competence model (Baacke, 1996), critical media literacy model (Funk, Kellner, Share, 2016), question model (Jolls, Wilson, 2014), cultural-semiotic model (Burn, Durran, 2007). Media literacy is most widely explained in the cultural-semiotic model, outlining the cultural context of media literacy, social functions and semiotic processes, thus reflecting the importance of media literacy in ensuring the complex agency of the subject.

Turning to media education in Latvia, it is concluded that media literacy as a separate kind of literacy is not mentioned either in the regulations on the national basic education standards and sample basic education curricula, or in the regulations on the national general secondary education standard and general secondary education curricula samples, integrating some elements of the content of media education into the framework of digital literacy as a transversal literacy. The definition of the concept of media literacy is provided in the “Latvian Media Policy Guidelines for 2016-2020” developed by the Ministry of Culture (2016, work at the new guideline elaboration started in 2022): “Media literacy is a set of knowledge and skills necessary for working with information sources – finding and analyzing information, understanding the functions of information providers, critically assessing the content of information, distinguishing objective information from biased information, comparing news available from different sources in order to form a justified opinion. Media literacy also includes the ability to use media in practice.” The proposed definition regards media literacy as a tool for media use, not as a set of perspectives to reveal itself and interpret the meaning of received messages, thus narrowing the understanding of media literacy, which should be supplemented with knowledge about media literacy as an important element of strengthening the subject’s agency, that ensures high quality participation in democracy, economy, and in culture (Carlsson, 2019), treats subject as a co-creator of media environment (Baacke, 2001), facilitates the awareness of the effects created by media (Funk, Kellner, Share, 2016; Jolls, Wilson, 2014).

Analyzing the status quo of media literacy in Latvia, it can be concluded that there is a lack of a holistic approach to media literacy and media education in general, so far at the national level and at the level of regulatory documents (macro) media literacy and media education have been viewed incompletely, which affects the implementation of media education at the micro level.

Chapter 3. Educators' beliefs as a professional competence component

Chapter 3 of the Doctoral Thesis provides the analysis of the educators' beliefs as a component of professional competence, realizing that in the implementation of media education decisive factors are the professional competence of every teacher (European Framework for the Digital Competence of Educators, 2017), beliefs about media literacy as its significant element (Hobbs, 2010; Ugur, 2010), as well as the teacher's own media literacy (Daly, Pachler, Pelletier, 2009).

Beliefs are an interdisciplinary, multi-layered term that unites theories of anthropology, social psychology, and philosophy. Beliefs are psychologically justified notions, assumptions, or suppositions about the world that are held to be true (Richardson, 1996), therefore they are emotionally binding and function as a guide for thought and behaviour (Borg, 2011), indicators that reflect subjects' actions (Pajares, 1992). Beliefs are usually juxtaposed to knowledge emphasizing the subjective nature of beliefs and the objective nature of knowledge (Šapkova, 2015).

Beliefs as an element of educator's professional competence are to be regarded in parallel to changes in approach and content in education because educators are bearers and implementers of changes in education (Gudjons, 2007) as they offer their learners concrete content and form of learning, adopting or rejecting new ideas and innovations (Avery, 1979).

Educator's beliefs are influenced by the situation context, education philosophy, experience, knowledge, values, stereotypes, and beliefs of the surrounding community (Brūvere, 2019). In turn, educator's beliefs affect his/her ability to plan and conduct the process of learning, advance learners' skills of analysis and reflection, skill of interacting that is manifested in the formation of the class and school environment, in the process of learning and the educator's sense of self-efficacy (Namsone, Volkinšteine, Lāce, 2018; OECD, 2009; Wilkins, 2008).

In order to understand the beliefs of educators about the concept of media literacy and its significance in education, which affects the implemented pedagogical practice, and to find out what factors influence these beliefs, the theory of planned behaviour developed by Icek Ajzen (Ajzen, 1991) that is broadly used in social science to prognosticate and understand subject's behaviour was adapted in the Doctoral Thesis research.

Planned behaviour theory defines three groups of beliefs that influence subject's intentions and respective behaviour:

- beliefs about behaviour, predicting a favourable or unfavourable attitude, evaluation of the implementation of the determined behaviour (cognitive aspect);
- beliefs about norms influenced by the subject's perceptions of social pressure, normative instructions to implement or not to implement the specific behaviour (external conditions);
- beliefs about self-efficacy, about the ability to implement the concrete behaviour (both internal and external conditions). Subjects perform specific actions if they assess them positively, feel social pressure to act so and believe that they have the means and opportunities to implement the specific action (Ajzen, 2019).

Achieving behavioural change requires either changing some of the beliefs or adding new beliefs that support the desired behaviour, thus it is important to identify the subject's behavioural, normative, and self-efficacy beliefs. These beliefs help to understand the cognitive base of behaviour, i.e., why people have specific attitudes, subjective norms, and perceptions about controlling behaviour and why they intend or do not intend to carry out the specified behaviour. Beliefs may not correspond to reality, they may be inaccurate, biased, or even irrational, but their totality influences intentions and behaviour in a logical and predictable way (Ajzen, 2005).

Based on I. Ajzen's theory, in accordance with the aim of the research, the author of the Doctoral Thesis has developed a module for determining educators' beliefs about media literacy as agency component in the context of media education. The elaborated model is presented in Figure 1.

