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Media Education as a Neglected Component of Public Health Policy in Poland: An Analysis of the Activities of the National Broadcasting Council from 1994 to 2021

ABSTRACT

This paper assesses the role of media education as a neglected element of public health policy in Poland, using the example of actions undertaken by the National Broadcasting Council (KRRiT). The research employed a qualitative analysis of KRRiT's annual reports published between 1993 and 2021, focusing on how media education initiatives are presented and implemented. The study found that, despite KRRiT's legal responsibility for media education in Poland, its activities in this area are marginal, inconsistent, and lack a long-term strategy. The paper reveals a significant gap between scientific research linking media use to well-being and KRRiT's approach to media education, which largely overlooks this important dimension. The findings suggest that media education in Poland is not effectively coordinated at the state level and fails to incorporate well-being, indicating a serious shortcoming in public health policy. This research contributes to understanding the institutional barriers hindering

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the effective implementation of media education and argues for including media literacy as an essential component of public health strategies.

KEYWORDS: Media literacy education, public health policy, digital well-being, National Broadcasting Council (KRRiT), Poland, institutional analysis

STRESZCZENIE

Edukacja medialna jako zaniedbany element polityki zdrowia publicznego w Polsce: analiza działalności Krajowej Rady Radiofonii i Telewizji w latach 1994–2021

Celem artykułu jest ocena roli edukacji medialnej jako zaniedbywanego elementu polityki zdrowia publicznego w Polsce na przykładzie działań Krajowej Rady Radiofonii i Telewizji (dalej KRRiT). W badaniu zastosowano analizę jakościową sprawozdań rocznych wydawanych przez KRRiT w latach 1993–2021, koncentrując się na tym, jak inicjatywy edukacji medialnej są prezentowane i wdrażane. W badaniu stwierdzono, że mimo iż KRRiT jest prawnie odpowiedzialna za edukację medialną w Polsce, jej działania w tym obszarze wydają się marginalne, niespójne i pozbawione długofalowej strategii. Artykuł ujawnia znaczącą lukę między badaniami naukowymi pokazującymi związki między korzystaniem z mediów i dobrostanem a podejściem KRRiT do edukacji medialnej, które pomija ten ważny aspekt. Wyniki wskazują, że edukacja medialna w Polsce nie jest skutecznie koordynowana na poziomie państwa i nie uwzględnia kwestii dobrostanu, co wskazuje na poważny brak w polityce zdrowia publicznego. Badanie to przyczynia się do zrozumienia instytucjonalnych barier w skutecznym wdrażaniu edukacji medialnej i argumentuje za włączeniem kompetencji medialnych jako istotnego elementu strategii zdrowia publicznego.

SŁOWA KLUCZE: edukacja medialna, polityka zdrowia publicznego, cyfrowy dobrostan, Krajowa Rada Radiofonii i Telewizji, Polska, analiza treści

Introduction

In an era of rapid digitalization and the continuous development of communication technologies, media education is gaining crucial importance as a tool that enables citizens to function consciously, critically, and safely within the media landscape. In line with United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4 – Quality Education) (UN, 2015), which promotes access to quality education at all levels and for all social groups, the development of media literacy should be regarded as a fundamental component of modern civic

education. Meanwhile, the *Global Risks Report 2024* by the World Economic Forum identifies disinformation as the most serious short-term risk to social stability, public trust, and the functioning of democracy. In this context, the lack of a coherent, strategic media education policy not only weakens society's resilience to information threats but also constitutes a failure in public health policy, thereby hindering the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 3 (SDG 3 – Good Health and Well-being) (UN, 2015). It also threatens the implementation of the *Strategy for Responsible Development until 2020* (with a perspective to 2030), adopted by the Council of Ministers (the Government of the Republic of Poland) on February 14, 2017. This strategy identifies human and social capital as key areas influencing the attainment of its goals, emphasizing that the quality of human capital depends on competencies and qualifications adapted to the challenges of a changing reality, as well as the ability to maintain optimal health (*Strategy for Responsible Development until 2020*, pp. 49–58). Considering the mediatization of all aspects of human life, it becomes evident that media education must be viewed as a factor that directly influences the quality of life.

The development of media education in Poland has occurred against the backdrop of profound political, socio-cultural, and media transformations that have unfolded over the past three decades. This transformation included the transition from a state-controlled media system to a pluralistic media market, and subsequently to a digital environment, leading to the mediatization of everyday life, the individualization of media practices, and the growing importance of the internet and social media. Simultaneously, these processes have intensified phenomena such as social polarization, fragmentation of public discourse, and disinformation (Castells, 2009; Goban-Klas, 2009; Jakubowicz, 2011). Media education has involved a variety of actors, including governmental institutions (e.g. the National Broadcasting Council and ministries responsible for digital affairs), non-governmental organizations, universities, and other entities. Given this multiplicity of factors shaping media education, as well as editorial constraints of the present study, the authors deliberately narrowed the scope of the analysis.

This article addresses a research gap by analyzing the role of the National Broadcasting Council (KRRiT) in shaping media education in Poland in connection with the broader issue of the relationship between media education and public health. Previous studies have focused primarily on media education in school or social contexts, marginalizing its links to public health and failing to examine the role of institutions responsible for its systemic implementation. Our study focuses on KRRiT's activities between 1993 and 2021, highlighting the institution's inconsistency, limited involvement, and lack of a long-term strategy in media education, despite its statutory obligations and international recommendations. The analysis encompasses reports from 1993 to 2021.

Although KRRiT commenced operations in 1993, the title of the study refers to 1994, as this was the first year for which a complete annual activity report was published. The 1993 report, which is partial due to the institution's mid-year establishment, has nevertheless been included in the analysis, while the systematic reporting cycle effectively began with the 1994 document.

