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sociales, politiques et de communication**

Representations and experiences of school teachers in Colombia regarding

Media Education

An exploratory research

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Contents

Acknowledgements.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
1. Introduction.....	4
2. Theoretical Framework.....	6
2.1 Media Education.....	6
2.1.1 The Nuances of Media Education.....	7
2.1.2 The Approach of Media Education in Latin America.....	8
2.2 Media Literacy.....	9
2.2.1 Schoolteacher’s Media Literacy.....	11
2.2.2 Teachers’ beliefs about digital media.....	12
2.3 Media Literacy and Media Education in Latin America.....	13
2.3.1 The Challenge of Defining Literacy in Spanish.....	13
2.3.2 Blurred lines between ICT education and media education.....	14
3. Problem Statement.....	16
3.1 Research Question.....	17
3.1.1 Teacher Cognition.....	18
3.2 Hypotheses.....	19
4. Methodology.....	20
4.1 Semi-structured interviews.....	20
4.1.1 Concepts Translated into Spanish Language.....	20
4.1.2 Interview Guide.....	21
4.2 Online Survey.....	22
4.2.1 Definition of the Sample.....	23
4.2.2 Validation of the Survey.....	24
4.3 Feedback on the method and justifications.....	24

4.3.1 Biases in the Translation	24
4.3.2 Validation of the Survey	25
4.3.3 Distribution of the Survey.....	25
5. Results.....	26
5.1. Data collection	26
5.1.1. Semi-structured Interviews	26
5.1.2. Online survey	30
5.2 Analysis of the Results.....	42
5.2.1 Sceptical Attitude Toward Media Literacy	42
5.2.2 Autonomy in Media Literacy Training	43
5.2.3 Representations of Media Education	43
5.2.4 Lack of institutional support in a complex socio-cultural context.....	44
5.3 Conclusions regarding the hypotheses.....	46
6. Discussion.....	48
6.1. Ambiguities in the definition of media	48
6.2. Teaching through or with the media	49
7. Conclusion	50
Bibliography	52

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1. Introduction

Digital media has become an indispensable component of all the fields of contemporary society, influencing work, culture, communication and education on a global scale. As its impact is exponentially growing, comprehending the different uses of digital media and its respective implications has been critical in recent years. Commonly defined as teaching and learning about media to be media literate (Buckingham, 2003), promoting media education in society has become increasingly critical, specifically in educational environments like schools.

Studies about media education at schools have traditionally been focused on young people as the target audience since “*they can be active participants in contemporary online culture*” (Yeh & Wan, 2019, p. 832). However, despite the critical role of teachers in disseminating knowledge, they seem to receive less attention within the research community and at the institutional level, especially in the complex contexts of developing countries like Colombia. This issue may have different reasons, including the challenge of knowing which could be the most appropriate methodology to research teachers’ media literacy (Weninger & Lang, 2024).

In this matter, there are diverse possibilities to conduct research on teachers, which includes, as a matter of example, measuring their media literacy competencies as a way to evaluate if they can provide their learners with effective media education (Simons et al., 2017), recognising their media practices in determined situations by adopting an interpretative approach (Fastrez & Jacques, 2024), or exploring their beliefs, attitudes and perceptions to appreciate their conceptualisation of media literacy (Weninger & Lang, 2024).

When researching school teachers, it is crucial to understand that their experiences are influenced by their socio-economic contexts. Public policies across countries vary in their efforts to integrate media education into the curriculum. In Colombia, other priorities must be addressed, and issues like the social gap and the digital divide tend to marginalise the implementation of media education and media literacy.

This thesis explores Colombian schoolteachers' beliefs, perceptions and challenges in integrating and fostering media education into their teaching practices. Thus, a brief historical account of the implementation of media literacy and media education in French-speaking and English-speaking countries exists. Furthermore, there is a state of art of the theoretical contributions from Latin American countries. Then, there is a literature review about specific academic productions that have sought the development of media literacy and media education in Colombia and their possible common points to ICT competencies.

By conducting a mixed methodology comprising 6 semi-structured interviews and an online survey in which 29 school teachers from different cities in Colombia participated, this thesis aims to recognise their representations and experiences towards media education and how they overcome their challenges concerning digital media. To do so, the research methodology is based on the domain of teachers' cognition, which is described as all the aspects that cannot be observable when studying teachers' media education. It involves then beliefs, experiences, and attitudes determined by contextual factors. (Borg, 2003, p.82). The findings of this research are expected to contribute to a broader understanding of media literacy and media education in Colombia.

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1 Media Education

The theoretical framework for this research on Media Education must be explained as a starting point. It provides a brief historical overview of its evolution in Belgium, the United Kingdom, and the United States. Furthermore, it explains the particularities of media education in Latin America, with occasional mentions of Colombia.

According to Buckingham (2013), media education is the process of teaching and learning about media to be media literate, which means being critically competent about it and its impact on society. Therefore, this implies not only understanding media from a critical point of view but also being able to create and produce media content so that people are the active and passive recipients of information.

Additionally, Buckingham emphasises that the media encompasses several languages of communication: images, audio, and written language. Thus, media education is based on the understanding of media literacy, which enables the capacity to analyse and judge the media consumed by people (see section 2.2). The key to effective media education is for teachers to understand their role as media interpreters and their potential towards the media, which lies in their ability to multiply knowledge among students, fostering media literacy learning.

One of the reasons why it is essential to study media education is because *“the media provide many of the ‘symbolic resources’ we use to conduct and interpret our relationships and to define our identities”* (Buckingham, 2003, p.4). In this context, symbolic resources can be related to any narrative or symbol that makes a person belong to a community. This notion seems crucial nowadays since digital media plays a fundamental part in individuals' daily lives, particularly with young people whose active online participation is essential to constructing their identities.

2.1.1 The Nuances of Media Education

The history of media education is complex and undoubtedly nuanced, and its definition cannot be widely applicable since it is a highly context- and language-dependent field. According to Fastrez and De Smedt (2012), media education emerged not intending to treat media as a subject of study but rather as a tool to facilitate the exchange of ideas and stimulate learning for other matters in the classroom. For instance, teachers used films, newspapers, or television to support their lessons, so learning became more engaging and creative for students. Over time, as it was observed that young people encountered difficulties in critically engaging with information, the need to develop pedagogical methods to encourage the exchange of ideas emerged.

Fastrez De Smedt (2012) highlighted a growing interest in integrating media education in Belgium and France.¹ Into the formal educational system during the 1990s to implement pilot practices demonstrating its educational effects. For the UK, the influence of cultural studies was fundamental to the evolution of media education. For David Buckingham (2003), it was part of a broader move towards *democratisation*, questioning the relevance of the traditional academic curriculum and attempting to debate social issues, where teaching about the media was key in the educational strategies in the 1960s and 1970s.

Nonetheless, media education in the UK refers to media literacy education (MLE) in America. American literature Describes MLE as teaching students the skills to “*access and understand information, identify the sources by evaluating the credibility of the content, create content using media materials, reflect on one’s behaviours based on social norms and participate in the community*” (Yeh & Wan, 2019, p. 1). MLE has evolved significantly, with notable contributions from organisations and educators who developed frameworks and resources for teaching it in schools². Associations such as the Center for Media Literacy (CML) and the National Association for Media Literacy Education (NAMLE) have been crucial in advocating for the growth of this discipline in the country.

¹ In French is referred to *Education aux Médias*.

² Jolls, T., & Wilson, C. (n.d.). The Core Concepts: Fundamental to Media Literacy Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow. *Journal of Media Literacy Education*.

Despite its expansive growth and recognition, media education still presents some inconsistencies regarding its institutionalisation in the educational framework, the lack of teacher preparation programs, and different postures and names depending on the language concerned, as seen in the American, British and French perspectives.

2.1.2 The Approach of Media Education in Latin America

De Oliveira Soares (2020) provides a historical overview of the development of media education in Latin America. Indeed, the author mentions that the first media education programs focused on analysing films, printed media and television production during the 1960s and 1970s. Due to the growing impact of the American media in the Southern Hemisphere, authors like Mario Kaplún (Argentina), Paulo Freire (Brazil), and Antonio Pasquali (Venezuela), among others, began a social movement around participatory communication to be aware and critical towards the “cultural invasion.”³. This movement successfully brought UNESCO's focus on social development in the 1980s, particularly in integrating communication and education into public policies. The “Major Project ” consisted of a set of seminars about television critical analysis aimed at democratising communication policies. Those seminars equipped participants (student leaders, activists and community leaders) with the skills required to engage with television content from a critical perspective.

