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Significance of the Creation of School Magazines in Secondary Schools in Slovakia

Introduction

Historically, one of the most practical ways of teaching media education has been through the creation of school magazines. Access to new digital technology was limited in the pre-new media period; thus, print media thrived. Despite the rise of new media, print media continues to be a powerful influence in the media landscape (Udenze 2018: 21). Print media is still widely accessible and offers the possibility of unlimited spatiotemporal use. For instruction purposes, print media supports the memory of information as it is possible to return to the physical texts. Magazines, part of the periodical press, are a collection of information from different areas of social life that reaches readers at regular intervals. In addition, those who create magazines participate in a form of learning-by-doing, using media education as a means to critically approach and evaluate content. By creating and preparing news and journalistic pieces, students are able to understand in practice the nature of the journalistic profession in printed periodicals (Kačinová 2018: 30–31). In Slovakia, there is no complete database of schools with their specific media outputs. We consider this issue to be unexplored, and for this reason, we are addressing it.

The internet is also connected to the creation of the magazine. In recent years, Slovak schools have become more connected to the internet. However, for the learning-by-doing concept of teaching, an internet connection is not enough. To create a classic magazine in print, it is necessary to purchase software for lamination and graphic design. In addition, it is a challenge for educational institutions to provide for the costs associated with printing the periodical. If a school decides to publish an online form of the journal, these costs disappear. The advantage of the online form of publishing

is the ability to update content and add videos, polls, and hyperlinks (Petranová, Vrabec 2011: 156–157).

There are several electronic magazines in Slovakia, which are presented at the competition called *Štúrovo pero* (Štúrovo pero 2022). There is a new category dedicated to "online journalism" presented at the competition. According to A. Tušer, the main mission of school magazines is to satisfy the informational, thematic, interest, opinion, leisure, and recessional interests of the audiences (Tušer 2005: 3). From an organizational point of view, the term "school media" refers to media created primarily for recipients from the ranks of the educational institution. Students are involved, on a voluntary participatory basis, in the production of media content intended to inform their classmates or teachers.

The development of journalism and media production at different levels of education is extremely important for several reasons. These include the development of democracy and free thinking, which is also linked to freedom of the press. Students should have active access to freedom of expression. Their opinions reflect contemporary social issues that affect them deeply. Another important function is to inform. School periodicals carry a lot of information from both in-school and out-of-school settings. They contain interviews with personalities as well as events in the life of the school or the region. They also offer students the opportunity to attend and participate in various events, and last, but not least, they offer students the opportunity to work on media in various positions (Prostináková Hossová, Švecová 2019: 35). A large sum of money is not needed to start a school magazine, neither is the best technical equipment or printing. The most important element in the creation of school magazines is the will of the students to create media content. The creation of a successful magazine requires students from different age groups with the appropriate predispositions to produce a media periodical (Bôtošová, Danihelová, 2021: 20).

Student-centered teaching is a method of instruction in which students have a say in the content, activities, resources, and speed of learning. Teaching has been in a constant state of change as a result of dynamic societal developments. In recent decades, there has been a notable paradigm change (Mekonnen 2020: 13–14). J. Wrenn and B. Wrenn state that we have to keep the balance between classical education and the learning-by-doing concept. Educators want students to understand the value of both classroom and field experiences, as well as the fact that a good theory is just as necessary as good practice. While experience is an excellent teacher, it cannot replace what is best taught in a classroom and vice versa. A case could be made that the best learning environment is created when these two learning modalities are integrated within a course rather than partitioned throughout multiple courses in the curriculum (Wrenn, Wrenn 2009: 258). However, with the growth of social media, decrease in traditional news consumption, and transition from written to visual methods of communication, it has become imperative that all students are well versed in media literacy skills (Grombly, Andersen 2020: 7). Evaluation of effective media education includes assessing certain acquired skills and competences as well as the understanding of how media functions and an awareness of the problems encountered in practice.