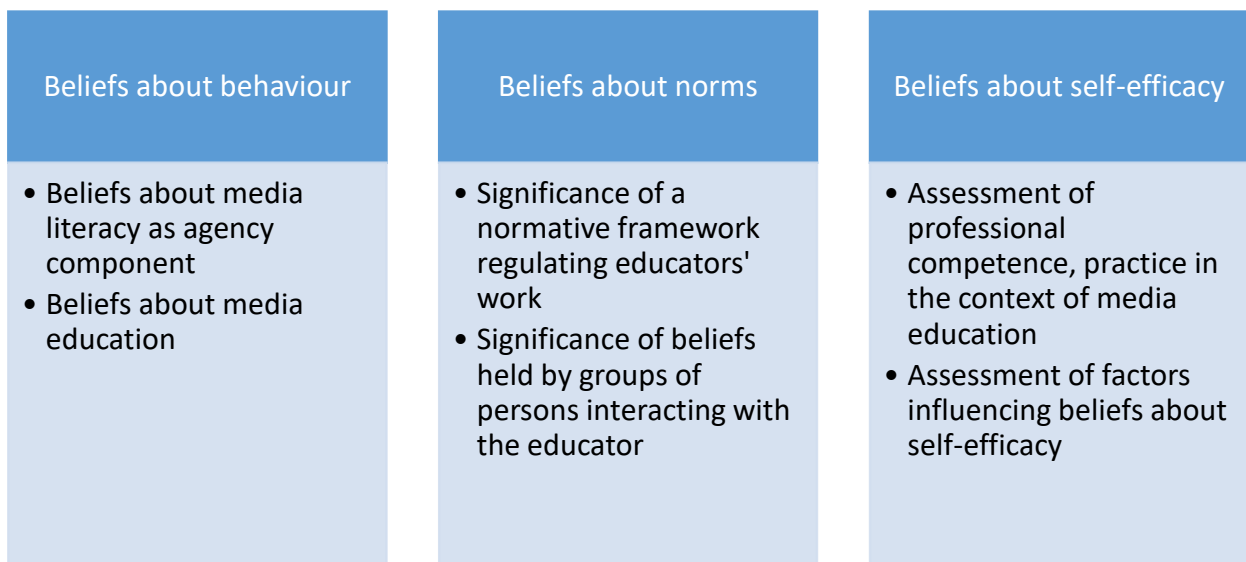


Figure 1. Model for detecting educators' beliefs about media literacy as agency component in the context of media education (Valdmane, 2022)

The Doctoral research methods has been formed on the basis of the structure of the elaborated module including and expanding the defined beliefs.

Chapter 4. Analysis of educators' beliefs about media literacy as agency component

Chapter 4 of the Doctoral Thesis provides methodological guidelines of the empirical research, description of the procedure and sampling of the research as well as explanation of the data obtained. The empirical research is a mixed type of research that allows to detect both generalized and detailed beliefs of individuals about the meaning of a phenomenon or concept (Mārtinsonē, Pipere, Kamerāde, 2016). The sequential explanatory research design has been chosen for the Doctoral research (Mārtinsonē, Pipere, 2011), detailing the quantitative method results by those of the qualitative method.

The author of the Doctoral Thesis has developed research methods that allows to determine and analyze educators' beliefs about media literacy as agency component in the context of media education, gaining answers to the research questions defined in the introduction of the Doctoral Thesis. A survey of educators and the method of comparison of pairs of education experts (Analytic Hierarchy Process) were used to obtain quantitative data, semi-structured interviews of media education and media literacy experts were used to obtain qualitative data.

Survey "Educators' beliefs about media education and media literacy"

The survey consists of the part of socio-demographic indicators and three parts of statements. Data were obtained from 305 respondents.

First two statement parts were designed based on the literature analysis produced in the theoretical part of the Doctoral Thesis (Baacke, 1996; Burn, Durran, 2007; Funk, Kellner, Share, 2016; Jolls, Wilson, 2014; Potter, 2004) identifying criteria that allow analyzing educators' beliefs about media literacy as agency component in the context of media education. Four competence groups were defined, each of them expanding in a set of statements.

Examples of competence groups and statements:

1. Searching and using information: I feel the need for diverse information; know how to find information in various media according to specific criteria; I use different sources of information, I know the advantages and limitations of each, I choose the most suitable for a specific situation, etc.

2. Critical evaluation of media messages: understand media power, functions and operating principles; understand the importance of independent media in the existence of democracy; know how to see and explain how the media form (rather than reflect) reality; the ability to perceive and interpret various media messages, etc.

3. Content creation and communication: I use various ICT tools, digital media to create and share information, knowledge with learners, colleagues, etc.; I know what the content, form, and channel of the message should be in order to reach the specific audience, I create my messages according to these criteria; Know how to use and use digital media for civic participation, etc.

4. Media education. This set of statements was divided into three subsections: *media education for the improvement of learners' media literacy as agency component* includes the following statements: I understand how the media influence learners' views about the importance of subjects in the field of learning; I purposefully improve the media literacy level of learners; I implement media education, promoting the development of thinking, informed and autonomous personalities, etc.; *didactics of media education* includes the following statements: I am interested in, learn about and include in the learning process assignments that develop learners' various skills, including media literacy; I improve learners' ability to create various media messages (videos, stories, articles, diagrams, polls, etc.), share them, etc.; The group of statements of *educator as an implementer of media education* includes the following statements: I feel the need to improve my understanding and knowledge of media education; not afraid to make mistakes, experiment when implementing media education, etc.

Each statement was assessed along two dimensions:

1. Relevance of the statement to the personal pedagogical activity.
2. Belief about the relevance and importance of the statement in education.

The statement part of the third survey contained statements that allow to understand:

1. educators' beliefs about media literacy as agency component: media literacy promotes human autonomy, activity and facilitates the achievement of goals in modern society; media literacy is closely related to personal growth, creativity, education, involvement in society and culture; media education is the basis of human rights, freedom and democracy, not only a set of specific competencies; a person with developed media literacy can express oneself, popularize one's ideas, share opinions, knowledge, thus co-creating the media environment and culture, etc.;

2. educators' beliefs about the role of media education in the modern learning process: media education promotes the implementation of a child-centred approach; media literacy is the basis of a modern educational process, etc.;

3. educator's willingness and ability to implement media education: I am not motivated to implement media education in the teaching process; I am not sure that I am capable of qualitatively implementing media education; only a few educators I know successfully integrate elements of media education into their curriculum; most of the pedagogues lack knowledge, understanding of how to include media education in a specific field of study, etc.;

4. external motivators or disturbing factors for the implementation of media education: I am afraid of the condemnation of students, parents, colleagues, if in addition to the content of the field of study, I also implement media education; it is important for the school administration to determine as important and follow up the implementation of media education in the educational institution; it is important for media education to be included in the Act on Education, standards of study areas, model programmes, teaching materials; I am not motivated to implement media education in the learning process, etc.

Paired comparison method

The paired comparison method is often and successfully used in psychology, sociology, statistics, and management (Kurennykh, 2019; Thurstone, 2021). The paired comparison method is a data collection tool that offers to respondents and experts to compare some objects in pairs according to the provided justification (Cherkashin, 2020). The obtained data provide an opportunity to create a scale, ranking, obtain an expert assessment according to the aims of the research.