In Colombia and Brazil, Catholic communities were vital in implementing education and communication programs. For example, the Communication Department of the Latin American Episcopal Council (CELAM) addressed its pastoral work by applying media education initiatives that privileged widespread communication, preserved cultural identity, and democratised media.

In the 1990s, the influence of the British perspective on cultural studies and the support of scientific journals in Latin America led to the conclusion that a strong relationship existed

³ De Oliveira Soares refers to cultural invasion as the result of media production coming constantly from the Northern Hemisphere, relegating the production and consumption of local media, often associated with the loss of identity, traditions and cultural homogenization.

between communication and education, particularly in the context of critical media consumption. Hence, Buitrago Alonso et al. (2017) mention that the concept of ‘Educommunication’ (the union of the words education and communication) was developed and discussed by Spanish researchers such as Roberto Aparici and Agustin Garcia Matilla, while in Brazil, it was widely supported by the University of São Paulo and author Ismar de Oliveira Soares.

Educommunication has a strong presence in higher education institutions in Brazil, Argentina, Colombia, México and Perú. Its distinctive approach is focused on social transformation and citizen participation to empower communities through communication. Galeano (2023) observes that the competency-based approach to media education is a tradition rooted in the Northern Hemisphere, implemented in the Southern Cone, with notable influences from communication. This implies that media literacy makes citizen empowerment possible in digital communication scenarios.

2.2 Media Literacy

Numerous researchers have extensively studied media literacy, encompassing a wide range of approaches depending on the cultural, historical, or social contexts. Nowadays, with the rapid proliferation of digital platforms, being media literate is crucial because of its influence in shaping people's perceptions of reality.

Fastrez et al. (2022) define media literacy as “*the ability to access, understand, create and evaluate media and media content in various contexts*”. In this sense, media literacy is conceived of as a competence-based approach; acquiring the necessary skills will make an individual competent when confronted with diverse situations. These competencies must be adapted to the unique demands of each context in which the situation is embedded. Therefore, to better comprehend the question of what media literacy is, it is essential to note that it can be answered “*in terms of knowledge, skills or critical thinking or in terms of activities and social-cultural practices.*” (Potter, 2004, as cited in Fastrez et al., 2022)

Upon examining the literature on media literacy, I found that the academic production from American and French-speaking perspectives is extensive. In the United States of America, authors Hobbs⁴ & Moore (2013) conceptualised a set of critical skills that includes five competencies that work together as problem-solving skills:

- Access: finding and sharing information using digital media tools well.
- Analyse: using critical thinking to understand the purpose of the message, its veracity and potential consequences.
- Create: generating content with creativity and assertiveness.
- Reflect: Consider the consequences of media messages in daily life and take accountability for conduct and communication behaviour.
- Act: working to share knowledge and solve problems individually and collaboratively as community members.

Likewise, in the context of French-speaking research, Fastrez & de Smedt (2012), the term ‘competence’ is used to define the sense of capacity, that is to say, the combinations of know-how that users must mobilise in given situations. Hence, the authors proposed a competency model comprising, on the one hand, a series of media objects (informational, technical, social) and, on the other hand, four types of media tasks (reading, writing, navigation and organisation). Cross-referencing each category within a matrix creates cartography, which makes it possible to highlight the challenges faced by media education today, including the diversity of current and future media practices of individuals.

Both perspectives, as mentioned earlier, share a common ground: in the face of continuous technological advances in the media, media literacy must permeate the social sphere of individuals. In the French-speaking perspective, Jacques et al. (2013) state that media is conceived as a social object, highlighting the complex relationship between media, society and

⁴ Renee Hobbs is indeed a proficient author in the research of media literacy education in America, and most of all, in how teachers acquire digital and media literacy competencies. Her contributions include Copyright for media literacy education, contemporary propaganda, and multimedia for media literacy education. Renee Hobbs. (2024). In *Wikipedia*. https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Renee_Hobbs&oldid=1231880644

individuals, and the media is not only being passively consumed but is also constantly being reinvented and used in social contexts. As Hobbs (2024, p. 200) postulates, “*the concept of Media Literacy has transformed in the past few years from a conceptualisation of “critical skills” to a set of social practices that include habits of mind, knowledge and dispositions*”.

2.2.1 Schoolteacher’s Media Literacy

Extensive research has been done on media literacy, with a particular focus on students at the school and university levels. Indeed, young people are introduced to digital technologies and online spaces from an early age, and they become familiar with accessing, consuming, and interacting in these environments. In this way, Media Literacy serves as the framework for analysing and evaluating how messages and experiences work in contemporary culture.

However, while students are often the primary targets, teachers also face significant challenges concerning media literacy. Yeh & Wan (2019, p. 826) argue that digital technologies challenge the teaching profession by “placing new demands on teachers to gain expertise in various programs and applications as well as developing strategies for incorporating technology into curriculum and pedagogy.”

Hence, schoolteachers must acquire media literacy competencies by becoming familiar with the concept and developing effective strategies for transmitting this knowledge to their students in the classroom. Nevertheless, research on teachers' media literacy is more limited. This fact is unsurprising for Simons et al. (2017), given the difficulties in measuring and understanding the many dimensions of media literacy that could genuinely support their expectations and needs.

Additionally, it is imperative to measure media literacy competencies in schoolteachers, as this facilitates their professional development by fostering self-awareness of their skills. By knowing their level of media literacy, policymakers, educational institutions, and other stakeholders can develop and implement media literacy policies within the school curriculum (Mateus & Hernández-Breña, 2019).

2.2.2 Teachers' beliefs about digital media

Literature reveals that media literacy competencies and media beliefs are two distinct concepts. In other words, the question of whether a teacher is media literate or not does not prevent them from having their own beliefs towards digital media. In fact, Hobbs & Tuzel (2017) states that teachers' beliefs may shape their media practices in the classroom, by restricting or not the use of media content and technologies.

Likewise, the perceptions of teachers towards media are also shaped by their specific socio-cultural contexts. Those contexts include topics such as access to technology, quality of hardware or software, school curriculum, ICT knowledge, school type, social issues, among others. In this matter, diverse attitudes are raised, where fear is a relevant element to consider by schoolteachers, who are concerned about the negative impact of media and technology, or even young people's mental health (Hobbs & Tuzel, 2017). As a matter of example, UK's Department for Education⁵ has recently published non-statutory guidelines to ban the use of phones at school, in order to tackle risks in the uses of technology, including addictions and bullying, among others.

⁵ Clarence-Smith, L. (2024, February 20). Parents must address their phone addictions before banning kids, says children's tsar. *The Telegraph*. <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2024/02/20/childrens-tsar-rachel-de-souza-phone-ban/>

2.3 Media Literacy and Media Education in Latin America

2.3.1 The Challenge of Defining Literacy in Spanish

The term *alfabetización*⁶ is employed mainly because the Anglo-Saxon term "literacy" does not exist and is not adapted in the Spanish language. Yet, the term has some shortcomings since the RAE (Spanish Royal Academy) conceives *alfabetización* as the knowledge of reading and writing. Consequently, some Spanish-speaking authors consider that it does not facilitate a deeper reflection when opening the discussion of what implies reading and writing in digital media. In this sense, the concept of *competencias mediáticas* was proposed as it is closer to the Anglo-Saxon definition of media competencies.

The translation of media competencies into *competencias mediáticas* has been accepted within an academic context. However, it may be subject to certain misunderstandings outside the Academy. One potential motive of confusion is the similarity between the words 'competencies' and 'competitiveness', which in Spanish refers to *competencia* and *competitividad*. Both of them describe the ability to compete and the rivalry that exists between individuals in the pursuit of a goal and are commonly used in business contexts. Thus, Buitrago Alonso et al. (2017) clarified that, in the field of media education, the appropriate definition is *competencias mediáticas*, referring to the set of knowledge, abilities, skills and attitudes to be developed in order to achieve the outcome of *alfabetización mediática* i.e. media literacy.