The study aims to assess the KRRiT's actual engagement in media education and to identify systemic barriers hindering its effective implementation. It emphasizes the often-overlooked relationship between media education, mental well-being, and public health, all of which are fundamental to achieving SDG 3. The methodology applied is a qualitative content analysis of KRRiT's annual reports from 1993 to 2021, considering legislative changes, institutional narratives, and the evolution of media education in official documents.

This novelty of this article lies in its interdisciplinary integration of perspectives from media studies, education, and health as well as in its empirical documentation of institutional shortcomings in linking media education with public health efforts in Poland. The article underscores the necessity of recognizing media education as a strategic component of health policy, rather than treating it merely as a domain of formal education or a fragmented field of activity undertaken by NGOs and higher education institutions.

The article is structured as follows: the first section outlines the theoretical foundations of media education in the context of SDG 4 and information-related threats; the second discusses the legal and institutional framework of KRRiT's activities; the third presents a content analysis of KRRiT reports from 1993 to 2021; and the fourth offers a discussion of the findings concerning the academic literature, public health concerns, and media policy. The article concludes with practical recommendations and suggestions for further research.

Initially, the authors intended to analyze the period from 1993 to 2024. However, during the review of the reports, it became apparent that from 2022, KRRiT changed its reporting approach, rendering the previously adopted method ineffective. The reports became more descriptive, and the structure and frequency of keywords changed significantly. The current composition of KRRiT was appointed in the second half of 2022, and since then the institution has focused more extensively on reporting the activities of other entities.

Furthermore, in sections thematically related to media education, the phrase "media education" or its equivalents was often absent, whereas in other passages it appeared excessively, thereby distorting the analysis. For this reason, the reports from 2022–2024 will be examined in a separate study using a slightly revised research approach and analytical tool. Including both analyses in a single article would be detrimental to the overall value of the work, either by resulting in a manuscript that would be excessively long for the journal or by requiring significant cuts that would compromise the quality and clarity of the text.

1. Literature Review

1.1. Media Education

Media education plays a crucial role in an era marked by the unprecedented development of new technologies that enable the easy, low-cost, and effective creation, dissemination, and manipulation of disinformation, advertising, political, commercial content, and other types of messaging. As Valtonen et al. (2019) observe, the algorithmic nature of contemporary media is a powerful tool that allows for the profiling of users, influencing their actions for various purposes, and predicting their behavior. Consequently, media literacy has become a fundamental competence of modern citizens, and media education should be understood as a responsibility requiring coordinated action by multiple actors at both national and international levels.

The concept of media education encompasses three core areas (Andrzejewska, 2003):

- The use of media as educational aids or sources of knowledge;
- Preparation for the critical reception of media messages;
- The use of media in creative activity.

Media education focuses on the development of two types of media competencies: instrumental (i.e., the ability to use media as tools) and cultural (i.e., the ability to critically and evaluatively interpret media content) (Juszczyk, 2007). It involves the cultivation of multidimensional competencies that are highly dependent on context and on the age of the audience (Livingstone et al., 2012; Schilder et al., 2016). This educational domain adopts an interdisciplinary approach, drawing on fields such as literacy studies, public health, the humanities, sociology, developmental psychology, cultural studies, library and information science, journalism, communication and new media studies, social technology studies, human-computer interaction, and media audience research (Hobbs, 2010; Livingstone et al., 2012).

According to Carlsson (2019), effective media education policy remains rare, which is particularly concerning given that countries that have developed and implemented such policies are significantly more effective in building their citizens' media and information literacy (Media and Information Literacy (MIL)) than those that have not. This situation calls for urgent systemic change (Bierzyński, 2024a). Such change should take place at the systemic level and incorporate a broad, interdisciplinary perspective on social changes driven by media, a diagnosis of the root of the problem, and the implementation of appropriate educational solutions (Bierzyński, 2024b). Key elements of such policies—often the result of integration between media, digital, educational, and other policies—include a clear governance structure, broad social support, and the engagement of multiple public and private stakeholders. Networks of

this kind, coordinated by designated public authorities or other organizations, are considered valuable tools for shaping a media-literate society and serve as an essential resource (EAO, 2016; Frau-Meigs et al., 2017; Bulger & Davison, 2018; LSE, 2018; O'Neill & Dinh, 2018).

According to the *MIL Europe Comparative Study*, national MIL policies typically follow one of the three approaches:

- Developmental—comprising comprehensive policy frameworks with the state as the primary driver and coordinator of actions among non-governmental actors;
- Delegative—based on partially developed policy models that support the activities of other entities;
- Disengaged—in which policy frameworks are limited and non-governmental actors operate independently (Frau-Meigs et al., 2017).

The most prevalent model in Europe today is the delegative approach. In many countries, media and information education falls under the responsibility of ministries of culture or education, whereas digital competencies are overseen by ministries of industry, telecommunications, digital affairs, or commerce, often without any inter-ministerial collaboration. Moreover, significantly more attention and funding are allocated to developing digital skills than to media and information education, which is frequently marginalized. Even when MIL is connected to multiple policy areas, these efforts are usually fragmented, and effective cooperation and synergy are rare (EAO, 2016; Frau-Meigs et al., 2017; Grandío et al., 2017).

Currently, most MIL programs and initiatives at the national level are short-term, regardless of whether the public sector, the media, or civil society initiate them. While most of these efforts target children and youth, there has been a recent increase in initiatives aimed at adults. Despite the high level of engagement and numerous initiatives, most are ad hoc rather than systemic or coordinated. Furthermore, the available resources are not used optimally (Carlsson, 2019).