In the study, the paired comparison method was used to detect the beliefs of 11 education experts about the aspects that influence the educators' beliefs by comparing the defined aspects with each other. The author of the Doctoral Thesis has designed a matrix of the paired comparison method, based both on the analysis of the scientific literature contained in

the Thesis on media literacy as agency component and on the theory of planned behaviour formulated by I. Ajzen.

Education experts compared the following aspects influencing educators' beliefs: normative documentation and the environment; philosophy of education, educators' knowledge of the learning process and learners; understanding of the concept of media literacy; didactics of media education; teacher's self-efficacy.

A semi-structured expert interview was used to explain the data obtained from the survey and the paired comparison method, interviewing four experts.

In order to find out the educators' beliefs about media literacy as agency component in the context of media education, a teacher survey was used. Each survey statement was assigned an index (K-competency, the first or first and second digits indicate the competence group or subgroup, the last digit indicates the order of the statement within the group), which is used in the visualization of the obtained data.

Each statement was assessed by the respondent according to the markers "Correspondence to personal teaching activity" and "Relevance and significance in education". According to this evaluation strategy, it is possible to create an arrangement of statements on a coordinate plane. Each point corresponds to a specific statement, while the line distribution depicts the correspondence to the rating marker. The obtained data are reflected in Figure 2, with the statements clearly structured into four groups:

1. group of statements: relevance to personal teaching activity above or equal to the mean, relevance and significance in education below the mean;
2. group of statements: relevance to personal teaching activity higher than or equal to the mean, relevance and significance in education higher than the mean;
3. group of statements: relevance to personal teaching activity lower than or equal to the mean, relevance and significance in education higher than the mean;
4. group of statements: relevance to personal teaching activity lower than or equal to the mean, relevance and significance in education lower than the mean.

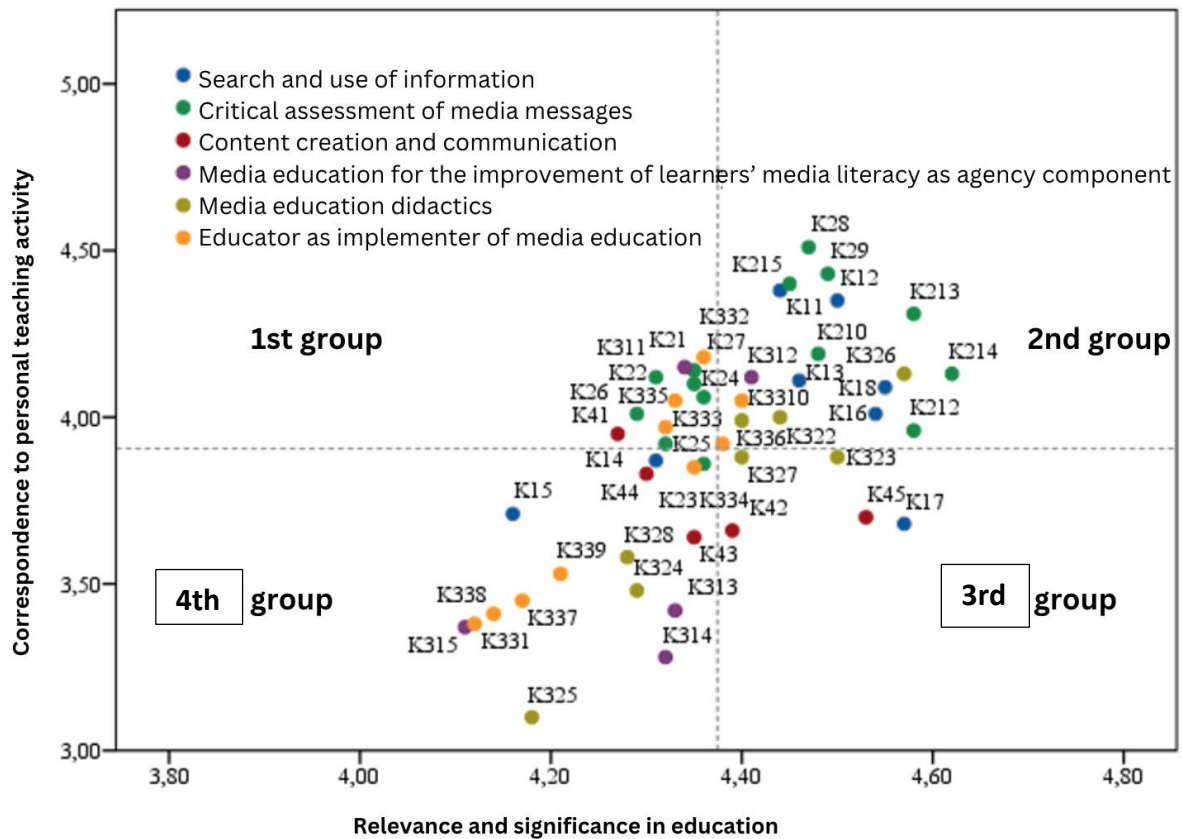


Figure 2. Statement distribution into groups

Group 1 identifies significant media literacy and media education elements that are estimated by educators as highly relevant to their teaching activity but their topicality and significance in education – as low. Educators’ belief that the listed statements are of low topicality and significance in education reflects the lack of understanding of the importance and content of media literacy. Understanding of the notion of media literacy as agency component is the foundation of media education (Ugur, 2010), therefore such basic questions about media literacy as media functioning, media functions, power, significance in the democratic process, and other questions included in this segment are vitally important for building learners’ media literacy as agency component.

Comparing the obtained results of the first group of statements with the results obtained by the paired comparison method contained in the Doctoral Thesis (see Figure 3), it can be concluded that the respondents of the paired comparison method rank the understanding of the concept of educators’ media literacy as the least influential aspect of educators’ beliefs.