Moreover, the definitions not only present complexities when translated into Spanish, but also give rise to certain concerns among Spanish-speaking researchers about open discussions on a global scale. As an example, Hoechsmann (2019) discusses the consequences of language and cultural barriers in academic or professional conferences, where dominant discourses could 'absorb' or even marginalize outside voices and perspectives towards media education. This appreciation suggests the presence of power dynamics in academic settings that homogenize the

⁶ ASALE, R.-, & RAE. (n.d.). *Alfabetización / Diccionario de la lengua española*. «Diccionario de la lengua española» - Edición del Tricentenario. Retrieved 15 August 2024, from <https://dle.rae.es/alfabetización>

ideas towards media literacy and media education without fully including the thoughts of authors from the Global South.

2.3.2 Blurred lines between ICT education and media education

Reviewed literature on media education in Colombia is somewhat vague and closely linked to ICT education. Therefore, it is necessary to provide a brief overview of the legal and institutional frameworks that have enabled the development of initiatives to foster ICT in the country.

As highlighted by Marín Ossa (2019), with the advent of the 1991 Constitution of Colombia and the subsequent Law 115 of 1994, the majority of the educational curriculum was updated, including subjects such as Information Communication and Technology (ICT). This enabled public and private educational institutions to implement courses with an emphasis on media, information and technology. Likewise, in 2009 the Ministry of Information Technology and Communication (MinTIC) was created to promote the development of ICT and communication, ensuring access to technology and fostering digital inclusion in the country. Another institutional framework is the Ten-Year Education Plan 2016-2026, which has set forth the challenge of promoting the relevant, pedagogical and widespread use of new and diverse technologies to support teaching, knowledge development, learning, research and innovation (MEN, pp. 17, 2017, as cited in Cardona Arteaga & Ángel Uribe, 2023).

Hence, some educational programmes gained importance in the country, such as *Computadores para Educar* (CPE) where in a collaborative effort between public and private companies, computers were donated and refurbished for use in various educational institutions, thereby improving access to ICT and educational training.

Another major initiative was the strategy of the MinTIC *En TIC Confío*⁷ that aims to promote safe and responsible uses of ICTs by helping citizens to be aware of their uses, including the

⁷ *En TIC Confío*. (n.d.). Retrieved 14 August 2024, from <https://mintic.gov.co/portal/inicio/Atencion-y-Servicio-a-la-Ciudadania/Preguntas-frecuentes/15261:En-TIC-Confio>

risks such as grooming, sexting, cyberbullying, cyberdependence and sexual abuse of children and adolescents.

Concisely, although the State agencies provide support and promote the development of ICTs, the majority of programmes focus on expanding access to new technologies and offering training on their different uses. This emphasis has, however, de-prioritised the implementation of media education programs that foster the acquisition of critical thinking and civic participation. For instance, the Technological University of Pereira offers a bachelor's degree in technology with an emphasis on communication and educational informatics, and the University of Valle in Cali offers a bachelor's degree in Popular Education. At a lower level, certain training programs for teachers integrate media literacy into their curriculum, such as the University of La Sabana, the National University of Colombia and the Externado University of Colombia (Martin Ossa, 2019).

In terms of academic production, Cardona Arteaga & Ángel Uribe (2023), pointed out that the research on the uses and appropriation of ICT by Colombian teachers is focused on three main areas: firstly, the beliefs of teachers regarding ICT; secondly, the use of ICT by teachers; and thirdly, the technological practices of teachers. Further studies are required to know how teachers overcome attitudinal, emotional, training and infrastructural difficulties as well as their media practices in educational environments. About media education research, Valderrama (2000, as cited in Martin Osa, 2019) states that there are three major areas of studying: Education for reception, communication in education and education and new technologies, where media literacy studies is included as a secondary field.

In this respect, Martin Ossa (2019) proposes a set of recommendations to foster a greater awareness of the role played by the media in Colombia, that includes, putting on the public agenda the advances related to media education and media literacy, as well as funding and disseminating research and educational initiatives from a local context.

3. Problem Statement

As previously discussed, there are numerous challenges to media education and media literacy on a global scale. These challenges are largely dependent on the linguistic, social and cultural contexts, as well as the theoretical approaches that are raised in each country.

Furthermore, media literacy has commonly been developed with young students as its target audience. As schoolteachers have the potential to multiply the knowledge of media literacy, it is certainly important to foster media literacy competencies to teachers, so they are better prepared to teach it in the classroom. However, there are relatively few training programs that focus on their specific digital needs. In Latin America, and particularly in Colombia, initiatives are concentrated on improving the infrastructure and promoting the acquisition of technical skills with the main objective of bridging the digital divide in society.

A further factor to be taken into account is the social inequality that persists in Colombia. This is evidenced by the gap in the quality of education between public and private schools⁸. Public education presents lower levels of quality, perpetuating poverty among lower-income individuals. In contrast, private education provides higher levels of quality, affording better infrastructure and qualified teachers and providing better opportunities for their students. Social inequality therefore impacts the motivation of teachers to engage in the teaching of media education, given the significant divergence in teaching priorities between education in public and private schools.

On the other hand, teachers face several challenges when it comes to promoting media education among their peers and therefore, among young people. As a developing country, Colombia faces major issues in terms of access to technology that are being addressed, leaving behind media

⁸ Espectador, E. (2022, March 1). *¿Por qué el sistema educativo colombiano aumenta la desigualdad?*. ELESPECTADOR.COM. Retrieved 15 August 2024, from <https://www.elespectador.com/opinion/columnistas/julian-de-zubiria-samper/por-que-el-sistema-educativo-colombiano-aumenta-la-desigualdad/>

education into the national curriculum. With regard to ICT, *“there is a lack of technical, methodological and didactic training to incorporate ICT in pedagogical processes, limited knowledge of the possibilities offered by ICT and the fears and self-doubts towards their ICT competencies”* (Cardona Arteaga & Ángel Uribe 2023, p. 10).

The majority of efforts to develop media education seem to have come from an informal education in a peripheral context, where other actors such as activists, communities and religious councils have seen the potential of media education in civic participation and social transformation. Nonetheless, efforts in academia seem to be fewer in terms of fostering media education in teachers, yet there is a general consensus that this would be a useful mechanism to face social gaps and generate processes of critical appropriation of media within its specific socio-cultural context.

3.1 Research question

According to Weninger & Ling (2024), it is crucial to distinguish between two distinct approaches to researching on teachers: one that focuses on examining their own media practices, and another that is focused on understanding teacher’s cognition⁹. As this thesis is intended to explore about what Colombian teachers think and perceive, the research question formulated is as follows:

Q1: *“What are the representations and experiences of schoolteachers towards media education in Colombia?”*

Plus, despite the existence of social inequality as a significant barrier to media education in the country, schoolteachers in both public and private institutions face different challenges when

⁹ For Borg (2003) the term teacher cognition refers to *“the unobservable cognitive dimension of teaching”* (p. 82). He conceptualized teacher cognition in Language teaching by indicating four dimensions, including schooling (experiences of classrooms), professional coursework and its impact, classroom practices and contextual factors. This framework can be also deployed when concerning media education, as highlighted by Weninger & Liang (2024).

they promote media education among their students. From a sociocultural context it is essential to formulate a second research question:

Q.2 “How do schoolteachers in Colombia overcome their challenges when promoting media education?”.

3.1.1 Teacher cognition

Weninger & Lang (2024, p.120) state that research on teachers encompasses two broad fields: “*studies of what they think and study of what they do*”. Thus, this research is framed in the field of what teachers think i.e. beliefs, knowledge, perceptions, experiences, among others. This field has been previously studied under the term of teacher cognition (Borg, 2003) and presents its own challenges due to the fact that studying beliefs might be challenging because they are not directly observable.

Specifically, this research is focused on analysing the representations and experiences of schoolteachers. Hence, in this research the term representation is perceived as “*the way as an individual or a group of individuals describe an object and mobilise this representation for thinking, understanding, and giving opinions*” (Culot et Ligurgo, 2021, as cited in Zander, 2022). This definition is important in the main research question, as there is the relevance of acknowledging how teachers understand the concepts of media education and media literacy and mobilise their representations into their own experiences and opinions.

Meanwhile, the term experience¹⁰ is, by definition, the process of acquiring knowledge through direct engagement from the world, by feeling, knowing, doing, or observing something. Borg (2003) states that the experiences teachers accumulate directly impact on their cognition. In this sense, experiences can shape their thinking and understanding, and therefore, it may influence their own media practices.