The relationship between media education and public health outcomes has been increasingly recognized in the academic literature, although it remains underexplored in policy contexts. A recent systematic review identified 85 publications indexed in the Scopus database since 2002 that address the intersection of media education and societal well-being (Adamski et al., 2025). Analysis of this body of literature reveals several recurring themes.

First, a substantial portion of studies focuses on children and adolescents, examining how media literacy interventions can mitigate the negative effects of media exposure on mental health, body image, and self-esteem. Research in this area demonstrates that media literacy education can serve as a protective factor against anxiety, depression, and eating disorders triggered by unrealistic media representations (Jeong et al., 2012). Second, a growing number of

studies address the role of media literacy in health communication, particularly in enabling individuals to evaluate health-related information and resist medical misinformation. This strand of research gained particular relevance during the Covid-19 pandemic, when the spread of health-related disinformation reached unprecedented levels (Sentell et al., 2020). Third, the concept of digital well-being has emerged as a framework linking media education with broader quality-of-life considerations. Gui, Fasoli and Carradore (2017) proposed digital well-being as a theoretical tool that integrates media literacy research with public health perspectives, arguing that the ability to manage one's relationship with digital media is an important determinant of psychological and social well-being.

In the Polish context, Dębski and Bigaj (2019) conducted a comprehensive study of young people's relationships with new technologies, demonstrating significant correlations between digital media consumption and mental health among Polish youth. Their findings indicate that problematic internet use is associated with lower levels of well-being, weaker family relationships, and a higher incidence of depressive symptoms. This research underscores the urgency of integrating media education with public health considerations within the Polish institutional framework.

According to Ogonowska (2018a, 2018b, 2022), media education plays a significant role in the domain of individual and public health, as it may reduce the risk of media-related addictions, information overload, and the negative psychological and social consequences resulting from intensive media use, particularly among children and adolescents (Ogonowska, 2015; 2018a; 2018b; 2022).

Despite this growing body of evidence, we identified a significant research gap: there is a lack of studies examining how media education policies are implemented at the institutional level and whether public bodies responsible for media education incorporate well-being considerations into their activities. Furthermore, adult media education in the context of public health policy remains largely unexplored. These issues are rarely addressed either in educational programs or health prevention strategies, pointing to the need for intensified research and for the integration of media education into public health policy frameworks.

1.2. The National Broadcasting Council in the Polish Media System

The primary public body legally responsible for media education in Poland is the KRRiT. Galewska (2016) noted that the KRRiT is a state institution tasked with overseeing radio and television broadcasting matters. It is a constitutional body whose existence, core competencies, and operational framework

are outlined in Articles 213–215 of the Constitution of the Republic of Poland (1997). Due to the nature of its responsibilities, the Council does not fit within the traditional separation of powers (legislative, executive, or judicial). Instead, it occupies a unique position, regulated under Chapter IX of the Constitution, which pertains to state control and legal protection authorities. As such, the Council possesses a hybrid character, combining features of a legislative body (through the issuing of regulations) and an executive entity (through the issuing of administrative decisions), while also serving both oversight and legal compliance functions within the domain of broadcasting (Jamróz, 2014).

The establishment of KRRiT was directly linked to the transformation of Poland's media market following the collapse of communism in 1989. The Act on Radio and Television Broadcasting was passed in 1992 and came into force on 1 March 1993. Its structure and competencies were modelled on France's Conseil supérieur de l'audiovisuel (CSA) (Gomoliszek, 2008). Initially, the Council consisted of nine members, but an amendment adopted on 29 December 2005 reduced this number to five. Members are appointed for six-year terms by the Sejm (two members), the President (two members), and the Senate (one member) (Gomoliszek, 2008). According to Article 12(1) of the Broadcasting Act, the Council is required to submit an annual report on its activities to the Sejm, Senate, and the President by the end of May each year.

Among the Council's core responsibilities are: setting the strategic directions for national media policy; defining the conditions for broadcaster operations; and making licensing decisions for the dissemination and distribution of broadcast content. Over time, the Council's competencies have expanded through subsequent legislative amendments. Notably, the 2011 amendment to the Broadcasting Act included the promotion of media literacy and cooperation with public institutions, NGOs, and other stakeholders in the area of media education (Act of March 25, 2011). This change implemented Directive 2010/13/EU of the European Parliament and the Council on coordinating specific provisions concerning audiovisual media services (AVMS Directive) (2010). In its 2011 activity report, the Council highlighted that media education and the promotion of media literacy had become its statutory responsibilities, along with fostering inter-institutional cooperation (KRRiT, 2012). The *Regulatory Strategy 2011–2013* emphasized that the primary responsibility for media education rests with the education system. Nonetheless, the KRRiT acknowledged its role as a facilitator and promoter by engaging media organizations and acting as a knowledge hub in this field.

Further reinforcement of the Council's responsibilities came with Directive (EU) 2018/1808, adopted by the European Parliament on 14 November 2018. Article 33a(1) of the directive requires Member States to promote media literacy and adopt appropriate measures. It also mandates regular reporting on the implementation of these measures. The Polish legal framework implemented

this directive via the Act of August 11, 2021, amending the Broadcasting Act and the Act on Cinematography (Journal of Laws 2021, item 1676). This amendment added two key obligations for KRRiT: conducting research and evaluating the state of media education, and reporting the findings to the European Commission (Art. 1, sec. 6, point b).

These changes aligned with the results of a 2019 public consultation conducted by KRRiT regarding the amendment of the directive. The findings confirmed the need for systemic reforms and emphasized that media education should be recognized as a critical mechanism for national development, social cohesion, and economic progress. The results further called for state responsibility in ensuring media education, supported by the media industry, particularly in enhancing critical thinking, media literacy, and distinguishing truth from misinformation (KRRiT, 2020).