Promotion of the magazine is necessary for its popularity. Promotion can happen within the institutional sphere; for instance, it is the editors' responsibility to manage social networks and create short statuses for Facebook and Instagram. They are also

responsible for mapping the life of the newsroom beyond the production of magazines by taking photos or videos of specific school events, conducting interviews, and taking photos of the magazine's cover and the process of finalizing a particular issue (lamination), etc. The next level of promotion is public; students could share content that relates not only to the school but also to the environment in which they live – the current situation and problems in the city, compiling topics at the regional or local level, presenting and mapping of urban activities, cooperating with regional periodicals, and participating in a secondary school fair with a continuous follow-up to the Open Day event, which according to the results of the survey are already in place (Bôtošová 2021: 24).

Methodology

Creating a school magazine is a challenging and complex process that requires the collective effort of the editorial board members. However, in this case, the degree of autonomy in creation, the organizational and managerial aspects, and the continuity of the editorial team are closely related to the work and creativity. Therefore, we have chosen to investigate these aspects, which are the ones that are bearing on our research:

1. *Autonomy*
2. *Organizational and management skills in the creation of a journal*
3. *Continuity of the editorial office*

1. Autonomy

The long-term purpose of formal education is likely not to learn a collection of "truths," but to build the ability and interest for studying on one's own (autonomous learning) (Elerman 2004: 4). This type of education also involves working autonomously in an activity of interest, for example in a school magazine. We investigate the aspect of *autonomy* through the scientific method of semantic differential. In doing so, we work with the following research question:

RQ1: What is the relationship between the degree of autonomy of students participating in the creation of school magazines among those in grammar schools and those in secondary vocational schools?

Based on interviews with editors of school magazines, we hypothesized that students in grammar schools have a greater degree of autonomy in the creation of school magazines than students in secondary vocational schools (Hypothesis 1).

The process of testing Hypothesis 1:

We tested this hypothesis based on the data from the questionnaire survey and evaluation through the semantic differential method. This method is used to investigate how different concepts differ in people's semantic space or to compare how different groups of respondents differ in their understanding of each concept. Semantic differential is a frequently used social psychological and sociological method that allows the analysis of subtle differences in respondents' attitudes. Respondents from the editor-in-chief ranks (6 editors-in-chief from grammar schools and 6 editors-in-chief from vocational schools) were approached with five scaled questions concerning the assessment of the degree of autonomy in the production of their journal.

Each respondent's task was to choose one value on the scale each time between two contrasting alternatives. In doing so, we used a 7-point scale, where a value of 1 represented a low perceived level of student autonomy (this option indicates that the educator interferes very much in the creation of the magazine), and a value of 7 represented a high perceived level of student autonomy (this option indicates that the educator interferes minimally in the creation of the magazine).

In order to test Hypothesis 1, we set 5 indicators related to autonomy in the production of gymnasium journals. The indicators of autonomy were the following: the educator's intervention in the editorial board meetings, the educator's approval of the selection of topics, the educator's comments on the content of the articles, the educator's control of the final version of the journal, and the educator's position in the selection of new members of the editorial board.

2. Organizational and management skills in the creation of a journal

Within the medium, organization, and management of activities is one of the key aspects of the operation of a school magazine. Order, structure, unification and integration, and a certain interconnectedness of the various elements must be established in order to function properly as a whole. In the current era, where institutions frequently face major challenges in the fields of production and services due to severe crises, efficient and effective management, combined with human and material resources, can help to improve and solve the organization's problems and issues (Nazari 2018: 58).

We explore the aspect of *organizational and management skills in the creation of a journal* through the scientific method of semantic differential. In doing so, we work with the following research question:

RQ2: What are the differences in the organizational and managerial capabilities of the activity of school magazine editors among those in grammar schools and those in secondary vocational schools?

Based on interviews with editors of school magazines, we hypothesized that students of grammar schools have more developed organizational and management skills in the production of school magazines than students of secondary vocational schools (Hypothesis 2).

The process of testing Hypothesis 2:

This hypothesis was tested based on the data from the questionnaire survey and its evaluation through the semantic differential method.