¹⁰ *Experience*. (2024, August 14). <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/experience>

Moreover, another central issue considered by teacher cognition is the role of context, because *“it allows the understanding of factors such as institutional, social or instructional to get deeper insights into relationships between cognition and practice”* (Borgs, 2003, p.105). When teachers can express their opinions from a personal standpoint, they do so from the context of their own experiences, which offers a valuable insight to sociocultural perspectives.

3.2 Hypotheses

A series of hypotheses are also put forward to supporting the research questions. They are intended to be tested in the method selected for the research:

H1: Social inequality in Colombia influences school teachers' representations and experiences of media education.

H2: Teachers in private schools in Colombia are more likely to be concerned about the impact of digital media on their students due to the greater access this population has to new technologies.

H3: School teachers learn media literacy autonomously due to the lack of institutional support in the country.

4. Methodology

4.1 Semi-structured interviews

The first phase was focused on understanding what is the overall perception about media education among schoolteachers in Colombia. Thus, qualitative research was implemented, and exploratory semi-structured interviews were conducted between December and February 2024. Due to the difficulties of accessing the target audience, the recruitment method employed was snowballing sampling¹¹. Concisely, the first participant referred a colleague who might be both available and interested in the research, collecting a total of six interviewees, three women and three men for maintaining gender parity. The range of age of the participants was from 25 to 40 years old, based in Bogotá, the capital city of Colombia, and members of public and private schools.

Likewise, the interviews were conducted via WhatsApp call, taking into account that I am currently based in Brussels, whilst the interviewees live in Bogotá, Colombia. This means that the six-hour difference between the two countries was also a factor during the first phase of the research. Additionally, the interviews were conducted in Spanish, the respondents' mother tongue, in order to facilitate the expression of their perceptions and create a comfortable and familiar environment for them.

4.1.1 Concepts translated into Spanish Language

The Spanish terms selected to use throughout the interviews were "alfabetización mediática", and "educación en medios" referring to media literacy and media education respectively. In some of the cases, the terms were not fully understood by the interviewees, resulting in their occasional

¹¹ According to Kieffer (2024), Snowball sampling is a non-probabilistic method consisting of asking a participant who corresponds to the desired profile and ask him or her to help recruit people around them with a similar profile. This method was convenient in terms of reaching the participants which have very specific characteristics.

requests for greater clarity. Thereby, it was necessary to assure them that there was any bad or good answer, and that they were free to express their opinions according to their own perceptions of those concepts.

The transcriptions of the interviews were translated into English with the assistance of the online translation software DeepL¹². This process may have led to certain biases, which will be explained in depth in the section “4.3 Feedback on the method and justifications”.

4.1.2 Interview guide

The interviews aimed to establish a preliminary understanding of the participants' representation of media education and media literacy within their own contexts. Thereby, the interview was divided into three parts: an introduction in which the framework of the research was explained and the participants introduced themselves. Then, they answer certain questions towards their perceptions about media education (how would you define in your own words media education? How do you implement media literacy in the classroom?). Afterwards, a set of questions were asked to know if they have been trained in media literacy in their workplaces (have you ever been trained in media literacy or media education? How do you learn to understand and use digital media?). At the end of the interview, a series of questions were posed to identify their concerns regarding media education in the classroom and the difficulties they encounter when interacting with their students regarding digital media.

The questions were posed in an open-ended manner to obtain clues that could better elucidate the current state of the art and facilitate the formulation of more accurate research questions and hypotheses.

¹² DeepL is an AI advanced translation tool that, in the case of this thesis, allowed to translate documents with a large number of pages. It should be noted that the majority of the Annexes were translated using this tool.

4.2 Online survey

The semi-structured interviews were significant to recognise teachers' beliefs, thoughts, perceptions, awareness and attitudes of what they perceive about media education and media literacy in their own contexts. In this sense, the possibility of implementing a quantitative method was crucial as, according to Weninger & Lang (2024), a quantitative methodology allows to recognise patterns of thinking and behaviour within teachers and therefore, it would be possible to better understand their cognition.

Then, the survey was distributed via Facebook between July 10th to August 1st, 2024. Likewise, the survey was shared among my personal contacts via Whatsapp who at the same time shared among their own contacts as a sort of snowball sample. The survey was created in Microsoft forms, which had a better design, specifically in the section of Linkert scale questions. It was answered anonymously in Spanish, by teachers located in Bogotá, Cali, Madrid, Mariquita, Sogamoso and Yopal. The transcriptions were made in Microsoft Word and the texts were translated into English with the translator DeepL.

The survey was built in four sections: representations, experiences, appreciations and challenges towards media education and media literacy. The first two sections were designed under a 5-point scale, from strongly disagree to strongly agree. Each section has 14 items to respond, with a total of 28 items, in which 10 of them were taken from the 48-item Likert scale instrument designed by Hobbs and Moore to measure different digital learning motivation profiles aligned to teacher beliefs¹³. The remaining statements were formulated based on the insights gathered from the qualitative method, based on the perspectives that had to do with their personal, cultural and social contexts. Thus, the total of statements was proposed as a way to evidence whether the

¹³ Although the questionnaire was aimed at identifying the media profiles of teachers, the statements presented three interest aspects to replicate in my thesis. One, they were already validated in previous research; two, they had the tone and the adequate language to approach school teachers; finally, they were aligned to the beliefs discovered during the interviews phase. *QUIZ / THE POWERFUL VOICES FOR KIDS*. (n.d.). Retrieved 15 August 2024, from <https://quiz.discovermedialiteracy.com/>

beliefs and perceptions expressed by the interviewees would be aligned to those of the respondents of the survey.

The third part had the aim to observe the appreciation towards the Media Literacy perspectives mentioned in the theoretical framework. Therefore, the participants were asked to rank 5 postulates in order of importance, from most to the least important. This question served a dual purpose: first, introducing participants into these theories, since during the interview phase, several of them expressed that the terms were not too clear for them or unknown. Secondly, by identifying which are the statements that are better aligned to their needs, it could be more likely to comprehend the distinctive dynamics that exist in their particular settings.

Finally, the fourth part was an open-ended question where respondents were invited to describe the challenges they encounter and the strategies they employ to overcome them when fostering media education in their professional settings. This question was designed to capture their personal perspectives that could provide a deeper understanding of what might not be fully expressed in the closed-ended-questions proposed at the beginning of the survey.

4.2.1 Definition of the sample

After having carried out the qualitative method, certain clarifications arose regarding the target audience. First, the age range had to be larger because schoolteachers, regardless of their age, were facing the same challenges in terms of media literacy and media education. In the same way, the survey was opened up to school teachers based on different cities of Colombia, as the differentiating factor was the type school (public, private) rather than the geographics location. Hence, the criterion of the online survey was as follows:

- Age ranges from 25 to over 51 years old.
- Ideally gender equality
- From any city of Colombia
- Teaching experience from 3 to over 15 years.

- From any field of knowledge i.e. Arts and Languages, Exact Sciences, Human Sciences, Natural Sciences or Computer Science and Technology.

4.2.2 Validation of the survey

According to Weninger & Liang (2024), validating the survey is crucial for content validation, in other words, it helps to confirm that it is accurate in the construction of the statements that are intended to be measured. Thus, a schoolteacher was invited to a remote session in which she read the survey and gave enriching feedback regarding the length, demographic aspects, and clarity of the statements. The session was recorded, transcribed and translated into English following the same procedure as the semi-structured interviews. This validation was relevant to address potential biases and ambiguities encountered by the teacher, ensuring the reliability of the results.

4.3 Feedback on the method and justifications

Whilst the method of data collection was generally effective, it also presented some biases that need to be clarified in order to gain deeper understanding of the methodology.

4.3.1 Biases in the translation

The translation of the semi structured interviews as well as the content of the survey presented a major challenge in this phase of the research. While conducting data collection in English could have simplified the process, it would have been an exclusionary measure as not all Colombian teachers have full proficiency in a second language. Thus, it was ensured that the methodology was carried out in Spanish; however, reliability could be limited due to the fact that the translation phase didn't have native reviewers.

4.3.2 Validation of the survey

Whereas the survey was validated by a schoolteacher to ensure better relevance and clarity, a pilot study wasn't conducted on a sample of the target audience. This absence could lead into potential biases such as question ambiguities, or lack of reliability and accuracy in the data collection process.