The central role of the National Broadcasting Council (KRRiT) in understanding media education in Poland within the broader framework of public policy—including its intersections with public health—derives from its constitutional status and statutory responsibilities in the field of media education arising from the implementation of European Union directives. The Council's annual reports constitute a formal and institutionalized record of these responsibilities and related activities; consequently, their analysis provides a methodologically justified basis for examining KRRiT's engagement in this area. As the primary public body responsible for promoting and implementing media education in Poland, KRRiT is also legally obliged to report its activities to the European Commission. Against this background, it is crucial to examine how the Council's role in media education has evolved since its establishment in 1993 and to analyze the concrete initiatives it has undertaken. A secondary objective is to explore the extent to which media education has been recognized or integrated within public health policy.

2. Methodology and Study Description

This analysis covers the years 1993–2021. In the first stage of the study, the annual reports of KRRiT from 1993 to 2021 were examined. The texts of the reports were analyzed regarding the media education activities described therein, undertaken by the KRRiT. A qualitative-quantitative content analysis was applied to the existing documents (KRRiT activity reports) in a diachronic perspective, covering the period from 1993 to 2021. The study consisted of the following stages:

- Operationalization, i.e. defining media education and establishing the conceptual boundaries of the analyzed category as well as exclusion criteria (e.g., the use of media as tools for education, skipping the

occurrence of target words in tables of contents, subchapter titles, and didactic remarks);

- Collection of KRRiT activity reports from 1993 to 2021—downloading them from the official website in the gov.pl website;
- Identification of units of analysis by locating text fragments referring to media education. This was based on established lexical and semantic selection criteria (the lexical criterion was the occurrence of the words “media education,” while the semantic criterion was substantive consistency with media education activities);
- Preparation of the research tool, involving the development of a system of categories for classifying the identified fragments;
- Analysis and categorization, consisting of reviewing the reports and assigning the identified fragments to the established categories (with the possibility of assigning one fragment to multiple categories);
- Interpretation of the results.

In the second part of the study, for the reasons outlined above, the focus was placed on a qualitative content analysis of the activities reported within the broadly understood field of media education.

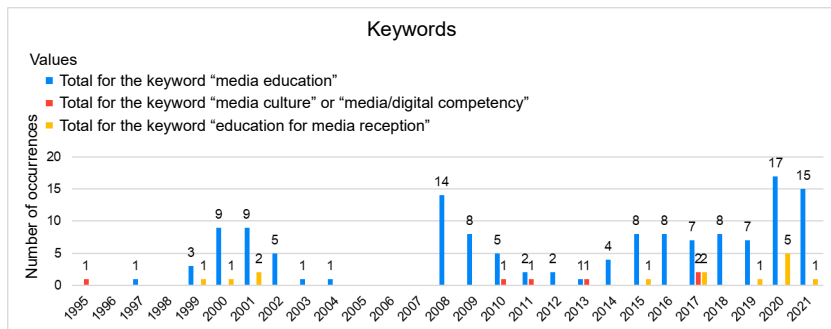
3. Analysis of Reports from 1993–2021

3.1. Keywords

Three categories of keywords were identified. The primary category is “media education”, which appears in 135 fragments. Additionally, the reports contain terms such as “media culture” (KRRiT, 1996), “media competence” (KRRiT 2011, 2012, 2013), “digital education” (2014) (KRRiT, 2015), and “developing media, information, and digital competences” (2018) (KRRiT, 2019). Phrases related to “education for media reception” appear 14 times (KRRiT, 2000), alongside expressions such as “improving the ability of viewers and listeners to critically and reflectively perceive content conveyed by electronic media, especially concerning children and youth” (KRRiT, 2001), “developing a critical and competent attitude toward media among audiences” (KRRiT, 2002), “promoting and developing conscious media usage skills” (KRRiT, 2016, 2018, 2020, 2021), and “shaping mature media reception skills” (KRRiT, 2016), and “educating minors on advertising reception in the digital world” (KRRiT, 2018).

Notably, some years lack references to media education, while others demonstrate increased interest in the subject. The quantitative distribution of mentions is presented in Figure 1 (the year given in the figure refers to the reporting year, not the year of publication).

Figure 1. Quantitative distribution of mentions of media education in KRRiT reports by keyword category. Source: own study



As can be seen, KRRiT’s peak interest in media education occurred in 2020 and 2021. A similar surge in interest was observed earlier in 2001 and 2008. In contrast, the years 2003–2007 represent a period during which KRRiT completely abandoned any activities in the field of media education—to such an extent that the 2008 report included a self-critical statement: “In 2008, KRRiT reactivated its activities related to media education” (KRRiT, 2009, p. 26).

In an official statement published on 10 June 2008 regarding the need to disseminate knowledge in the area of media education, KRRiT stated:

The National Broadcasting Council (KRRiT) considers media education to be an essential element of conscious and effective use of modern electronic media. ... Media competence, conscious reception of media content, and the ability to formulate it are prerequisites for the success of the digital revolution in media and the foundation of a civil and information society (KRRiT, 2008b).

This document was also referenced in the 2008 report, which additionally emphasized KRRiT’s “concern over the marginalization of this topic in the education system and among public broadcasters” (KRRiT, 2009, pp. 26–27).

It is also noteworthy that in some years, media education was given a separate chapter in the reports (specifically in the reports for 2000–2002, 2008–2011, 2013, 2016, and 2018–2021) (KRRiT, 2001, 2002, 2003, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2014, 2017, 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022). In other years, references to media education were scattered throughout the reports, if they appeared at all.