The task of each respondent was to choose one value on the scale each time between two contrasting alternatives. We used a 7-point scale, where a value of 1 represented a low perceived level of organizational and managerial aspects in the editorial office (this option indicates that the editorial office does not have clearly defined rules of operation, competencies, etc.), and a value of 7 represented a high perceived level of student autonomy (this option indicates that the process of creating the journal is highly specified).

In order to test Hypothesis 2, we set 5 indicators that relate to organizational and managerial aspects in the editorial office. The indicators of organizational and managerial aspects of the editorial office were the following: establishment of competencies, knowledge of rights and responsibilities, evaluation, feedback, and interest in topics.

3. Continuity of the editorial office

One of the prerequisites for running a successful school magazine is to provide a permanent support staff and editorial staff along with graphic designers, photographers, and other positions as the current situation demands. In some cases, this includes social media management or language proofreading.

We also investigate the continuity indicator in the editorial activity through the scientific method of semantic differential. In doing so, we work with the following research question:

RQ3: How is the continuity of the activity of the editors of school magazines ensured among those in grammar schools and those in secondary vocational schools?

Based on interviews with editors of school magazines, we hypothesized that continuity in the activity of editors of school magazines is better ensured in the conditions of grammar schools than in secondary vocational schools (Hypothesis 3).

The process of testing Hypothesis 3:

We tested this hypothesis based on the data from the questionnaire survey and evaluation through the semantic differential method. We followed the same procedure as the previous two hypotheses.

The task of each respondent was to choose one value on the scale each time between two contrasting alternatives. We used a 7-point scale, where a value of 1 represented a low perceived degree of organizational and managerial aspects in the editorial office (this option indicates that the continuity of the magazine is effectively ensured), and a value of 7 represented a high perceived degree of student autonomy (this option indicates that the continuity of the magazine is not addressed within the editorial office).

In order to test Hypothesis 3, we set 4 indicators that relate to the continuity of the editorial office. The indicators of continuity of editorial office activities were the following: openness, frequency of castings, training of newcomers, and mentoring.

Conclusion

Based on the data obtained from the questionnaire survey among editors-in-chief, we found the average values of these indicators. We then calculated mean values for grammar schools and mean values for high schools (Table 1).

Table 1: Autonomy

Autonomy indicator	Description	Grammar schools	Vocational secondary schools
		Average value	
Interventions	Educator interferes in the course of the editorial board vs. Educator does not interfere in the course of the editorial board	3.83	4
Approval	Educator approves the selection of article topics vs. Article topics are selected solely by the students	3.83	1.17

Speaking out	Educator comments on the content of all articles vs. The content of articles is commented on exclusively by students – members of the editorial board	3.17	3.5
Control	Educator reviews the final version of each issue of the magazine vs. The final version of each issue of the magazine is reviewed only by the students themselves – members of the editorial board	1.33	1.33
Selection	New members of the editorial board are selected by the teacher (e.g., based on how well they write essays) vs. New members of the editorial board are not selected by the teacher	4.67	3.17
AVERAGE VALUE = Index of Autonomy		3.37	2.63

Source: own processing, 2021.

