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Media Literacy in the Face of Disinformation and the Crisis in Education

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Description

In recent years, Media and Information Literacy (MIL) has become an increasingly prominent field of research at the intersection of communication and education. The rise of disinformation and fake news, the proliferation of hoaxes, fabricated news and hate speech —further amplified by the emergence of generative artificial intelligence— and the growing influence of digital platforms and social media have attracted considerable attention from both the academic community and a wide range of international institutions and organisations.

For more than four decades, UNESCO has taken a sustained interest in developments across the media landscape and, more specifically, in media education. Since the late 1970s, it has promoted the field through numerous institutional declarations and an extensive body of publications on MIL (Pérez Tornero, 2025). The European Commission and the European Parliament have likewise launched a wide range of initiatives to promote media literacy (Sádaba and Salaverría, 2023), understood as “a proactive strategy for strengthening democracy and fostering social resilience in the face of the challenges posed by digital society” (Sádaba, 2025: 101) and, ultimately, as “a means of safeguarding democracy” (Marta-Lazo, 2025).

Significant developments have also taken place in the measures introduced by audiovisual regulators to promote media literacy, particularly across European public and private media, in implementation of Directive (EU) 2018/1808. Spain’s General Law 13/2022 on Audiovisual Communication, particularly Article 10, established a specific mandate to promote media literacy measures under the supervision of the national audiovisual regulator, the National Commission on Markets and Competition (CNMC). This remit also extends to regional regulators (CAC, CAA and CACV) and to the competent administrative bodies in other autonomous communities, as reflected in the CNMC’s 2025 report (CNMC, 2025).

In recent years, Alfamed, the research network specialising in educommunication, has played an active role in advancing the field. Its work includes the publication of the new Curriculum Alfamed para docentes (Aguaded, Hernando, de-Casas-Moreno [coord.], 2025), as well as the development of specific public-policy recommendations aimed at strengthening media literacy (Aguaded et al., 2025). At the same time, the emergence of generative artificial intelligence has profoundly reshaped the debate surrounding MIL and prompted renewed critical reflection within the academic community (Gutiérrez, 2025; Martín Gómez, Bexerra and García Matilla,

2025). Media literacy can therefore be regarded as a field of clear strategic importance (Sádaba, 2026).

Yet even a brief review of the major milestones in the development of media education reveals —not without some cause for concern— that national and regional education authorities have not played the role that might reasonably have been expected of them in promoting media education in Spain. This situation has been brought into sharper focus by the publication of the PISA 2025 Report on 8 September 2026 (Ministry of Education, 2026), which has generated considerable debate among political representatives, officials from national and regional education authorities, teachers, families and a significant section of the wider public. As has increasingly been the case in recent years, the discussion has often been shaped less by measured debate than by mutual accusations between political parties and national and regional governments, against a broader backdrop of polarisation.

In our view, however, the latest PISA Report raises a number of issues which, albeit indirectly, point to the need to strengthen media literacy. The OECD draws attention to poor performance in reading comprehension, which the authors of the study associate with the widespread use of mobile devices. The PISA authors themselves also question whether the instruments currently used to assess learning are capable of capturing the full range of students' skills, some of which may fall outside the scope of existing forms of assessment.

Particularly significant in this respect is the fact that, in early 2026, several months before the publication of the PISA 2025 Report, the OECD announced a new framework for assessing children's and adolescents' learning in schools: MAIL, the Media and Artificial Intelligence Literacy framework. This initiative highlights the growing need to assess levels of media and artificial intelligence literacy, given their direct relationship with learning in areas such as reading comprehension, mathematics and science (OECD, 2026). Future PISA assessments are therefore likely to undergo significant changes, with information literacy and the use of AI set to be incorporated into the 2029 assessment.

Against this background, ZER. Revista de Estudios en Comunicación invites contributions that critically examine the development of MIL in the context of the current crisis in education. The special issue, entitled "Media Literacy in the Face of Disinformation and the Crisis in Education", seeks to bring together research on a topic of particular relevance at the present time.

Submissions may address, among others, the following themes:

- Cooperation between national and regional education authorities to advance media literacy.
- Educommunication and the development of critical thinking among citizens.
- Critical theories of mediatisation and media education.
- Education, new technologies and audiovisual literacy.
- The role of the media in advancing educommunication.
- The role of media education in fostering critical and participatory citizenship.
- Media, social media and non-formal education.
- Public service media and Media and Information Literacy.
- Cooperation between education authorities and public and private media in the field of media education, at both national and international levels.

- The impact of artificial intelligence on the practice and teaching of media literacy.
- Adapting media literacy content to different levels of non-university education.
- Challenges in teacher education and professional development in the field of educommunication.
- Media literacy in higher education.
- Innovative approaches and case studies in the implementation of media literacy programmes.

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