3.2. Diagnoses and Emphasis on the Importance of Media Education

In its reports, the National Broadcasting Council (KRRiT) occasionally provides diagnoses concerning media education in Poland and emphasizes its

importance and significance. In the 1995 report, it was stated that “Poland still lacks a deeper media culture, serious criticism, and social bodies monitoring programming” (KRRiT, 1996). In the year 2000, KRRiT referred to a report it had prepared on the state of media education, quoting its conclusion: “the issue of media education is downplayed and marginalized in our country, and the consequence of this situation is a poorly prepared curriculum, decision-making chaos, lack of modern models and appropriate teaching aids” (KRRiT, 2001, p. 17). The 1999 report—in two separate passages—contains expressions of regret that, due to insufficient financial resources, KRRiT was unable to fulfil its tasks in the field of media education properly and that “the lack of appropriate funds limits the scope of conducted research and forces KRRiT to seek other forms of financing for such work” (KRRiT, 2000, p. 17).

Much more frequently, KRRiT emphasizes the importance and significance of media education in its reports. Seventeen such statements were identified in the analyzed material. For example, in the 1999 report (pp. 1–2), the authors stated that

in an era of the dissemination of new communication technologies, factors such as broadcaster responsibility and preparation for conscious, critical reception and selection of television programs are becoming increasingly important. This requires placing greater emphasis on educating children and youth in schools about media consumption and organizing various forms of education for parents and educators in this area (KRRiT, 2000).

A year later, the report stated that media education activities extend beyond teaching the language of media and are a condition for developing Polish democracy (KRRiT, 2001). In the 2001 report, KRRiT supported its position on the importance of media education by twice citing the opinion of the Polish Episcopal Conference (pp. 4–5; 19) (KRRiT, 2002), while in 2008 and 2010 it referred to the European Commission (KRRiT, 2009, 2011). In the 2015 report, KRRiT emphasized that

the most important goal of media education is the development of skills for mature media consumption. The recipient—viewer, listener, internet user, reader—should be able to use media effectively and safely by understanding the mechanisms of information creation and selection, and [should] be a conscious and active participant in the modern media world (KRRiT, 2016).

Meanwhile, the 2019 report refers to public consultations conducted by KRRiT. Based on these, a wide range of postulates and justifications for the importance of media education for society were formulated:

The results of the consultations confirmed not only the need for systemic changes, but also the need to: recognize media education as one of the most important mechanisms for the development of the state, economy, and society, which should become a pillar of social cohesion; fund media education activities, particularly in the area of developing critical thinking skills and critical understanding of the media environment, including the ability to distinguish truth from fake news; and introduce the principle of state responsibility for the condition of media education in Poland, supported by entities from the media market (KRRiT, 2020).

Interestingly, media education for children and youth is mentioned far more frequently in the reports. By contrast, the topic of adult education appears much more sporadically. Examples include references in 1999 to the need for various forms of education for parents and educators (KRRiT, 2000), the need for comprehensive civic education (KRRiT, 2001), or “raising broadcaster awareness of the social consequences of their activities and strengthening the sense of responsibility for the content transmitted in programs” (KRRiT, 2001).

Given the importance of media education, KRRiT reports repeatedly included the postulate to introduce media education into schools as a separate subject (or teaching module). Two periods can be identified during which this direction was evident in KRRiT’s activities: 1997–2002 and 2008–2010. After 2010, however, this postulate ceased to appear. The most advanced efforts in this regard were undertaken in 2008–2009: in 2008, as part of KRRiT’s cooperation with the Polish Committee of the “Information for All” Program, operating within the Polish National Commission for UNESCO, an appeal was made

to all institutions capable of bringing media knowledge closer to society, to make every effort to ensure that media education finds its rightful place in the education process of children, youth, and adults. The Committee specifically appealed to the Minister of National Education to take action to ensure that media education functions as a school subject at all levels of education (KRRiT, 2009).

This appeal was repeated both in 2009 and 2010 (KRRiT, 2010, 2011).

3.3. KRRiT’s Activities in the Field of Media Education

Another area analyzed was KRRiT’s cooperation with various entities in media education. The reports contain 22 mentions of cooperation with state institutions (especially with ministers responsible for school and higher education),

34 references to cooperation with other institutions, NGOs, universities, and media broadcasters, and 33 references to international cooperation.

Cooperation with ministers responsible for school and higher education mainly concerned the proposal to introduce a separate school subject called “media education” (the most concrete form of cooperation). Other activities included joint meetings, submission of reports, or were limited to a general statement that “The National Broadcasting Council also cooperates with the Ministry of National Education (among other matters, on media education)” (KRRiT, 2001, 2002, 2003, 2009, 2016, 2018, 2021). Among the institutions and NGOs mentioned in the reports is the Polish Episcopal Conference (KRRiT, 2000, 2002, 2003). As can be observed, this cooperation coincided with the peak of interest in media education in Poland at the turn of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

Cooperation with broadcasters primarily involved actions aimed at protecting minors through classifying and marking programs with symbols indicating the minimum viewer age. In the recommendations for preparing financial and programming plans for public media, KRRiT indicated that media education programs should be part of the pool of so-called “declared preferred broadcasts.” KRRiT emphasized that these programs ought to include knowledge about electronic media, new technologies, and information on conscious and critical use of programming content (KRRiT, 2016, 2017). In tenders for frequencies on one of the digital terrestrial television multiplexes, one of the requirements was the inclusion of film and media education content in the programming (KRRiT, 2013; 2014). Furthermore, in some years, the reports refer to public broadcasters fulfilling their obligation to air programs on media education (KRRiT, 2017; 2021). An important initiative was also the proposal by Radio Kielce to establish the Media Education Centre (KRRiT, 2022). The Centre was opened in October 2022 (Michalski, 2022).