Through statistical operations, we calculated a magazine autonomy index, which reflects the degree of autonomy students have in working in school magazines. Based on these data, we found that students in high schools (the index value was 3.37) had a higher degree of autonomy than those in vocational high schools (the index value was 2.63). The relevant data were then processed through a semantic differential (Figure 1), which shows how, on average, the respondents leaned towards one of the opposite values on a scale of 1 to 7. Thus, we consider Hypothesis 1 to be confirmed (higher levels of autonomy in the creation of a magazine have students of grammar schools).
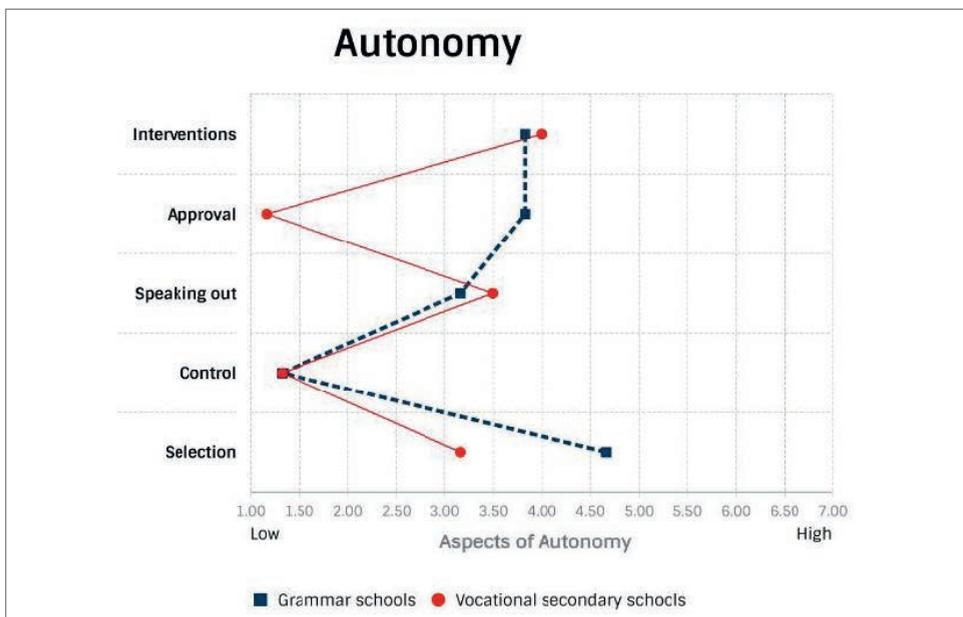

Figure 1: Aspects of autonomy in the creation of a school periodical
Source: own processing, 2021.

We averaged the data obtained from the questionnaire survey of the editors-in-chief. We then calculated the mean values for grammar schools and the mean values for vocational secondary schools (Table 2).

Table 2: Indicator of organizational and management aspects

Indicator of organizational and management aspects	Description	Grammar schools	Vocational secondary schools
		Average value	
Determination of competences	Members of the editorial staff have clearly defined tasks to perform vs. They do not divide tasks among the editorial staff at all	2.66	2.16
Knowledge of rights and obligations	Each member of the editorial board knows his/her rights and responsibilities vs. Members of the editorial board do not know their rights and responsibilities	1.83	2.16
Assessment	We regularly evaluate each issue after it is finished vs. When an issue is finished, our work ends, and we do not engage in any evaluation	2.5	2.5
Feedback	We regularly solicit feedback from classmates vs. We do not solicit feedback from classmates at all	2.66	2.16
Interest in topics	We try to find out from classmates on an ongoing basis what topics they are interested in vs. Suggestions from classmates are not relevant to us	2.66	1.83
AVERAGE VALUE = Index of organizational and management aspects		2.46	2.16

Source: own processing, 2021.