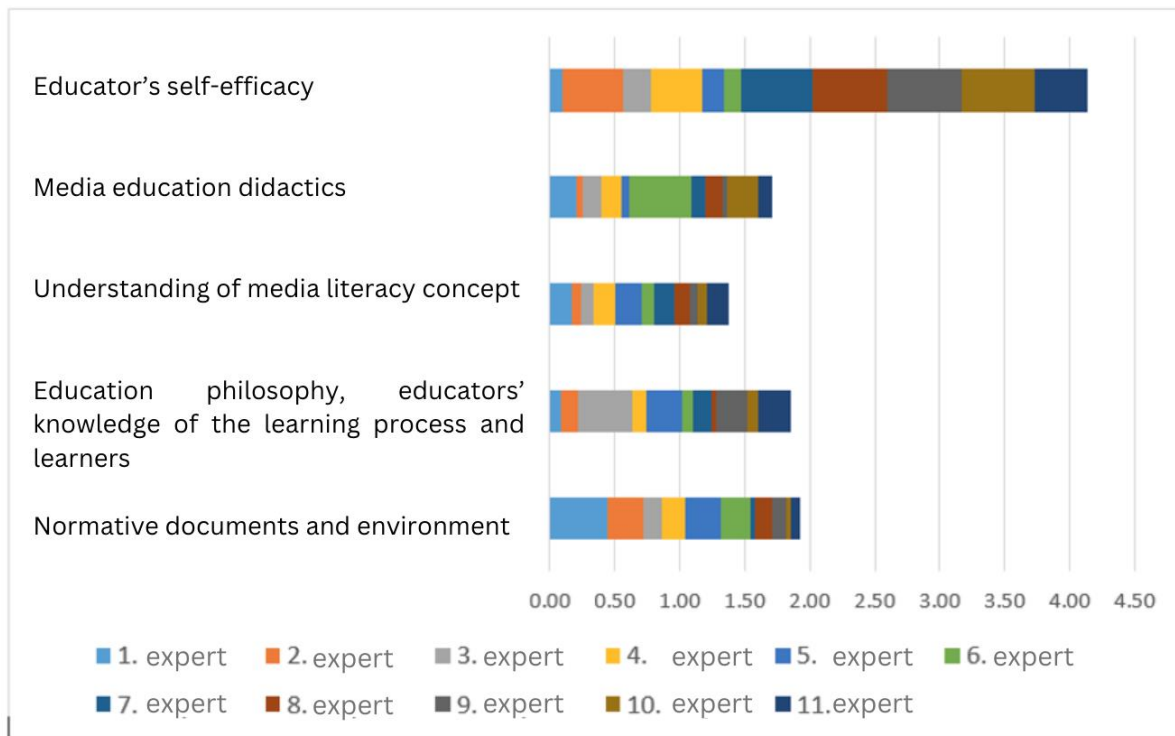


Figure 3. The experts' assessment of the factors influencing educators' beliefs in the paired comparison method

The identified results can be explained by the situation described in the theoretical part of the thesis at macro-level – the absence of the description, content, and achievable outcomes of the concept of media literacy in the major educational documents, thus educators do not form a unified understanding of what the concept of media literacy includes.

Group 2 comprises the largest number of survey statements (18), which shows that media literacy is important both in educators' work and relevant and important in education, but the analysis of the statements about media education in this group reveals that no statements have been identified in this sector that would approve of a comprehensive and meaningful implementation of media education. It is important to note that the answers to the survey conducted in the Doctoral Thesis characterize the self-assessment of the respondents, but in the conducted interviews the experts emphasize: "The content of research ought to be changed from self-assessment, which does not reflect reality, to control tasks, the results whereof can be measured. Based on my experience, I can say that the self-assessment of educators does not match the reality, because they think they know, but the reality is different, the theoretical answers do not match the actions in practice." (Expert 1, Expert 2).

In group 3, only five statements were identified, which confirm the educators' beliefs about the importance of these statements, but their inconsistency with their pedagogical

activity. The mentioned statements are considered very important not only for the educator's own media literacy, but also for the implementation of good quality media education, in the educational process, which is based on self-directed learning.

Group 4 of statements allows to conclude that 16 important elements of media literacy, whereof 11 represent the competency group "Media education", are not implemented by the respondents in their personal teaching activities, nor do they consider them relevant and important in education. It is important to note that the respondents' answers approve of the fact that media literacy is not purposefully improved and assessed in their educational activities. Besides, educators lack understanding and knowledge in the use of digital media in civic participation, as a result of which the opportunities provided by the media environment in strengthening learners' civic participation and civic skills may not be used.

It has been identified that educators do not independently improve their knowledge and understanding of media education issues (K334), and do not consider it important and do not follow the news of organizations about new resources, activities that support the implementation of media education in Latvia (K339). Such a belief and behaviour make it difficult for educators to improve their media literacy, which is possible by attending further education activities, as well as using materials dedicated to media literacy.

The comment by expert 3 is useful for the explanation of the obtained data: "Educational policy documents should include the concept of "media literacy", as well as define what elements constitute it, which elements are highlighted in the educational process. This would establish clarity and a common understanding of both media literacy and media education. Currently, there is fragmentation, irregularity, lack of system. Teachers are involved in courses and seminars implemented by various projects, but each project highlights its own currently relevant topics and areas. This situation results in not considering many elements of media literacy at all, placing the focus on the goal of the project, instead of what may be important for the educator. This could only be solved with the creation and implementation of a unified further education programme."

Part 3 of the survey provides broader explanation of educators' beliefs on media literacy as agency component and media education. This stage was dedicated to factor analysis.

According to Bartlett's test, the acceptable level for factor analysis to be considered valid for the analysis of the study sample is lower than 0.05. Bartlett's test result for the Doctoral Thesis survey shows a significance lower than 0.001, from which it can be concluded that the factor analysis is usable.

The statements contained in the survey are structured into three factors, which allow to characterize the educators' beliefs about media literacy as agency component:

- media literacy as agency component;
- obstacles to implementing media education;
- educator's self-assessment in the implementation of media education.

In the first group – “Media literacy as agency component” – the greatest factor weights are those of statements such as “The use of media in the learning process helps to relate knowledge to real life”, “By analyzing diverse media messages, learners develop critical thinking, learn to see how the media influence culture, society”, “The use of media in the learning process promotes learners' activity and co-responsibility for the learning process”, “The meaningful use of media in the learning process develops learners' participation skills in a democratic society”, “Media literacy creates confidence and the ability to influence one's life and the surrounding world”. The identified data theoretically confirm the educators' beliefs about media literacy as agency component, but do not coincide with the respondents' answers in the first and second part of the statements of the survey, assessing their pedagogical activity and the relevance and importance of the specific statement in education. The statement “I can see and explain how the media form (rather than reflect) reality” (statement group “Critical assessment of media messages”, K23) was rated below the mean in both criteria, but in this part of the survey it is rated as one of the most significant. The situation is similar with the criteria for digital participation. Such a discrepancy in data can be explained by the direct connection of the first and second parts of the survey with the personality of the teacher, the implemented pedagogical practice, and not the assessment of abstract criteria, as is the case in this part of the survey.