International cooperation most often refers to KRRiT’s membership in various international associations and organizations dealing with media education. Examples include involvement in the International Association for Media Education (AEEMA), operating under the patronage of the Council of Europe (KRRiT, 2003), participation in the work of the European Platform of Regulatory Authorities (EPRA) in the field of media education in the context of protecting minors (KRRiT, 2009), cooperation with the Polish Committee of the Information for All Program, operating at the Polish National Commission for UNESCO (KRRiT, 2010), cooperation with the European Audiovisual Observatory (EAO) (KRRiT, 2018), participation in the work of the Media Literacy Expert Group (MLEG), which acts as an advisory body to the European Commission in the field of media education (KRRiT, 2020), and activities within the Contact Committee for the Audiovisual Media Services Directive (KRRiT, 2021).

Another category identified in the reports includes the organization or co-organization of meetings, competitions, and conferences (including

honorary patronage of such events) and the participation of KRRiT members in conferences devoted to media education. A total of 38 excerpts were identified in this category, including:

- 15 excerpts referring to various types of meetings or debates. However, it is difficult to determine the total number of such events based solely on the reports, as many references are made to meetings or series of meetings in general terms (KRRiT, 2022). Noteworthy here is the Media Education Forum—a total of 7 thematic debates organized by KRRiT between 2008 and 2009 (five of which took place in 2008);
- 7 excerpts referring to the organization or co-organization of conferences on media education (in 2002, the report refers more generally to a “series of thematic conferences” [KRRiT, 2003]). Particularly notable are the following conferences: “Media Education – A Need and a Challenge for the Future,” organized by KRRiT on October 18, 2000 (KRRiT, 2001); “Media Education and Social Competencies,” organized by KRRiT in Warsaw on December 3, 2010 (KRRiT, 2011); and the international conference entitled “The Role of Media Education in the New Media Landscape,” organized by KRRiT in Warsaw on June 8, 2017, together with the European Audiovisual Observatory (EAO), during Poland’s presidency of this international organization (KRRiT, 2018);
- 19 excerpts referring to KRRiT’s patronage of various events related to media education. In the 2020–2021 reports, the patronages are mentioned only in general terms (in the plural form), without listing them, which suggests that the number of such events exceeded 19.
- Among the noteworthy initiatives is the co-organization and/or patronage by KRRiT of various media education-related olympiads and competitions, including the Digital Olympiad, Media Olympiad, Media Knowledge Olympiad, Grand Tournament of Media Education, the competition “Matur@ity Online. Good Practices,” among others.

The next group of activities comprises publications, reports, and official statements. A total of 12 excerpts were identified in this category. The most important include (in chronological order):

- The publication in 2000 of the report “Media Education,” devoted to the state of media education in Poland. Commissioned by KRRiT, the report was prepared by a team led by Professor Wiesław Godzic. The full text is not available in digital form, as it existed only as a typescript. However, a summary has been preserved in an archived version of the KRRiT website, accessible through the Wayback Machine (Godzic, 2001). The report consisted of five chapters. The first two were introductory, presenting the objectives, methodology, and research team. The third chapter focused on diagnosing the state of media education in Poland. It included the following subsections: Computers in Schools, Audiovisual Media, Teaching

Aids, Media Education in Higher Education—Selection, Postgraduate Studies, Postgraduate Studies Including Media Knowledge or Use in Modern Education, Media Studies, Textbooks, Dissemination of Media Knowledge and Media Education in the Press and on Television. The fourth chapter presented conclusions and recommendations, including: Models of Media Education; Proposals for the Ministry of National Education; Proposals for Media Organizations; And KRRiT. The fifth chapter included various appendices, such as a bibliography in Polish and foreign languages, and templates of surveys used to prepare the report.

- The official position of the National Broadcasting Council of Poland (KRRiT) from 10 June 2008 regarding the need to promote media education, in which KRRiT

recognized media education as a crucial element for the conscious and effective use of contemporary electronic media and a condition for the success of the digital revolution in media, as well as a foundation for the development of a civil and information society. At the same time, the Council expressed concern over the marginalization of this issue in the education system and the activities of public broadcasters (KRRiT, 2008b);

- The study *International Organizations and Selected European Countries on Media Education*, prepared in 2010 by the KRRiT Office (Borkowska et al., 2010);
- In 2015, together with the Polish National Commission for UNESCO, KRRiT co-published the volume *On the Need for Media Education*, which includes several articles devoted to media and digital competencies of various age and social groups in Poland and the influence of media on the behavior of children and youth. The authors also presented recommendations for necessary action required in response to the dynamic development of media civilization (Federowicz & Ratajski, 2015).

Additionally:

- In five reports, the National Broadcasting Council (KRRiT) is identified as the coordinating institution for various activities related to media education;
- Eleven excerpts indicate the promotion of media education indicated as one of KRRiT's primary responsibilities;
- Sixteen excerpts refer to KRRiT's own educational and media-related activities (of which ten repeat the same information across successive reports, stating that "Since 2013, KRRiT has operated a website dedicated to media education, which serves as a knowledge base on media education initiatives in Poland and abroad, and as a platform for the exchange of information on the topic" (KRRiT, 2022). The website is currently hosted on KRRiT's archived site. Over its ten years of existence, the

related Facebook page gathered 530 followers and 529 likes. The last post was made on January 11, 2020, while earlier posts date from 2017 (with only six posts throughout that year). As of 2025, the Facebook page no longer exists and was not archived on the Wayback Machine.