Through statistical operations, we calculated an index of organizational and managerial aspects of school magazine activities, which reflects the degree of organizational and managerial aspects in the production of school magazines, but also the establishment and definition of clear roles in the editorial office or involvement in the feedback and evaluation of school magazines. Based on these data, we found that a higher degree of organizational and managerial aspects was found among students in grammar schools (the index value was 2.46) than in vocational secondary schools (the index value was 2.16). The relevant data are processed through a semantic differential (Figure 2), which shows how, on average, respondents leaned towards one of the opposite values on a scale from 1 to 7. Thus, we consider hypothesis 2 to be confirmed (students of grammar schools have more developed organizational and management skills in the production of school magazines than students of vocational secondary schools).
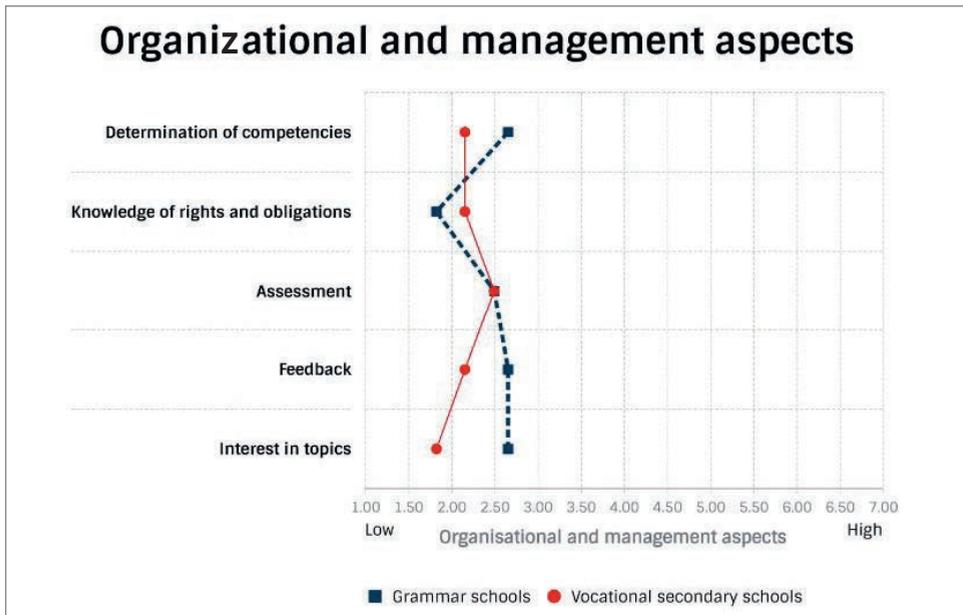
Figure 2: Organization and management in school periodicals
Source: own processing, 2021.

Organization and management in school magazines also work through practical exercises and learning about how things work in the media. M. Brestovansky agrees with this when he talks about the practical side of using the media. As the production of the magazine is also included in the so-called learning-by-doing concept, which belongs to education, educators participate in it as well. We averaged the data obtained from the questionnaire survey among the editors. We then calculated the mean values for grammar schools and the mean values for secondary vocational schools (Table 3).

Table 3: Indicator of continuity in editorial activities

Indicator of continuity in editorial activities	Description	Grammar schools	Vocational secondary schools
		Average value	
Openness	We are continuously trying to recruit new students to contribute to the magazine vs. We are more of a closed group, so recruiting new members is not an issue	1.16	2.33
Frequency of auditions	We hold a casting for new editorial board members at least once a year vs. We do not organize castings for new editorial board members	4.00	6.33
Training of newcomers	We provide training for new members of the editorial board vs. We do not organize any training for newcomers, everyone should do their own training and learn by himself/herself	3.33	4.33

Mentoring	A new editorial board member is working with a more experienced editor (mentor) who advises and helps him/her vs. We do not have any form of mentoring in our editorial board	4.00	4.16
AVERAGE VALUE = Index of continuity in editorial activities		3.12	4.25

Source: own processing, 2021.