Analyzing the elements with the lowest load in this group, it can be identified that statements such as “Media literacy promotes human autonomy, activity and facilitates the achievement of goals in modern society”, “Media influence our beliefs, values, shape us” are among the statements with the lowest load.

The second group “Obstacles to the implementation of media education” has the biggest loads with such statements as “Media literacy is already innate in children nowadays, it develops by itself, it does not need to be purposefully developed in the educational process”, “If ICT are used in the learning process, it is sufficient for developing the media literacy of learners”, “Learners should be protected from the conflicting opinions found in the media and the influence of mass culture”, “Media literacy is just another thing in fashion, its importance

is exaggerated”, “I am afraid of the condemnation of students, parents, colleagues if, in addition to the content of the curriculum, I also implement media education”, “Media in the learning process undesirably compete with the educator or even replaces him/her”, “I am not motivated to implement media education in the learning process”.

The identified group approves of the prevalence of protectionist beliefs, as well as an incomplete understanding of media literacy that does not correspond to the present-day situation and a lack of motivation, which is a significant obstacle in the implementation of media education. It is important to highlight the statement of this group: “I am afraid of the condemnation of students, parents, colleagues if, in addition to the content of the curriculum, I also implement media education”, which describes the educators’ beliefs about norms, and, as the data show, the teacher predicts a negative reaction to his/her behaviour.

Analyzing the elements of the lowest load in this group, it is important to highlight the opinion “In the implementation of media education, the greatest importance is attributed to the teacher’s knowledge and skills, not the teacher’s beliefs and attitude towards media education”. The obtained data show that educators are aware of the importance of their beliefs in the implementation of media education.

In the third group “Educator’s self-assessment in the implementation of media education”, the greatest load is with the following statements: “The majority of educators lack knowledge, understanding of how to include media education in a specific field of study”, “Only a few teachers whom I know successfully integrate elements of media education in their field of study”, “The teacher finds it difficult to select information appropriate for a specific learning goal in diverse media”, “Most educators are aware of the importance of media education, but do not implement it”, “Most educators are not aware of the importance of media education”, “I am not sure that I can implement media education qualitatively”.

The identified statements reflect educators’ self-assessment in the implementation of media education that I. Ajzen (Ajzen, 1991) terms beliefs about self-efficacy. The obtained data approve of the fact that a major part of educators hold negative beliefs about self-efficacy – they think they lack knowledge, understanding, find it hard to select information, lack assurance on their ability to implement media education qualitatively.

The data obtained in the study reveal the most important regularities and aspects that influence educators’ beliefs about media literacy as agency component, therefore a two-stage cluster analysis was performed – a statistical classification technique in which a set of indicators or points with similar characteristics is grouped into clusters, forming meaningful structures.

The results of the cluster analysis showed that the factors with the greatest discriminant power in the division of groups are “Obstacles to the implementation of media education” and “Self-assessment of the educator in the implementation of media education” with a high or low correlation with the indicator “Media literacy as agency component” (Fig. 4) .

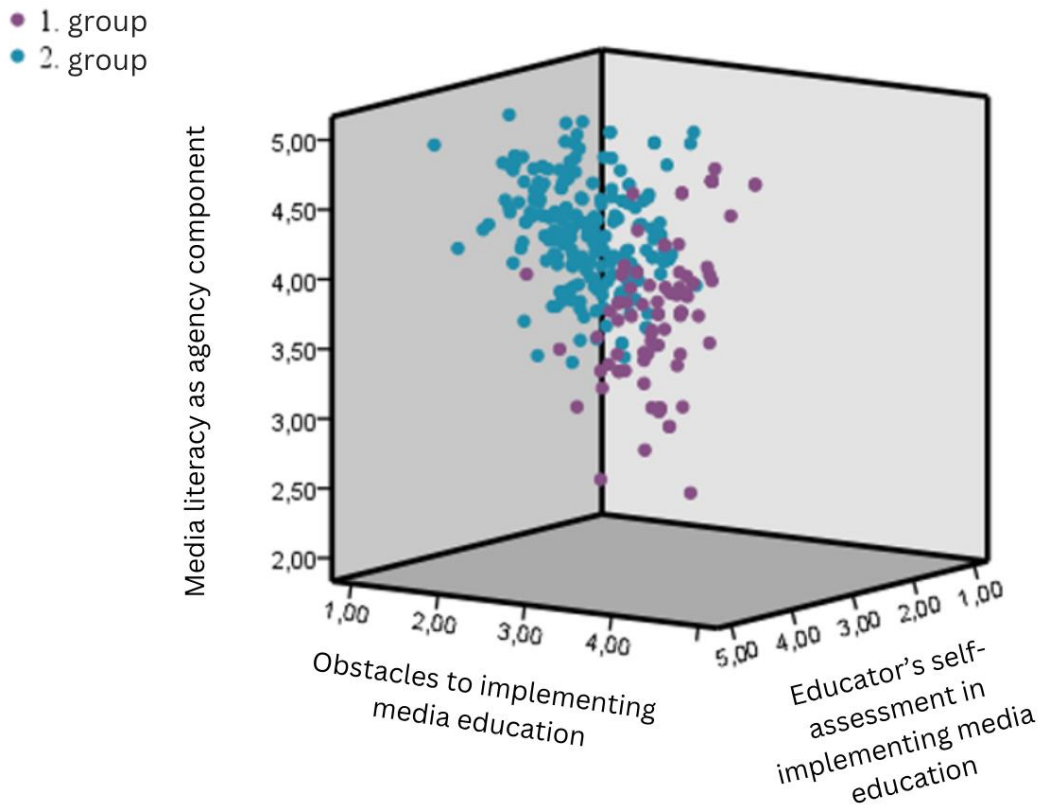


Figure 4. Respondent distribution in clusters.

According to the research results, two clusters of educators can be distinguished. For the respondents of the first cluster, the indicator “Media literacy as agency component” is lower than the mean on a whole. 31.1% of educators belong to this cluster. For the respondents of the second cluster, the indicator “Media literacy as agency component” is higher than the overall mean, and it holds 68.9% of educators. Henceforth in the text, groups are called group 1 (31.1% of educators) and group 2 (68.9% of educators).