Other excerpts refer to initiatives such as:

- Funding the purchase of media equipment for high schools in Warsaw, Pruszcz Gdański, and Lublin, participating in a pilot media education program (KRRiT, 2003);
- Contacts with a student journalism club operating at the Jan Zamoyski High School No. 1 in Świdnik (KRRiT, 2018);
- In the 2020 report, as an example of the personal involvement of KRRiT members in promoting media education, it was noted that Prof. Janusz Kawecki, PhD, participated in a weekly radio program titled *Understanding the Media* broadcast by Radio Maryja. In this series, students of the Higher School of Social and Media Culture in Toruń prepared and asked questions related to, among other things, how media content is received, how program offerings are interpreted, and how to critically select and evaluate media messages (KRRiT, 2021, 2022).

3.4. Summary of the Analysis

The analysis leads to the conclusion that the activities undertaken by the KRRiT in media education are marginal concerning the Council's overall operations. Essentially, KRRiT is an authority responsible for radio and television in Poland. The press and, to some extent, internet media (e.g., online portals or digital newspaper editions) fall outside its remit. KRRiT's work primarily focuses on granting licenses for radio and television programs, monitoring whether broadcasters comply with license conditions, and handling complaints against broadcasters. In recent years, an important area of KRRiT's activity has been the implementation of digital terrestrial television and radio. These core functions are substantial, and their effects are visible in society relatively quickly. Against this backdrop, concern for media education appears as a secondary activity and is often marginalized.

Hence, there is a perception that KRRiT's initiatives in the field of media education are often superficial and aimed mainly at fulfilling reporting requirements. It is difficult to identify a long-term strategy for media education; instead, these efforts are ad hoc, frequently driven by international obligations or inspired by the actions of foreign institutions. A case in point is the *Media Signpost* website, often cited in KRRiT's reports as a flagship media literacy initiative. In reality, however, it failed to fulfil its role, as reflected in the performance of the Facebook profile. The initiative gathered a tiny number of

followers and likes, generated minimal user engagement, until it was eventually neglected and ultimately deleted.

Following the introduction of the requirement to report undertaken actions to the European Commission, only in the last two years has there been a modest revival in KRRiT's media education initiatives. Significantly, this period (2020–2021) coincided with the Covid-19 pandemic, which dramatically increased the relevance of media education due to the proliferation of health-related disinformation and the accelerated digitalization of social life. However, the analyzed reports do not reflect any systematic attempt by KRRiT to address these unprecedented challenges or to link media education efforts with pandemic-related public health communication needs. Comparing periods of heightened KRRiT activity aimed at introducing a dedicated educational module in schools (1997–2002 and 2008–2010) with the period when a separate “Media and Reading Education” pathway functioned in schools (1999–2007), suggest that while the first wave of activity contributed to the implementation of this pathway. However, after the pathway was removed from schools in 2007, the subsequent efforts undertaken by KRRiT's efforts and its cooperation with the Ministry of Education failed to produce a comparable breakthrough.

To synthesize the findings, the authors developed a concept map illustrating the main thematic clusters identified in KRRiT's media education activities throughout the analyzed period (Table 1).

Table 1. Concept map

Central Concept	Media Education
Main Associations:	—
Audience Competencies	Critical/aware reception, media comprehension, ability to make informed choices
Education and Protection	Primarily, the protection of minors from harmful content and education for media consumption
Civic Function	A prerequisite for democracy, civil society, and the information society
Institutional Actions	Coordination, cooperation (Ministry of National Education, Ministry of Culture, NGOs, academia), organization of debates/conferences, creation of resources, international participation
Formal Education	The postulate is to introduce media education into schools
Digital Competencies	(Emerging later)
Disinformation	(Emerging late, mainly in international contexts)

Source: own study.

The above map appears somewhat outdated. It is focused on traditional media and general reception competencies. It lacks a stronger consideration of the specific characteristics of digital media (apart from the general notion of digital competencies, which is understandable, as this topic emerged in line with the development of internet infrastructure in Poland). Moreover, it completely omits health and well-being.

In the activities and institutional awareness of the National Broadcasting Council (KRRiT), there is a complete absence of connection between media education, media use, and public health policy, unlike, for example, the initiatives taken by the Ombudsman for Children. In the reports from this period, there is no direct link between KRRiT's media education efforts and the concepts of well-being or public health. Although academic literature—especially after 2010—highlighted the relationship between media use and mental well-being, KRRiT focused primarily on protecting minors from morally or developmentally harmful content, as well as fostering civic competencies and critical media reception.

While these can be considered indirectly related to well-being, there is no deliberate integration of these thematic areas, nor is the relationship between media education and well-being treated as a core strategic element of KRRiT's initiatives. The omission of the health aspect, despite the growing body of scientific knowledge and the potential impact of media on mental health—especially among young people—reflects a limited and insufficiently updated understanding of the scope and potential of media education by the Council during this period. When we also consider the lack of emphasis in the national curriculum on educating about the impact of media on the psychophysical sphere of humans and the importance of digital hygiene—and, above all, the data on the mental condition of the younger generation—it becomes clear how unprepared children and adolescents are to care for their well-being. This, on a broader scale, affects the overall health condition of society. While it is understandable that this aspect may have been overlooked in the 1990s and early 2000s, when the connection between media education and audience well-being, as well as the influence of media literacy initiatives on societal well-being, had not yet been sufficiently studied or articulated in the literature, its continued neglect after 2010 indicates a knowledge gap among those responsible for state media policy. This is particularly puzzling given that KRRiT's reports mention cooperation with academic institutions. Why, then, has this cooperation not included important and up-to-date academic findings on media education in the work of the institution officially responsible for media education in Poland?