As in the previous cases, we have calculated, through statistical operations, an index of continuity of the school magazine editorial office, which reflects the degree of ensuring continuity of the magazine in the high school environment, but also the training of newcomers, the frequency of castings and, therefore, the possibility of joining the editorial office, the mentoring program, and so on. Based on these data, we found that a higher degree of organizational and managerial aspects is experienced by students in vocational secondary schools (the index value was 4.25) than in grammar schools (the index value was 3.12). The relevant data are processed through a semantic differential (Figure 3), which shows how on average respondents leaned towards one of the opposite values on a scale of 1 to 7.
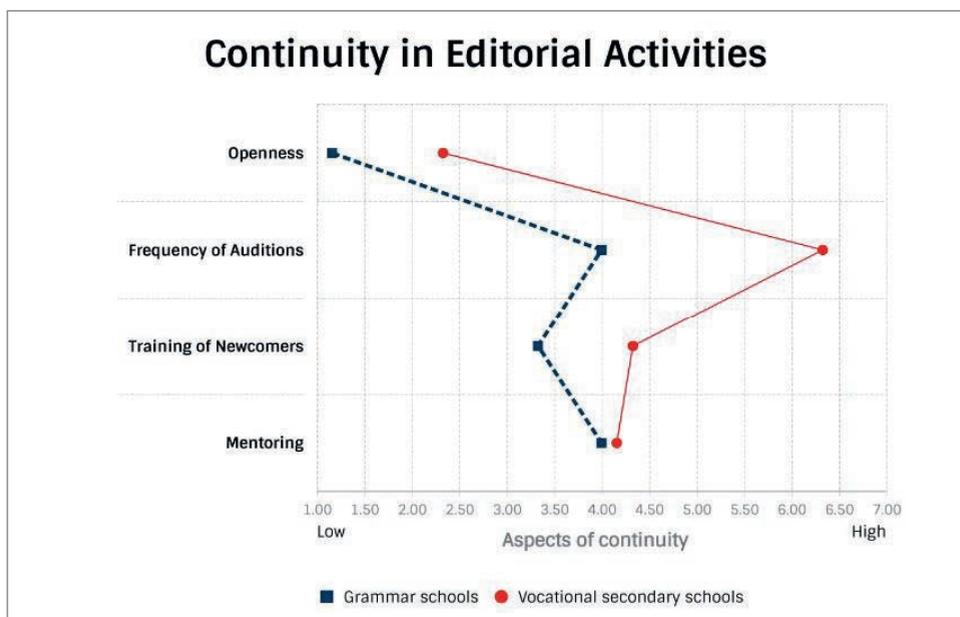

Figure 3: Continuity in school periodicals

Source: own processing, 2021.

Thus, we consider Hypothesis 3 to have been disproved (students of grammar schools have more developed organizational and management skills in the production of school magazines than students of vocational secondary schools). According to the evaluation of the semantic differential method, we conclude that secondary vocational schools have better continuity of activity.

4. Limits of the Research

Media education is an important part of education, but it is still not given the attention it deserves, especially in times of misinformation that create the need to know how to better manage the media. In schools, the activity of creating something in the context of spare time activities is valued, but it is overwhelmed by an intuitive form of creation that does not have clearly defined rules, rights, and obligations.

In this research, we focused on three aspects of the creation of a school journal. We studied autonomy, organizational and management skills in the creation of a journal, and continuity of the editorial office through the method of semantic differential. We tested 12 secondary schools where 6 editors-in-chief from vocational secondary schools and 6 editors-in-chief from grammar schools answered the questions and selected scales. The limitations of our research lie mainly in the size of the research sample; in the future, we see the potential in expanding this type of scientific investigation. Based on the findings, we can come up with a methodology for managing school editorial offices as well as an appropriate way of organizing work or ensuring the continuity of students. Another limitation of our research is the narrow specification of individual aspects, as one could also look at this issue from the position of a teacher in charge of a periodical or the management of an educational institution. In this way, we could identify the threats and opportunities of creating and maintaining the tradition of school journals in schools as well as the possibilities of effectively motivating or rewarding students who participate in the production.

Conclusion

The methodology of media education has remained unchanged for many decades. Today, however, teachers face new obstacles and tasks that are predetermined by global education trends. (Sazonova 2022: 193) Without taking the time to reflect, learning potential is squandered. Intentional reflection may result in new generalizations. These generalizations can allow for the successful handling of new circumstances. The learner must connect theory and action by planning for it, carrying it out, and then reflecting on it, linking what happened to the theory. (Gibbs 2013: 14) This study aimed to validate the findings through semantic differential analysis with editors-in-chief of grammar and vocational secondary school magazines. The thematic area of the survey focused on the continuity of the editorial activity, autonomy in the creation of the magazine, and organizational and managerial aspects of the editorial activity. The continuity of the magazine is better ensured in the environment of secondary vocational schools, which was confirmed by the semantic differential method in the evaluation of the stated hypothesis.