4.3.3 Distribution of the survey

With regard to the distribution of the online survey, using social media was not as efficient as it was the snowball method. This is because schoolteachers' Facebook groups are aimed to support and share job opportunities and keep them up to date in the requirements to this matter e.g. teaching career ladder. So, it is possible that a better way of approaching them is through the institutions themselves (schools, universities, city halls, among others).

5. Results

5.1. Data collection

5.1.1. Semi-structured Interviews

Demographic characteristics

The respondents were all between 25 and 40 years old, with teaching experience ranging from 3 to over 15 years. The teaching areas covered arts, human sciences, and exact sciences. While in some studies, such as the one from Hobbs & Tuzel (2015), teaching areas were relevant to comprehending the motivations of school teachers towards media literacy, this aspect played as a demographic measure and wasn't considered in depth. In contrast, a pivotal aspect of the data analysis is the school type, which is more related to socio-cultural settings; in this measure, 4 of 6 respondents worked in private and 2 in public schools.

Table 1: Demographic characteristics of the interviewees

Name	Age range	Gender	Teaching areas	Teaching experience	School type
R1	25-30	Male	Mathematics	6-10 years	Public
R2	31-40	Male	Chemistry	Over 15 years	Private
R3	25-30	Male	History	3-5 years	Public
R4	25-30	Female	Arts	3-5 years	Private
R5	25-30	Female	History	3-5 years	Private
R6	31-40	Female	Arts	3-5 years	Private

Perceptions of media education

Regarding the first section of the survey, most teachers perceived media education as a process focused on the know-how of certain digital tools to maximise the use of new technologies. In other words, it is viewed as a way to learn and teach about using digital tools effectively to engage students in the classroom. This fact is particularly common in R4, whose background is related to arts and design:

R4: *“(...) In the past few years, students from 10th and 11th grade worked on Da Vinci in 11 and Adobe Premiere. As my subject is a digital illustration, we see a little bit in the last bimester. And my photography and design colleagues work on other programs. Also, very much on that, not on the subject of the concept. Because if we notice that the concept gives the students a very hard time, they won't know how to move forward with their idea.”*

However, media education was also involved in alternative processes that foster creativity in themselves and, by extension, in their students. Respondents in their majority expressed this positive aspect of media that encompasses all the fields of knowledge:

R2 *“(...) Today's technologies allow you to build completely different experiences, even more enriching, which will allow today's students to face the challenges they have for the future with clarity and certainty.”*

There was also found a major perception that the interviewees mostly experience fears that their students are more media literate than them. This statement was recurring within private school teachers, where students have an affluent social status and therefore their access to the latest technologies is habitual:

R5: *“(...) There is a big gap, because even though I was born with a computer and internet at home, it was like a precious commodity and everything was very measured, you know? (...) I work with children from very well-affluent families, so they acquire the latest devices whenever they want. So, it's like they have the faculty to be able to use the technology at their disposal.”*

To face those fears, teachers use innovation and creativity measures to overcome them, by, for instance, engaging students in sharing their experiences with them, as a way of turning students into teachers to enrich their relationships permeated by digital media:

R2 *“(….) And it is remarkable because they show you more alternatives beforehand, they also teach you other things, because their curiosity can go much further than ours.”*

Media literacy training

Concerning media literacy training, the totality of them have seen since the pandemic how important learning about digital media is when teaching in the classroom. They all have listened to diverse courses from both formal and informal education. Besides, respondents such as R4 have had to undertake learning programs to keep or get a promotion in their schools:

R4: *“(…) well, as I was saying, with the pandemic, they generated interesting portals to visit museums and so on, but I'm not that skilled with them, and I have done it through my own experience, the need to update my classes a bit. In the same course, I tell you that we had an obligation to update our knowledge.”*

It is also observed that most of them highlight autonomy as key when acquiring digital skills. The responses are, however, not clear in the sense that some respondents could be referring to receiving ICT education rather than media education.

Concerns found when fostering media education in the classroom

Scepticism was the first appreciation when respondents shared their concerns towards media education. R1 and R3 hesitated whether the current cultural and educational environment is adequately prepared to embrace media education:

R1: *“(...) I say that it is very ideal in that sense because our culture is very particular, very special. I do feel that I still don't know if we are not ready, I don't know if we need to invest, I don't know if we are still resisting”.*

Likewise, R6 highlighted the conservative approach of education in the country that tends to focus on the negative consequences of media i.e mental health issues among young people:

R6: *“(...) I feel that education, at least in Colombia, is not ready to fully integrate these media literacies because I feel that there is a kind of demonisation of the use of networks, especially because they affect the mental health of students and so on, so I feel that it should happen so that children themselves learn how to choose, what content to consume.”*

In this sense, R3 strongly supports the idea that teaching must be more human and less mediated by a screen:

R3: *“(...) I'm not so much a friend of digital as a tool for education, because I'm a bit more old-fashioned, and I still think that the pen and the notebook are essential for teaching. (...) then technology is not a friend of the true teaching profession because teaching involves human experiences from one side to the other, and the screen simply doesn't provide it.”*

In contrast, R2 sees in technology opportunities with engage to young people, and it depends mostly on the efforts teachers do:

R2: *“(...) I think that in this exercise we need even more effort and meaning so that teachers understand the benefits of using these types of media, and there are some who take risks.*

Sometimes they are short with the options that they can find, because there is still the anxiety or the worry that the students don't value what you're doing, unfortunately, depending on the environment you're in.”

5.1.2. Online survey

Demographics characteristics

The total number of respondents for the quantitative method was 29, of which 58,6% were male and 41.3% female. Most respondents were between 31 and 40 years old (44,8%), whereas a considerable part were more than 41 years old. Another compelling outcome is the years of teaching, with 34.4% of participants having 3 and 5 years of experience, the same percentage of teachers with experience of more than 15 years. A similar result regarding school type is observed, compared to the qualitative method. In other words, the majority of respondents (48.2%) belong to private schools, and 41.3% to public schools. In the area of knowledge, respondents teach a wide variety of courses encompassed in Exact sciences, natural sciences, human sciences, language and arts and ICT.

Table 2: Demographic characteristics of the respondents

	n	%
Gender		
Male	17	58,6
Female	12	41,3
Age range		
Between 20 and 30 y/o	6	20,6
Between 31 and 40 y/o	13	44,8
Between 41 and 50 y/o	5	17,2
Over 51 y/o	5	17,2
Region		

Bogotá	21	72,4
Cali	1	3,4
Madrid	1	3,4
Mariquita	1	3,4
Sogamoso	1	3,4
Yopal	4	13,7
Years of teaching		
Between 10 and 15 years	3	10,3
Between 3 and 5 years	10	34,4
Between 6 and 10 years	6	20,6
Over 15 years	10	34,4
School type		
Private	14	48,2
Public	12	41,3
Other	3	10,3
Area of knowledge		
Arts and Languages	5	17,2
Exact Sciences (e.g. Mathematics)	3	10,3
Human Sciences (e.g. Philosophy, History)	3	10,3
Natural Sciences (e.g. Biology)	6	20,6
ICT	5	17,2
Other		

Furthermore, 78,4% of them came from Bogotá, indicating that most of the participants were concentrated in the capital city. There were also respondents from smaller cities such as Mariquita, Madrid, Sogamoso, Cali and Yopal. Rural areas were not represented in the survey, which means that the results fully capture the perspectives from urban regions. The following image illustrates their geographical location in the country:

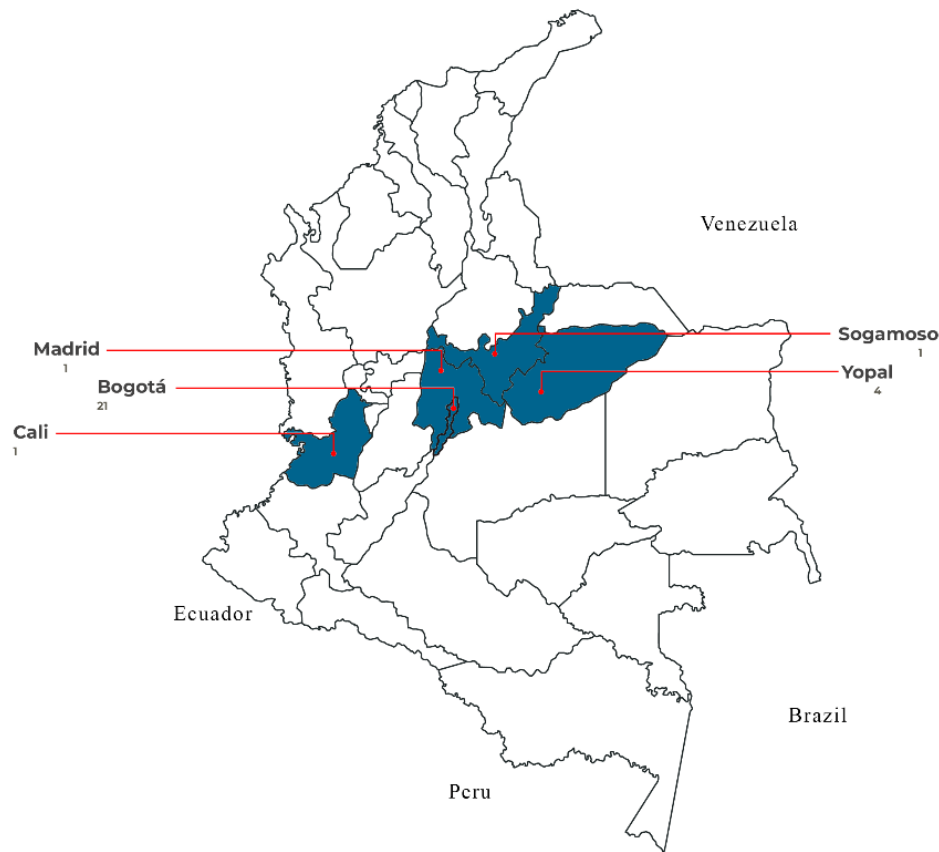


Image 1: geographical location of respondents.

Section 1: representations

As described in section 4.2, the items proposed in the section 1 and 2 of the online survey aimed to reflect whether the representations and experiences about media education in the qualitative method were widely supported or not by the respondents. To do so, certain hot topics in the

semi-structured interview were identified: the benefits of digital media, teaching and learning about media education, awareness of digital media, and socio-cultural and institutional settings.

Statements 1, 2, 9, 13 highlights the importance of being aware about media practices and the reliability of digital media. For statement 1, the majority of respondents indicated their high level of concern about misinformation (82.76%), as well as for statement 9, high level of self-awareness about their own media practices (82.76%). On the contrary, statement 2 has more divided opinions (31.03% agree, 27.59% no opinion, 27.59% disagree), indicating that there is a considerable level of uncertainty or mixed beliefs about the positive impact on young people. The statement 13 has a significant percentage of respondents with no opinion (48.28%), which may conclude that there is a lack of understanding of this statement.

Regarding teaching and learning about media education, a significant majority of respondents agree and strongly agree (89.65%) that educational technologies improve teaching (statement 7). In the same vein, participants agree and strongly agree (89.65%) that media education should be mandatory in all teacher training programs. Statement 10, however, presented different reactions, as a majority (58.62%) agree or strongly agree that media literacy is something that each teacher learns autonomously, though a notable proportion disagrees (17.24%) or have no opinion (24.14%).

In socio-cultural and institutional settings, the majority of respondents agree that addressing social inequalities is a necessary prerequisite for implementing media education programs (75.86%). There is also a prevalent concern that schools may be left behind if they are not up to date with technological trends (65.52%). The results are even more high in statement 5, where the majority (82.76%) agree or mostly agree that the competitiveness of a school is also determined by its investment in the right technology tools (statement 5).

Finally, statements 4, 8, and 14 are related to the benefits of fostering media education among their students. These statements are unanimously agreed in the fact that participants value the role of digital media in student engagement, as well as the benefits that being media literate brings. The statement 4 presented a large majority (93.10%) of “agree” and “strongly agree”

responses, validating that for them, when it is clear how a digital media is actually made, it changes the way to see it. Likewise, respondents agree (89.66%) that students are more engaged in the classroom when they interact with digital media. In the same way, the totality of respondents answered “agree” or “strongly agree” that building experiences engaging media education will allow students to better overcome the challenges that future media bring .

Table 3: Teachers’ representations of media education and media literacy

	Strongly agree	Agree	No opinion	Disagree	Strongly disagree
1. We can be misled by media when you don’t know where the information comes from. *	34,48%	48,28%	13,79%	3,45%	-
2. I constantly have doubts that digital media have a positive impact on young people.	3,45%	31,03%	27,59%	27,59%	10,34%
3. I worry that the school where I work will be left behind because it is not up to date with the latest technological trends.	17,24%	48,28%	10,34%	17,24%	6,90%
4. When you know how a digital media is actually made, it changes the way you see media forever.*	31,03%	62,07%	6,90%	-	-
5. The most competitive schools of the future will invest in the right	58,62%	24,14%	6,90%	6,90%	3,45%

technology tools and help students learn to use them well.*					
6. When used to its fullest potential, social media can transform education.*	62,07%	34,48%	3,45%	-	-
7. Good educational technologies help teachers teach better. *	51,72%	37,93%	10,34%	-	-
8. Digital media makes it easier for students to interact with subject matter some students find boring.*	44,83%	44,83%	6,90%	3,45%	-
9. As a teacher, I know my media practices inside and outside the classroom.	37,93%	44,83%	10,34%	-	6,90%
10. Media literacy is something that each teacher learns autonomously.	13,79%	44,83%	24,14%	17,24%	-
11. Media education should be mandatory in all teacher training programs.	34,48%	55,17%	10,34%	-	-
12. Before implementing media education programmes in the curriculum, it is necessary to tackle the problems of social inequality that affect education in Colombia.	37,93%	37,93%	20,69%	3,45%	-
13. Media literacy is a concept that can marginalise different perspectives on media education.	10,34%	27,59%	48,28%	-	13,79%

14. Building different experiences engaging in media education will allow students to better meet the challenges posed by the technologies of the future.	48,28%	51,72%	-	-	-
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Section 2: experiences

Among the statements addressed to recognise the experiences of the respondents, there are three themes to consider: scepticism towards digital media, institutional support and the relationship between teachers and students regarding digital media.

There are mixed opinions regarding the scepticism of the impact of digital media on student learning and engagement (statements 15, 16, 17 and 26). In statement 15, a significant portion of respondents (48.27%) believe that media can distract students from important information compared to a significant number of “disagree” (20.69%) and “no opinion” (31.03%). Likewise, in statement 16, over half of respondents (55.17%) are concerned that media negatively affects the concentration of students at school, compared to a notable “disagree” (27.59%) of respondents who don’t share this concern. Mixed responses are encountered in Statement 17, where a significant number of respondents (51.72%) disagree and strongly disagree to the fact that it is difficult to know if students learn anything meaningful when they propose to them to engage with the creation of digital content. In the same way, they indicate their disagreement in statement 26, where the majority of respondents (54.2%) don’t think that they don’t apply their media literacy skills in the classroom.

In the statements concerning institutional support (22, 23, 25 and 27), respondents have experienced lack of institutional support, yet the pressure from some schools for teachers to undertake media literacy training courses is increasing. In this matter, the statement 22 has nearly

half of the responses (48.27%) agree and strongly agree on the lack of institutional support, whilst they answered disagree and strongly disagree (48.27%) in the fact that media education is irrelevant in their schools because there are other priorities to attend with regard to social inequalities. Concerning statement 25, a majority of respondents (65.51%) agree on the requirement for teachers to take media literacy training. The statement 27 shows a notable level of uncertainty (37.93% no opinion) when it comes to express their opinions about the awareness of colleagues and schools towards media literacy and media education.

The statements related to the relationship between teachers and students regarding digital media (18, 19, 20, 21, 24, 28) evidence the challenges teachers face in understanding the habitudes and engaging better with young people. For instance, statement 18 shows that a strong majority (72.41%) agree and strongly agree that creativity is essential for helping students to express themselves. In the same way, a majority (62.06%) believe that media activates the feelings and emotions in students, which leads to a better learning in the classroom.