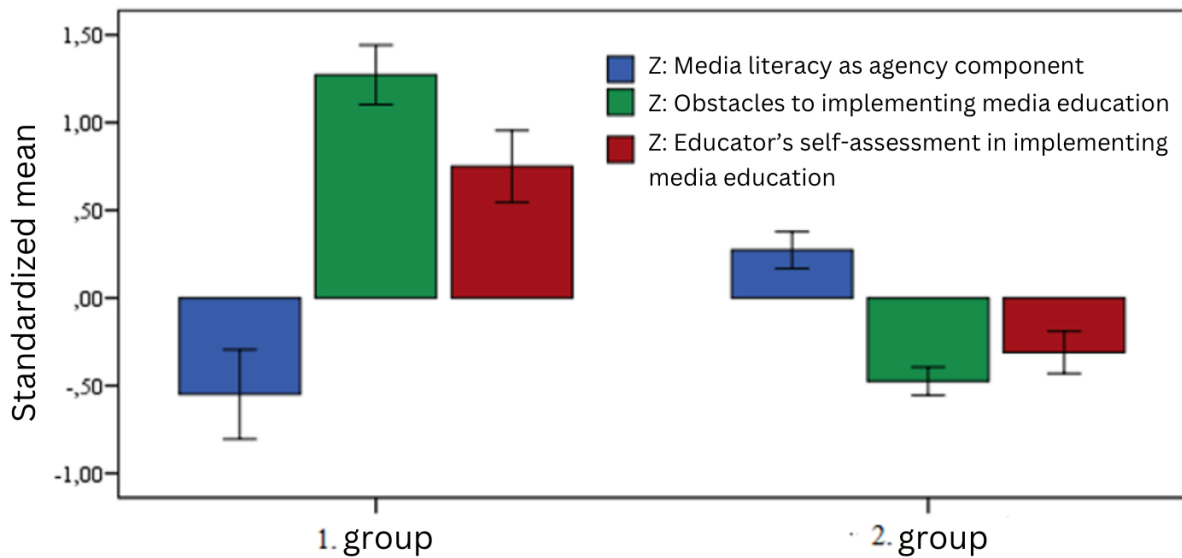


Figure 5. The standardized mean values of the created cluster indicators that reflect respondents' beliefs about media education and media literacy

Figure 5 shows significant differences between the two groups – group 1 considers media literacy as agency component to be below the mean, focusing much more on the obstacles to the implementation of media education. The obtained data for this group show a higher self-assessment of educators in the implementation of media education. For group 2, the indicators are the opposite showing greater understanding of media literacy as agency component, but lower self-assessment and less focus on the obstacles to the implementation of media education.

The research analyzes what elements of media literacy are characteristic and important for the representatives of each cluster (Figures 6 and 7).

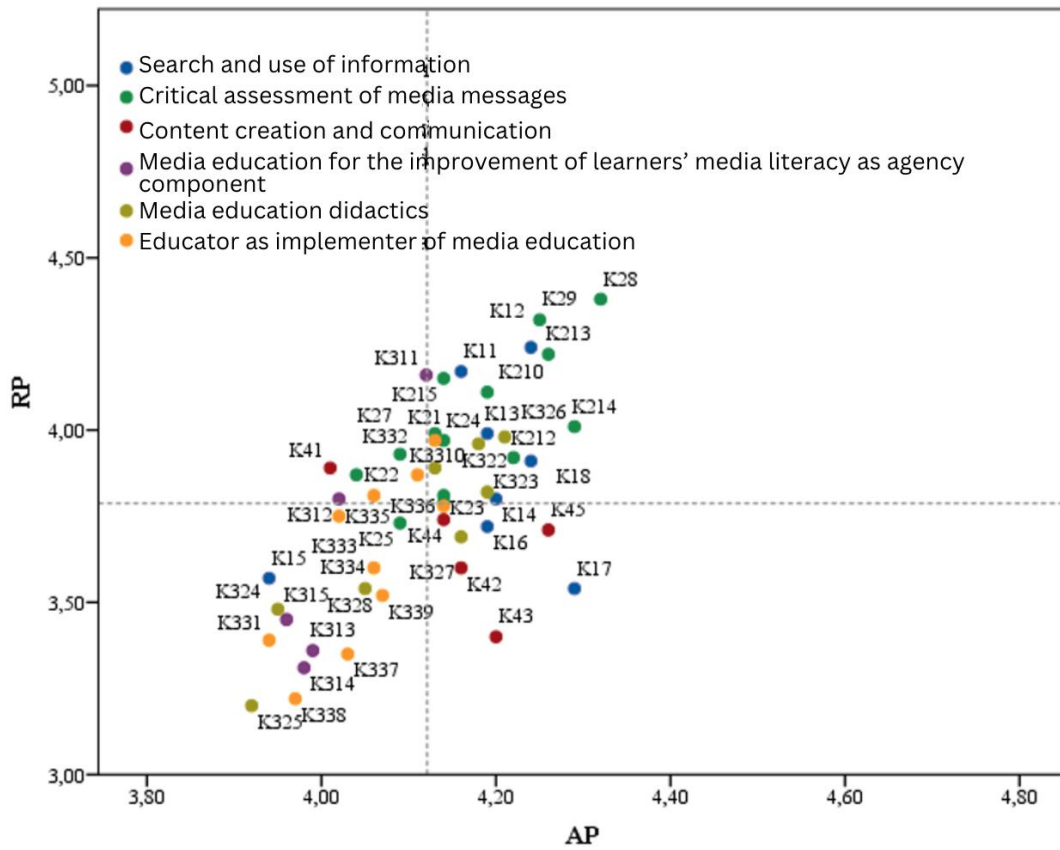


Figure 6. Distribution of the statements of the representatives of the first cluster “Correspondence to personal pedagogical activity” (RP) and “Relevance and importance in education” (AP) in their intercorrelation