Through the semantic differential method, we found that grammar school students have a higher level of autonomy than vocational secondary school students. However,

this is not the case for organizational and management aspects, nor for the continuity of editorial activities. The biggest difference in the case of grammar schools and secondary vocational schools was observed precisely in the personality of the teacher, who in the case of secondary vocational schools helps significantly, especially in staffing the students, who are approached directly in class when their writing talent becomes apparent. In most cases, the students had a positive relationship with the teacher in charge, who is mostly in charge of finances, communication with the management of the institution, and also the press of the periodical. It is critical to keep up with emerging journalism trends in order to keep the school magazine relevant. The growth of data available as a result of the open data movement, as well as the advent of big data, necessitates new skills in journalistic practice. Statistics, visualization, and the use of technology have all grown more significant in recent years, particularly when it comes to data gathering and reporting (Portilla 2018: 14). Students need to learn and understand these issues while participating in creating a school magazine.

We must emphasize that the limitations of our research lie in the size of the research sample and also in the narrow specification of the aspects we investigated. This is an area with potential for exploration because the results could help to effectively manage and organize the work in school media or school magazines.

Hence, we conclude that the personality of the educator is important, but these are mostly administrative or organizational matters not directly related to the content or management of the editorial office. Understandably, newspaper publishers are concerned about their print media dropping circulation figures, given evident changes in readers' media consumption choices and their shift to digital copies of news. They are always on the lookout for innovative business ideas and revenue streams from advertising (Knihová 2018: 7). For this reason, it is also necessary to focus on making the content of newspapers and magazines more attractive to readers while also educating new and high-quality journalists.

Acknowledgment

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Abstract

Secondary school magazines have long been part of the educational process at educational institutions. The present study examines the status of secondary school magazines within the contexts of grammar and vocational secondary schools in Slovakia. It obtains relevant results using a semantic differential method addressed to the editors-in-chief of individual school magazines. There are 16 magazines in total. The object of the study is to find out the degree of autonomy given to the editors-in-chief, the organizational and managerial processes of running the journal, and the means of creating continuity for these activities within the environment of secondary vocational schools and grammar schools. After obtaining the answers from the scaled test, we arrive at the results through statistical operations and a calculated index that describes the

status of each selected aspect. The factors we examine are an important part of the editorial office functioning. To avoid problems, school journal programs attempt to ensure continuity and to train future students in this work. We see the degree of autonomy and the intervention of the educator in the production as an essential part of the concept of learning-by-doing. At the same time, this balance of autonomy and intervention provides smoother organization, management, and continuity, specifically as an educational activity in the field of media education.

Znaczenie i aspekty tworzenia czasopism szkolnych w szkołach średnich na Słowacji

Streszczenie

Czasopisma licealne od dawna są częścią procesu edukacyjnego w placówkach kształcących dzieci. W niniejszym opracowaniu przeanalizowano status czasopism szkół średnich w liceach i szkołach zawodowych na Słowacji. Wykorzystano metodę dyferencjału semantycznego skierowaną do redaktorów naczelnych poszczególnych czasopism szkolnych w celu uzyskania odpowiednich wyników – w sumie jest ich 16. Przedmiotem badań jest poznanie stopnia samodzielności, aspektów organizacyjnych i zarządczych działalności oraz ciągłości działalności czasopisma w środowisku średnich szkół zawodowych i liceów ogólnokształcących. Po uzyskaniu odpowiedzi z testu skalowanego dochodzimy do wyników za pomocą operacji statystycznych i obliczonego wskaźnika opisującego stan każdego wybranego aspektu. To właśnie powyższe rzeczy są ważnym elementem funkcjonowania redakcji jako takiej i mogą powodować problemy w jej funkcjonowaniu, ponieważ częstą bolączką czasopism szkolnych jest właśnie zapewnienie ciągłości i wyszkolenie następców w tej pracy. Postrzegamy stopień autonomii i interwencję edukatora w produkcję jako istotną część pracy w koncepcji uczenia się przez działanie, ale również zapewnienie sprawnej organizacji i aspektów zarządzania jako elementarną część dla kontynuacji tej działalności edukacyjnej w zakresie edukacji medialnej.

Key words: magazine, school periodicals, secondary school, learning-by-doing

Słowa kluczowe: czasopismo, czasopisma szkolne, szkoła średnia, nauka przez działanie

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