However, half of the respondents (51.72%) have no opinion in the statement that indicates the importance of being familiar with student's popular culture (statement 20). Related to the fears about the media literacies of teachers when compared to those of their students, the responses are fairly divided in statement 21 (37.93% agree, no opinion 20.69%, disagree 20.69%), statement 24 (24,14% agree, 24, 14% no opinion, 41.38% disagree) and statement 28 (20.69% agree, 34.48% no opinion, 31.03% disagree); therefore, they are split opinions in the belief that students, for being digital natives are more literate than their teachers.

Table 4: Teachers' Experiences of teachers

	Strongly agree	Agree	No opinion	Disagree	Strongly disagree
15. Too often, media distracts students from the information and ideas that are really important. *	10,34%	37,93%	31,03%	20,69%	-
16. I worry that students' media use interferes with their concentration and motivation in school. *	17,24%	37,93%	17,24%	27,59%	-
17. It is often difficult to know if students learn anything meaningful when I propose to them to create digital content.	3,45%	20,69%	24,14%	34,48%	17,24%
18. If I don't give my students flexibility to be creative, they may not learn to speak for themselves. *	13,79%	58,62%	17,24%	6,90%	3,45%
19. If I'm not familiar with students' popular culture, they will think that I'm not really connected to their lives.*	6,90%	24,14%	51,72%	10,34%	6,90%
20. Media helps students activate their feelings and emotions in the classroom to promote learning.	10,34%	51,72%	34,48%	3,45%	-

21. No matter how media literate I am, my students will always be one step ahead of me.	-	37,93%	20,69%	20,69%	20,69%
22. I do not find institutional support when it comes to training in media literacy.	13,79%	34,48%	34,48%	6,90%	10,34%
23. Media education is not relevant in my school because there are other priorities to attend with regard to the basic needs of the students.	3,45%	20,69%	27,59%	31,03%	17,24%
24. I often notice that students are more media literate than I am.	10,34%	24,14%	24,14%	41,38%	-
25. Educational institutions demand more and more that their teachers take media literacy training.	13,79%	51,72%	31,03%	-	3,45%
26. Despite my proficiency in media literacy, I do not apply my knowledges in the classroom.	41,7%	4,17%	-	58,33%	29,2%
27. Few colleagues and/or educational institutions know about media literacy and media education	6,90%	31,03%	37,93%	20,69%	3,45%
28. The gap between my digital media skills and those of my students is growing.	13,79%	20,69%	34,48%	31,03%	-

Section 4: theoretical postulates about media education

The postulates proposed in the survey were ranked as follows:

Table 5: theoretical postulates ranked by respondents.

Rank	Postulate
1	The key to media literacy is to develop the competencies required to solve certain tasks, such as reading, writing, navigation, and organizing digital media. (Fastrez, & De Smedt, 2012)
2	Media literacy must be seen from social practices that include habits of mind, knowledge and dispositions. (Hobbs, 2024)
3	Media literacy serves as a framework for analysing and evaluating how messages and experiences work in contemporary culture (Weninger & Liang, 2024)
4	Measuring media literacy competencies in schoolteachers is imperative, as this facilitates their professional development by fostering self-awareness of their skills. (Simons et al., 2017)
5	Through media literacy, individuals acquire a set of skills that enable them to develop critical thinking when consuming digital media (Hobbs, 2011)

This table ranks various theoretical postulates related to media literacy, according to the answers of the respondents. The ranking provides insight into which aspects of media literacy schoolteachers prioritize, reflecting their own experiences and beliefs, as well as the needs they encounter in their educational settings.

Section 5: Challenges and How They Overcome Them

The following table summarizes the most common challenges faced by the respondents towards media education. It also outlines the potential strategies they implement to overcome these obstacles. The summary contains the most frequently mentioned responses among the participants' answers:

Table 6: Challenges of schoolteachers towards media education

Challenges	How to overcome them
Recognising that learning about media is not something to do alone	Asking students for support
It is unclear what is media education	Consider the context in which this question is asked.
Lack of resources in public schools: internet, technological tools, caused by lack of funding	Providing their tools to class
Lack of adequate training	Updating knowledges autonomously Being a constant student Online courses about media literacy
How to provide quality education in a digital environment	Adapting their traditional methods of teaching

Schools demand teachers to be media literate without improving their remunerations	It is a major issue they cannot solve by themselves.
There is a dispute between supporters and opponents of media education, causing confusion among students.	Reach a consensus, move forward positively, generate solidarity among teachers.

5.2 Analysis of the results

5.2.1 Sceptical attitude toward media literacy

When comparing results between quantitative and qualitative methods, there is a sceptical attitude toward media literacy; nonetheless, qualitative data reveals deeper concerns and even resistance to embrace digital media, prioritising a more traditional learning method for maintaining the humanity relations implied in education:

R3: “(...) Reality is so far away from us that we don't even know who we are anymore, so in my opinion , this world of technology is destroying us a lot. Yes, I and I will always think that a student's best friend is not a screen, but a pencil, and technology can destroy that kind of thing.”

The quantitative data, however, suggests that respondents are actually engaging more with media literacy, albeit with certain caution. Specifically, there is a concern about how media can distract students, negatively impacting their concentration. Respondents also believe that by implementing a more pragmatic approach, e.g. finding creative alternatives to promote media literacy in class, their concerns could be addressed. Among the challenges encountered by teachers (table 6), it is highlighted the ongoing debate between proponents and critics of media education that create uncertainty within their students. Respondents then propose to reach a

common ground on the importance of fostering media education so school teachers can move forward collaboratively in this concern.

The causes of the scepticism were unclear. Whilst in the qualitative method, interviewees pointed out that the traditional approach of education in Colombia might be the reason why media education isn't still in the agenda, the quantitative method didn't provide any information to validate this perspective. This discrepancy could be attributed to the absence of any statement related to this matter in the quantitative survey.

5.2.2 Autonomy in media literacy training

Both the qualitative and quantitative data reveal a consensus about the importance of self-learning in contemporary teaching. There is a strong tendency among schoolteachers in taking the initiative to update their media literacy skills on their own, by, for example, looking for external courses offered by different universities, institutions or online platforms¹⁴. Additionally, other participants acknowledge that learning about media literacy is something that is better to do in community. Some respondents even suggest that involving students actively throughout the process could lead into a deeper understanding of media (as seen in table 6 as well as the qualitative method). This aspect is aligned with the perception of some participants that their students are more literate than them, which might be overwhelming for an amount of teachers, but for others to interact with young people.

5.2.3 Representations of media education

There is an underlying uncertainty about the broader concept of media education from the perspective of the respondents. The aforementioned confusion was particularly evident in the qualitative method; some interviewees expressed ambiguity about what media education truly encompasses, and therefore, its implementation in classroom might be affected:

¹⁴ In this matter, interviewees mentioned certain courses offered by universities in Colombia, as well as online courses provided by renowned platforms in the Spanish-speaking context, such as Platzi. On the other hand, the Ministry of ICT of Colombia also offers courses in data analysis, cybersecurity, network, or artificial intelligence, which might be related to media literacy yet there are no evidence of a course that specifically addresses this discipline.

“00:03:32 MP

Now moving on to the first question, from your perspective, how would you define media education?

00:03:49 R1

Well, here I'm going to ask you for, let's say, a little bit of clarification on this term “media education”.

You are referring here to the use of artificial intelligence? Or to the use of programs of let's say mathematics in my case or I don't know, I don't know.”

Section 4 of the quantitative method showed that respondents supported the competence approach theory from authors Fastrez & De Smedt (2012) and the fact that media literacy must be seen from a social practice scope proposed by Hobbs (2024). These findings highlight the needs of teachers to learn practical skills that they can apply when solving certain tasks involving digital media.

On the other hand, qualitative findings also show evidence that the interviewees tend to associate the ability to use digital tools in the classroom with media education. Consequently, teachers express a strong preference in using media as a way to enhance their classes and engage students, as it often leads to increase participation and interest. Furthermore, the results of the online survey emphasized the benefits of media literacy, such as the importance of creativity for helping students to express themselves and promoting learning in the classroom. Therefore, there is a positive perception of media education as a transformative element in school.