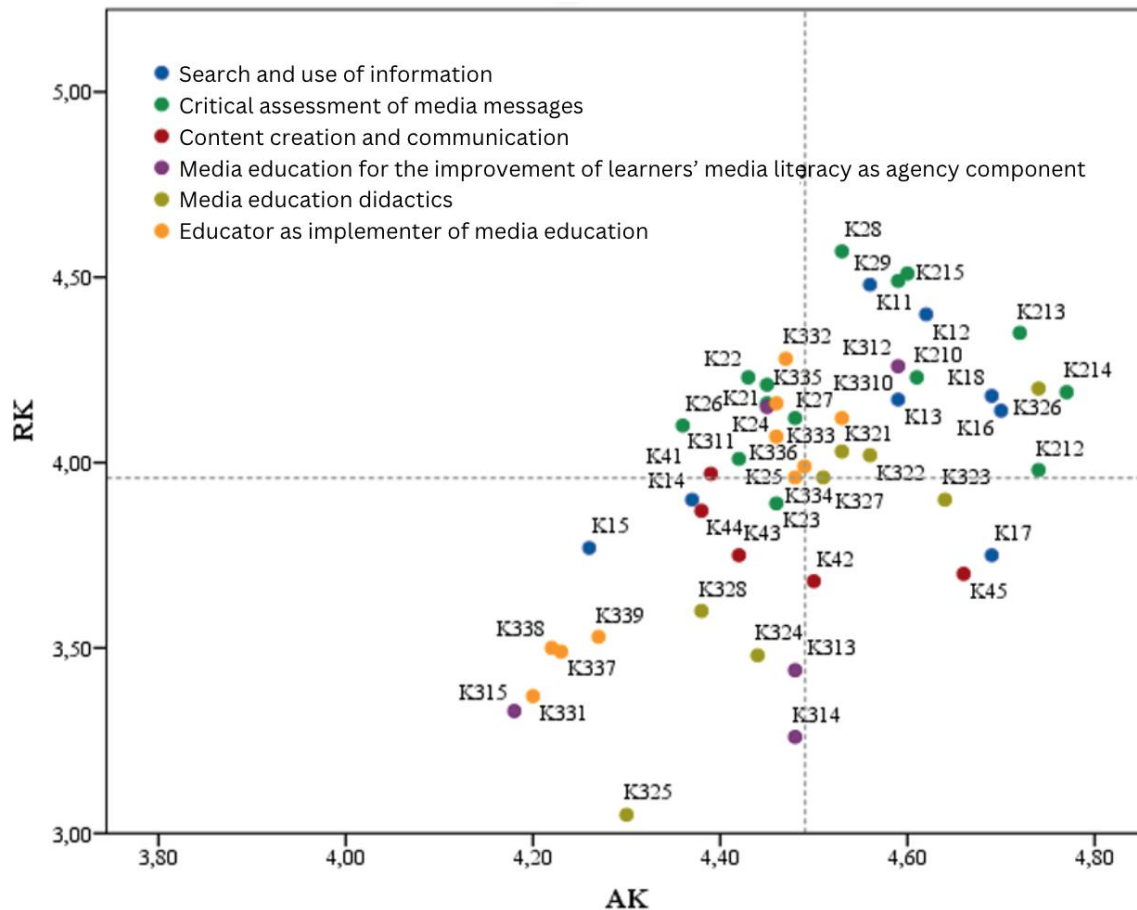


Figure 7. Distribution of the statements of the representatives of the second cluster group “Correspondence to personal pedagogical activity” (RK) and “Relevance and significance in education” (AK) in their intercorrelation

Comparing the obtained data described in detail above, significant differences can be identified in the distribution of competencies of the representatives of the clusters – the representatives of the 2nd cluster show a significantly higher assessment both in terms of compliance with the pedagogical activity and in evaluating the relevance and importance of the given competencies in education. The obtained data confirm the beliefs of the representatives of the 2nd cluster on media literacy as agency component, and also approve of a higher readiness for the implementation of media education.

DISCUSSION

The methods developed in the research made it possible to obtain data and analyze the educators' beliefs about media literacy as agency component, raising the question for discussion – how to improve the educators' beliefs about media literacy as agency component in the context of media education, realizing the following:

- educator's professional competence comprises both knowledge and skills and beliefs;
- educator's professional competence is expressed in action that directly influences and forms learners' agency;
- beliefs are a critical factor for change as they influence educator's teaching style, behaviour, content of learning;
- educators are often unaware of their own beliefs or they lack terms to convey them, besides educator's beliefs are influenced by subjective theories developed and structured like scientific theories, yet lacking a thorough assessment. They are mostly based on personal experience, yet they affect teacher's action more than scientific theories (Namsone, Volkinšteine, Lāce, 2018).

As a result of the research, two groups of educators have been identified: educators who do not consider media literacy as agency component, focusing on the obstacles to the implementation of media education, but have a higher self-assessment of the practice of media education (31.1%), and the second group, whose representatives consider media literacy as agency component, focus less on obstacles to the implementation of media education and have a lower self-assessment in the practice of media education (68.9%).

The obtained results approve that the first group of educators (31.1% of Latvian educators) do not implement media education, do not consider it to be agency component, consider important elements of media literacy as insignificant, and do not include them in the educational process. The representatives of this group assess as inconsistent with their teaching practice and insignificant in education the statements: "I offer learners tasks that allow them to familiarize with and predict the effects of media messages"; "I know and can explain to others what media literacy is and how to implement media education"; "I implement media education, promoting

the development of thinking, informed, and autonomous personalities”; “I have familiarized myself with the documents that explain the necessity of implementing media education in school and the basic principles for its implementation”, etc. From the answers given, it can be concluded that the representatives of this group are not ready for the implementation of media education, are not interested in media literacy as agency component, therefore, in future research, the reasons for such beliefs should be analyzed in greater detail, also finding out what factors would contribute to changing the educators’ beliefs.

In addition, the research has established that the level of media literacy of the representatives of this group is lower than that of the representative of the second group.

The research allows to define some possible solutions for strengthening educators’ beliefs about media literacy as agency component.

As one of the most important solutions to the defined problems is **purposefully planned and implemented education and further education of teachers**, which has been indicated in the present research by both educators and experts. Education and further education of teachers include three important aspects – further education programmes, monitoring, and media literacy of teachers. In order for further education to be effective, it is recommended to start with an audit of media literacy and knowledge of media education of educators, which would allow to differentiate the content of the offered further education activities, to offer a programme that purposefully creates an understanding of media literacy as agency component, taking into account that the transformation of beliefs is a complex process – as new, still unstable beliefs appear or the credibility of old beliefs changes, they are tested in practice and only then are they strengthened or changed (Šapková, 2015). The identified data allow to conclude that the beliefs of this group of educators are also influenced by a low level of media literacy, thus it is necessary to plan and implement the development of the level of media literacy, which is a prerequisite for understanding, research, integration, expertise, management, and innovations.