Until 2021, the main directions of the National Broadcasting Council's (KRRiT) activities in the area of media education focused on diagnosing the state of media education, initiating debates and conferences, cooperating with the ministries of education and culture as well as the academic community, advocating for the introduction of media education in schools, creating

resources (such as the *Bulletin* and *Media Signpost*), participating in international bodies, and granting patronage. In later years, the development of digital competencies and combating disinformation (particularly in the context of European Regulators Group for Audiovisual Media Services – ERGA) also became visible areas of activity. Although these activities were diverse, they lacked coherence and continuity. Periods of heightened interest (around 2000–2002 and 2008–2011) alternated with periods of near-total inactivity (2003–2007). Overall, there was no consistent long-term strategy and consistency in action. Many initiatives appeared reactive (e.g., in response to EU directives) or symbolic, as exemplified by *Media Signpost*, which proved largely ineffective.

KRRiT functioned both as an implementing body and as an initiator of media education activities, although it often limited itself to the role of reporting initiatives undertaken by other entities. For example, cooperation with ministries was declared, yet in practice, as in the case of introducing media education into schools, it proved ineffective after 2007. One may therefore conclude that KRRiT's role as an initiator was periodic and dependent on external stimuli (e.g., EU directives), or on the personal engagement of individual members. Despite its statutory powers, especially after 2011, KRRiT did not fully utilize its potential as a central body coordinating and strategically guiding media education in Poland. Its actions were scattered and lacked a systemic approach.

This leads to a broader conclusion: the activities of institutions officially responsible for media education, or those that should assume such responsibility—such as the Ombudsman for Children or the ministers responsible for education and science—remain uncoordinated at the national level. There is a complete absence of a coherent policy in this area. Given the growing problem of media usage, this situation requires urgent change. This change should occur at a systemic level, incorporating a broad and interdisciplinary perspective on the social changes driven by media, diagnosing the root causes of the problems, and implementing necessary solutions in media education.

The period under discussion also saw the conclusion of the project “Media Competencies of Students and Teachers as the Key to Education in a Mediatized Society,” carried out by the University of Information Technology and Management in Rzeszów in partnership with the Norwegian University of Science and Technology in Trondheim, with financial support from Iceland, Liechtenstein, and Norway under the EEA Grants. Some authors of this article were involved in the project, which resulted in developing a media education system that was ready for implementation. The system aimed at parallel developing media competencies in both students and teachers. It included general assumptions and detailed proposals for changes in legal acts: the Education Law Act, the core curriculum for all types and levels of schools, and the standards for teacher training. Additionally, it contained practical tools, such as instruments for diagnosing media competencies among students of various age groups and a postgraduate study program

for school media educators (Adamski, Gosek & Kurek-Ochmańska, 2023). The developed documents were submitted, among others, to the National Broadcasting Council (KRRiT) with a recommendation for their use in reforming the current media education system. KRRiT acknowledged the importance of media education and noted that it always welcomes such initiatives and cooperates with organizations undertaking activities in this field. However, it stated that it does not have the appropriate competences to assess or recommend curricular, organizational, or policy changes in education, as these fall under the exclusive authority of the Minister of Education and Science. This stance illustrates KRRiT's limited proactivity and engagement in efforts to reform the media education system during the analyzed period.

Conclusions and Directions for Further Research

The content analysis of reports by KRRiT from 1993 to 2021 reveals that media education, despite its growing importance in the digital era and the statutory responsibility assigned to KRRiT in this area, is treated in a marginal, inconsistent, and strategically fragmented manner. Moreover, the analysis uncovers a significant lack of systemic integration between media education and the country's public health policy, despite existing scientific evidence showing a direct impact of media use on mental well-being and public health.

The findings of this study indicate that Poland requires a coordinated media education policy that would be an integral part of the public health strategy and the society's resilience to disinformation. State institutions, especially KRRiT, should actively promote and implement educational programs aimed at all age groups, with particular emphasis on digital well-being. It is also essential to formally recognize media education as one of the key elements of mental health prevention, particularly for children, youth, and the elderly, groups most vulnerable to the adverse effects of excessive or unconscious media use. In this context, the initiative of the Polish Communication Association to propose that the Senate of the Republic of Poland declare 2026 as the Year of Media Education should be regarded as a particularly welcome step.

The practical implications of this research concern three areas. First, there is a clear need to develop and implement a national media education strategy with clearly defined goals, a dedicated budget, and an inter-institutional cooperation framework is necessary. Second, elements of media education should be integrated into public health programs, especially in promoting mental health, preventing digital addictions, and combating health-related disinformation. In this regard, the current activities of the Ombudsperson for Children deserve strong support and recognition. Third, it is crucial to increase media literacy among educational staff, healthcare workers, and individuals working with socially vulnerable groups.

The authors see a strong rationale for continuing this line of research. Most importantly, recent KRRiT reports from 2022 onward should be analyzed. Further research should focus on three key dimensions. The first involves a more in-depth comparative analysis with other EU countries that have more systematically implemented media education in health policy frameworks, such as Finland and Ireland. The second concerns quantitative studies examining the impact of media education programs on the mental well-being of audiences across various age groups, particularly regarding the mechanisms through which resilience to disinformation is developed. This should include adult media education, which remains almost entirely absent from media education discussions in Poland. The third dimension should involve institutional studies analyzing organizational and cultural barriers to implementing media education at national and local levels. Future research could also broaden the analytical perspective—an approach not undertaken in the present article due to length constraints—by examining the role of other institutions involved in media education, including the Ministry of Digital Affairs, NASK, and the Media Ethics Council.

In conclusion, this study highlights the urgent need to reorient approaches to media education away from fragmented educational and cultural initiatives and toward a strategically guided public policy aimed at supporting citizens' mental health and quality of life. Only such an approach can effectively address the challenges of the information age in a manner consistent with the principles of sustainable development and the public interest.

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