



Panel Session Note 4: Dealing with propaganda, misinformation and fake news

Time: November 16, 09:15-10:45

Room: Main Hall, 2nd floor

Moderator:

Elizabeth KASA-MÄLKSOO, trainer, Human Rights Institute, CoE and EWC expert, Estonia

Speakers:

Anna CWIKLINSKA-RUTKA, Teacher, II LO im. Adama Mickiewicza oraz Gimnazjum nr 23, Poland Evaggelia

KANALI, Principal, High School of Makrygialos of Pieria, Greece

Jelena ZIDOVIC, Teacher, Vilnius Kachialov Gymnasium, Lithuania

Input & reflections on topic & school practices by Francesco RAGAZZI, Assistant Professor, University of Leiden and Campaign Steering Group member, the Netherlands

Rapporteur:

Liz MOORSE, Chief Executive of the Association for Citizenship Teaching, EPAN-member, UK

Language: English

Background:

Dealing with propaganda, misinformation and fake news is one of the six themes of the CoE Campaign “Free to Speak, Safe to Learn - Democratic Schools for All”:

“Propaganda, misinformation and “fake news” have the potential to polarize public opinion, to promote violent extremism and hate speech and, ultimately, to undermine democracies and reduce trust in the democratic processes. It is vital for schools to provide students with a solid education on media and information literacy as part of the curriculum. Teachers must be well-trained in the subject to empower students with the necessary competences to critically understand and assess information reported by all forms of media. Projects in partnership with national and local authorities and media organizations are encouraged.” (CoE Campaign leaflet)

Good practices and initiatives by school representatives, as submitted, please find below.

Adama Mickiewicza oraz Gimnazjum nr 23, Poland

“Information vs manipulation - how to stand up against propaganda” by Ania Ćwiklińska-Rutka, teacher

Why did you/ your school choose to work on the issue of “Dealing with propaganda, misinformation and fake news”?	Our school has always taken part in numerous projects concerning democracy and that issue relates very much to the freedom of speech and the general idea of democracy.
What did you do and what went well? Who took part? Please describe some important steps of the process.	Together with 2 students we participated in a conference in Budapest where we were sharing ideas and experience concerning manipulation in media, focusing on events from the history of Hungary, Czech Republic and Poland. Then, in Gdynia with 8 more students we were working on the history and information issue, finally in Warsaw we debated the contemporary problems with information and manipulation, keeping the history as a source. What was most important was students' cooperation preparing the posters and main ideas, sharing everything with each other and gaining new knowledge about other countries' approach.
What were main challenges you have experienced?	The main challenges were to be able to discuss with young people difficult problems concerning history that I personally remember.
Did your project/ practice/ initiative bring some changes? What were the benefits?	The benefits are obvious- expanding knowledge about history but also awareness of the fact of being manipulated.
What would you say to a colleague who is about to start the same kind of project/ practice/ initiative to help them repeat your success?	Absolutely worth doing. You can then feel satisfied to prevent young people from just taking information without thinking of context or sources.
Anything else you would like to highlight?	I am very much for more international cooperation in this area of problems, as we have to try to understand different approach, especially of nations with different background.

High School of Makrygialos of Pieria, Greece

“Journalistic Student Conference” by Evaggelia Kanali, principal

<p>Why did you/ your school choose to work on the issue of “Dealing with propaganda, misinformation and fake news”?</p>	<p>I have been publishing school newspapers since 2002 and I have always felt students' worry about information on editing their school newspapers. I had the possibility to organize in my school the “Journalistic Student Conference” for students and teachers from the High Schools and the Lyceums in Pieria who issue or plan to publish school newspapers.</p> <p>The main objectives of the Conference were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students and teachers to be informed by distinguished media journalists on issues related to design, editing and publishing school newspapers. • To explore basic concepts of journalistic ethics, as well as impartiality, objectivity and the meaning of misinformation, false news, propaganda, misleading public opinion. • To realize their role as student journalists. • To promote and award their school newspapers and give motivations for new creations.
<p>What did you do and what went well? Who took part?</p> <p>Please describe some important steps of the process.</p>	<p>The Conference was held on 27 March 2018. The numbers were impressive: It was attended by 307 students and 72 teachers from 17 schools of Pieria.</p> <p>First Part</p> <p>Information-training of journalist students and teachers by renown media journalists who developed interesting issues such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -<i>"The Survival of Newspaper: Struggling with the Electronic Media"</i> -<i>"Newspaper: a collective information process, a paper publication"</i> -<i>"True and Promising News - The Validity of the News Through Reporting"</i> -<i>"Ethics, Limitations and Self-Censorship of Journalism"</i> - <i>"Financial Management of the School Journal"</i> <p>Second Part</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Feedback - Archaeologists presented archaeological treasures - Students in an active journalist role -Promotion and school newspapers award
<p>What were main challenges you have experienced?</p>	<p>The organization of the conference was a difficult task, and the challenges were rewarding. In a small provincial school, we have managed to organize a “Journalistic Student Conference” for the first time in our country. It was</p>

	an innovative action with high goals and great impact on the educational community. We hope other schools follow our action.
Did your project/ practice/ initiative bring some changes? What were the benefits?	<p>Many benefits have been achieved for students and teachers.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Students' Newspapers Archive -Local Education History -Conference records on school's website -Network of communication/ views exchange for school journalist groups -Cooperation between school, parents, local authorities and society <p>Our next goals to organize:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exhibition School Newspapers of Pieria • 2nd Journalistic Student Conference
What would you say to a colleague who is about to start the same kind of project/ practice/ initiative to help them repeat your success?	In a democratic school, inspired teachers do not only offer knowledge, but they lead pupils to new horizons through the development of innovative pedagogical actions, such as the edition of school newspapers. They motivate all students, regardless of their particularities (origin, cultural environment, disability) to collaborate by taking roles and feel creative by composing one or more issues of their newspaper. They also help all students demonstrate skills and talents and ensure a pleasant and attractive school environment without discrimination and exclusion.
Anything else you would like to highlight?	The writing and publishing of school newspaper is a cultural event that satisfies the desire of young people for communication, expression and creation. Pupils journalists learn to be more responsible and participant, to overcome the narrow boundaries of the school and become active citizens of the global community.