Another important solution is the **strengthening of media literacy in the leading policy and education documents**, which would justify and legitimize the public demand for media education, supporting its integration into the content of learning. The inclusion of media literacy in educational standards and the disclosure of its content in the age periods would provide an opportunity to change the belief of this group of educators about media literacy as a passing fad, the importance of which has been exaggerated. The research results show that

63.2% of educators fully or rather agree that it is important for society as a whole to demand, support, and promote the implementation of media education in educational institutions; for 59.8% it is important for media education to be included in the Act on Education, standards of study areas, model programmes, teaching materials; for 51.4% it is important for the school administration to define as important and follow up the implementation of media education in the educational institution. It is important to mention that for the group of educators who do not consider media literacy as agency component, the supervision of the school administration is more important than to the other group of educators. Thus, it is obvious that much work needs to be done in educating not only teachers, but also school administration.

Third solution is **the general increase of the professional competence of educators**, because the research allows to identify such indicators as the level of education of teachers, foreign language proficiency, the level of decision-making in the educational institution, the impact on the beliefs about media literacy as agency component. Education Development Guidelines for 2021-2027 “Future skills for future society” Action Plan for 2021-2023 state as one of the goals highly qualified, competent, and excellence-oriented educators and academic staff, envisaging concrete steps to achieve the goal (MK, 2022). However, taking into account the current situation in Latvia characterized by a shortage of teachers, it is impossible to set concrete requirements and define the necessary level of competence in the field of media literacy. The intention to improve must come from the educator, promoting an inductive change of beliefs, providing favourable conditions and support at the micro, meso, and macro levels.

Analyzing **the limitations of the research** – the participation of educators and experts in the research was voluntary. It is possible that respondents were more active, motivated, knowledgeable educators interested in media education and its implementation. It is possible that the data have been obtained exactly from this group of educators.

It is possible to use the outcomes of the research for further studies, focusing on teachers of a specific field of study or holding specific beliefs, analyzing the process of changing the beliefs of educators, studying the influence of beliefs on the teaching process.

CONCLUSIONS

The aim of the Doctoral Thesis has been achieved, the defined objectives have been realized and the answers to the research questions have been provided, confirming that the conducted research is complete, and its results can be used in the field of education, strengthening educators' beliefs about media literacy as agency component in the context of media education.

1. Taking into account the concept of a subject capable of agency, which is characterized not only by existence in culture, the ability to make decisions, freedom of choice, but also social emancipation, lifelong learning, the ability to influence and change social processes (see chapter 1.1), the differences between terms "agency" and "proficiency" revealed, as well as the term "agency" included in the OECD (2019) document "The Future of Education and Skills 2030" as an educational goal, the author of the Doctoral Thesis proposes as a novelty to introduce the term "agency" in the educational space of Latvia, using it as a more comprehensive term than "proficiency" that broadens the social context and purpose of education.

2. Media literacy nowadays is regarded not only as a component of the subject's individual and delegated agency, but it also ensures collective agency. Media literacy is improved through the implementation of high quality media education, which ensures the subject's opportunity for active participation, expressing opinions, building communities, digital citizenship, thereby strengthening the existence of a democratic society. Media education also changes the relationship between the educator and learner, grounding it on dialogue, promoting autonomous and self-directed learning, allowing learning to be regarded in a broader perspective, strengthening learners' agency. The theoretical part of the research defines the criteria contained in the research methods, allowing to clarify and analyze the educators' beliefs about media literacy as agency component.

3. In the research, educators' beliefs about media literacy as agency component in the context of media education have been clarified. Two groups of educators have been identified, who hold significantly different beliefs about media literacy as agency component. One group (31.1%) does not consider media literacy as agency component, focusing more on the obstacles to the implementation of media education, but the representatives of this group have a higher self-assessment. The second group (68.9%) considers media literacy as agency component, the

representatives of this group have lower self-assessment and less focus on the obstacles to the implementation of media education. Analyzing the connection of educators' beliefs with practice, it was identified that the representatives of the first group show lower indicators both in the scale "Correspondence to personal pedagogical activity" and in the scale "Relevance and significance in education", thus it can be concluded that the representatives of this group implement media education incompletely, being less aware of the relevance and importance of media education. Analyzing the influence of demographic data on educators' beliefs, it has been concluded that such factors as educators' level of education, foreign language proficiency, level of decision-making in the educational institution significantly influence respondents' beliefs on media literacy as agency component.

4. The research outcomes allow to conclude that the most important aspects that influence the educators' beliefs about media literacy as agency component in the context of media education are the self-efficacy of the educator, followed by normative documentation and the environment, education philosophy, educators' knowledge of the learning process and learners. Educators' self-efficacy as a significant influencer of their beliefs is confirmed both by the results of the survey of educators and also by the method of paired comparison of educational experts. In the teachers' survey, in the group of statements "Teachers' self-assessment in the implementation of media education", statements were identified that describe the teachers' negative beliefs about their self-efficacy, including "I am not sure that I can implement media education qualitatively". It has been identified that the group of educators who consider media literacy as agency component (68.9%) show a lower self-assessment in the implementation of media education, and this does not depend on further education in the field of media literacy or media education methodology.

5. The significance of educators' beliefs about norms has been identified. Research data show that it is important for educators to organize the normative environment in the field of media literacy and media education, which indicates the need to create a unified national vision of media literacy and media education in Latvia, including it in policy planning and implementation documents, defining specific actions that should be included in the education process. The identified groups of educators differ as to the aspects that the representatives of the group consider to be the most important – for group 1 (31.1%) more important, as compared to the other group, is the rule of school administration and monitoring of the implementation of media education in the educational institution; group 2 (68.9%) attributes greater importance

to the public demand, support for the implementation of media education in educational institutions.

6. The implementation of media literacy and media education requires inter-institutional cooperation at all levels (macro, meso, micro), which provides comprehensive support for strengthening media literacy in the society in general and especially in the field of education. Regular research is needed, the results of which are used in the creation and implementation of policy, an audit of the educators' skills followed by specific, individualized, available support mechanisms for them, such as further education activities. Media literacy and media education experts suggest changing the content of further media education, including in further education examples from an environment that is close and understandable to the teacher.