Vilnius Kachialov Gymnasium

“Big Small Screens: Media Literacy in Schools of Lithuania” by Jelena Zidovic, teacher

Why did you/ your school choose to work on the issue of “Dealing with propaganda, misinformation and fake news”?	Vilnius Kachialov Gymnasium is a school of national minorities for students from Russian-speaking families. The students’ parents rely on very different sources of information, therefore touching controversial political topics often turns into a harsh discussion. Moreover, teenagers are easily influenced by uncontrolled stream of information online and may become a target of propaganda, misinformation and fake news. Although audio-visual media is the main source of information, communication and entertainment for the young generation, in schools, it almost never represented and analyzed, there are not even specialists who could professionally work with it. Therefore, we decided to enter this project.
What did you do and what went well? Who took part?	The project aims to develop media literacy skills (with a special focus on audio visual media) amongst students and teachers of secondary and higher education, especially targeting the areas that are largely populated by ethnic minorities in Lithuania. The students learn how audio-visual media (cinema, computer games,

<p>Please describe some important steps of the process.</p>	<p>social networks, TV and advertisement) is constructed and try to create it with the help of professionals. The activities of the project are organized by The British Council, Education Development Centre and NGO 'Meno Avilys' which specializes in the area of film education. While organizing the activities, the topic of recognizing propaganda and misinformation is indirectly introduced.</p> <p>Some successful examples of activities for 14-17-year-olds:</p> <p><u>Cinema</u>: Creating a photo film of 5-7 shots to tell a story, communicate an idea or feeling. After students present their work they are asked to change the order of the shots, so that the meaning was different. Then we discuss how our perception transforms and how our feelings and even actions may be manipulated, and, finally, why and who may use these techniques.</p> <p><u>Computer games</u>: Playing and analyzing interactive video game „1979 Revolution. Black Friday“ which depicts the events of Iran revolution and helps students understand the political importance of media and its role in history. Discussing how information vacuum may be used by dictators for propaganda and misinformation to govern people. The game is also a perfect way to educate tolerance to different cultures.</p> <p><u>TV</u>: Comparing TV news blocks of the same day but from different channels. Discussing the order of the news presented, how the same piece of news is introduced, why not introduced, what is emphasized and hidden. Discussing what students know about the TV channels, their owners, and political views. Conclusion: Every piece of news should be checked in different sources, to trust the source of information it is necessary to find out about it, so as not to become a victim of fake news.</p> <p><u>Social networks</u>: After studying types and purposes of selfies and organizing a selfie contest (to celebrate the 100 anniversary of restored Lithuania) we discussed if selfie can be a source of propaganda, who may use it and how.</p> <p><u>Media Week at school</u>: The project involves the whole school community during the Media Week which includes debates, top speaker tournament, brain-rings, exhibition of media vocabulary posters, selfie contests and other attractive activities. The content of the activities always accentuates the topic of misinformation and detecting it.</p>
<p>What were main challenges you have experienced?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The first problem is the lack of qualified specialists at schools to deal with the topic of audio-visual media, dealing with misinformation and propaganda. Although the teachers were given very effective practical training and support from the organizers, the preparation for the lessons and activities required a lot of personal effort and time. • Teenagers are usually not politically concerned, and if they are, they are influenced by their families very much. Therefore, discussing political issues is often faced with tension. We have found an indirect way to deal with it through learning about media. • Teachers often feel not confident and inexperienced to work on the issue of audio-visual media, like video games or social networks, as they are mostly of the older generation. So, it was not easy to build a team of teachers at school for the project.

<p>Did your project/ practice/ initiative bring some changes? What were the benefits?</p>	<p>Impact of the project on students:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The ability to critically analyze and understand various media products to recognize propaganda and fake news as well as avoid being manipulated. • Meeting students' interests practical activities which result in creating a final product. • Teamwork experience with sharing responsibilities. • Social experience while cooperating and solving problems. • Meeting and working with high-level media industry specialists. • Experience in terms of future career prospects. <p>Impact on teachers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New knowledge, practical experience and teaching materials about five spheres of media and their impact on teenagers, which can be used to discuss the problems of propaganda, fake news and misinformation. • Meeting with and support of media industry specialists. <p>Impact on schools as educational institutions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of the teachers' qualifications to tackle controversial political issues through practical activities with students. • Non-traditional activities, such as workshops, computer game testing, excursions, meeting celebrities. • The whole community involvement into the activities. • Partnership with other schools and organizations. • Highly motivated students and teachers.
<p>What would you say to a colleague who is about to start the same kind of project/ practice/ initiative to help them repeat your success?</p>	<p>The project is a great possibility to know and understand your students better, learn from them, share their interests and bring them up as responsible citizens. It broadens your and your students' mind, personal experience in the issue of audio-visual media, as well as, helps not to get lost in the stream of information or become a victim of propaganda and other manipulations. It is challenging and requires dedication.</p>
<p>Anything else you would like to highlight?</p>	<p>I would like to emphasize again, that the project does not directly aimed to deal only with the question of propaganda, misinformation and fake news, but it is the best way our school found to address the problem.</p>