5.2.4 Lack of institutional support in a complex socio-cultural context

The findings for both qualitative and quantitative methods evidence that, even if there is a broad recognition of the importance of promoting media education as well as increasing investment in technology, there is a lack of institutional support that concern school teachers. Despite this, schools are tending to put pressure to schoolteacher to be trained in media literacy. This aspect was frequently mentioned by the interviewees, explaining that, if they are not certified in the

uses of tools such as artificial intelligence, they would have the risk to lose their jobs or left behind in recruitment processes:

R1: *“(….) It's also about status because let's say, if teachers are trained, they give status to the school. Many schools count on their teachers to be at up to date, they have to do a training course, let's say those schools have agreements with universities, they give some facilities. Unfortunately, education is not equal in Colombia, and this is more prominent in Bogotá. Public school teachers have to access to scholarships in order to have access to training, otherwise they couldn't apply for it.”*

In fact, this observation points out the inequalities on the education system; the fees on accessing to higher education are constantly increasing, and therefore, it could become a barrier for low-income population¹⁵, contributing to the socio-economic gap in the country. Moreover, public schoolteachers' incomes tend to be lower than those from private schools, and it depends on a teaching career ladder which establish the salary in terms of education level, spoken languages, years of experience, among others¹⁶. As seen in table 6, some participants expressed their deep concern that, even though undertaking media training courses, their efforts are not being compensating in their salaries.

On the other hand, socio-economic gap is also perceived as the decisive factor when it comes to foster media education in Colombia. All participants for both methods agree that addressing social inequalities is crucial before implementing media education in the official curriculum. At the same time, there is a prevalent concern that schools might not be prepared to the current and future technologies, which will directly affect the level of competitiveness of schools. This concern is deeper as, for instance, some participants point out the lack of technological resources

¹⁵ Pulzo, & Pulzo.com. (n.d.). *53 universidades se fueron de rebeldes y aumentarán el precio en su matrícula este 2024*. pulzo.com. Retrieved 18 August 2024, from <https://www.pulzo.com/economia/universidades-privadas-colombia-aumentaron-precios-matriculas-asi-quedan-PP3375355A>

¹⁶ Orduz, M. C. (2022, September 14). *¿Mal pagos? Este es el salario de los profesores en Colombia*. El Tiempo. <https://www.eltiempo.com/vida/educacion/salario-de-docentes-cuanto-ganan-los-profesores-en-colombia-702243>

at school, e.g internet access, computers, among others, so many of them must solve these difficulties on their own.

5.3 Conclusions regarding the hypotheses

After conducting a mixed method based on collecting qualitative and quantitative data, the hypotheses proposed to answer the main and secondary research questions provide a comprehensive understanding of all the factors that shape the representations of school teachers of media fostering media education in their personal settings.

The findings of the research validate the first hypothesis. Indeed, data collected show that teachers firmly believe social disparities are a barrier to implementing media education in Colombia. This belief also demonstrates significant concerns in terms of the lack of technological resources in schools. Thus, teachers perceive that the schools are facing a competitive disadvantage, especially in the public sector. Moreover, teachers are feeling distress due to the increasing demands of schools to be certified in the uses of digital media; for a certain number of participants, the efforts to undertake those courses are not being well recompensated by the institutions in terms of monetary revenues, highlighting the systematic inequalities within the Colombian Education system.

The research does not validate the second hypothesis. The data collected does not show a significant difference in digital media concerns between private and public schools. Although it is acknowledged that private schools are better equipped with superior technological resources, the data indicates that concerns about the impacts of digital media, including misinformation, media creation, and media culture, among others, are prevalent across both sectors. In other words, even if the experiences of private and public-school teachers with digital media are different, mainly because of the socio-economic differences, this does not mean that their beliefs and perspectives must be differentiated.

The third hypothesis is partially validated. The data collected indicates that, while most participants are engaged in acquiring autonomous media literacy skills, collaborative approaches

also exist. Some teachers successfully create strategies to receive insight from their students, integrating their perspectives into the learning process and fostering more profound engagement with digital media. Although institutional support may be limited and inconsistent, other teachers have undertaken training courses that are being offered more frequently in universities and online platforms, and some courses are even being offered with the support of the national government.

6. Discussion

6.1. Ambiguities in the definition of media

In Latin America as in other contexts, there is confusion about the variety of terms that are aimed at media education (Mateus, J.C & Quiroz, M.T., 2020). However, there is a significant challenge in the ambiguity surrounding the definition of the media itself. Participants of this research predominantly perceived media as an object or a tool, which reflects a perspective limited to the technical device. Besides, when they were asked to rank theoretical postulates regarding media education (section 4 of the online survey), they placed in the first place the one focused on acquiring media competencies- such as read, write, navigate, and organise digital media. This choice denotes their needs to know-how to use a determined media that, at the same time, potentially shapes the reality of the society.

In this regard, Landry & Fastrez (2024) highlighted that the meaning of media is multifaceted, encompassing diverse perspectives that raise different concerns, needs and viewpoints. So, it is highly probable that respondents' answers are permeated by their current needs and problems in the use of the latest digital trends. By time this research was conducted, school teacher were concern in the impacts of artificial intelligence into their classes:

R5: "(...) students are like, "I'm going to tell ChatGPT to do my essay, and I correct the things that don't seem to be mine" (...). I also have several students who already pay ChatGPT premium chat for the latest update, for which there is already voice command and many things. I get worried when they tell me those things."

In addition, some Latin American literature discusses parallel media literacy and media education with the access, uses and appropriation of ICTS, as in the case Mateus & Quiroz (2021) and Buitrago Alonso et al. (2017). In my opinion, this is because it is necessary to acknowledge that the digital divide is still considerable, and therefore, by understanding the reality of access to ICTs in Colombia, it is possible to promote media education better.

On the other hand, the theoretical framework of this research is firmly based on French-Speaking and English-Speaking approaches to media literacy and media education. In this sense, it is possible to leave the door open to discuss the possibility of studying regional theories such as educommunication in more detail, as a way to open the door to theories that historically have not been dominant in the information and communication sciences field.

6.2. Teaching through or with the media

One of the common concerns when it comes to researching media education is the persistent misconception between “with” the media or “through” the media (Buckingham, 2013). In this regard, some of the participants expressed their perception of media as a teaching tool:

R2: *“(...) For example, Cafam School had a television network and an interconnected circuit so that everyone could access audiovisual resources, loudspeaker systems, radio and these types of connections that allowed us to work a bit with these tools.”*

R4: *“(..) Above all, I use web pages, blogs, all these things, platforms such as social sciences, maps, etcetera.”*

R5: *“(...) I started working with Midjourney. Because I was getting some kind of lack of creativity with the students. I work my class transversal to the history of art. (...)”*

Those declarations suggest that the media use is restricted to the classroom, rather than empowering students in the critical use of the media in the other contexts of their daily lives. However, this interpretation may be mistaken. Given that the scope of this research is based on teachers’ cognition i.e. their beliefs, perceptions, experiences and representations, it is possible that their opinions might not fully align their media practices. In this sense, discussion is opened to determine if it is possible to conclude whether teachers do teach “with” or “through” the media by using other kind of methodologies, including, as a matter of example, observing their media practices.

7. Conclusion

This thesis explored teachers' representations and experiences of media education for school teachers in Colombia. Even with the ambiguities that may arise from the concepts of media education and media literacy, the representations and experiences identified are generally positive; the exercise of inviting Colombian school teachers to explain from their own beliefs, perceptions and attitudes what is the meaning of media education and media literacy for them has been enriching. It also enables a deeper understanding of the diverse alternatives in which media education is being promoted inside and outside schools.

One of the aspects that school teachers remark from media education is creativity. For them, creativity is an invaluable asset to develop different strategies to overcome all their concerns about the different uses of digital media. It also enriches educational environments and acquires media literacy competencies (Cardona Arteaga & Ángel Uribe, 2023). Besides, creativity is commonly referred to in Colombia as the ability to be resilient when circumstances are challenging and the resources are limited; in the case of schoolteachers, being creative means overcoming the complex social gap of the country, where aspects such as access to internet connection and digital devices are still to be solved.

Fastrez & Landry (2024, p.1) highlighted that *“the knowledge and competencies sought in media education respond to public discourses formulated on media-related needs and concerns”*. Thus, this thesis also evidences that school teachers' perceptions in Colombia are deeply rooted in their settings and the local educational framework, which is highly oriented toward promoting new and diverse technologies that develop education, research and innovation. Hereby, school teachers' approach to media education is related to the know-how to use new technologies to engage students in the classroom, or in the words of Buckingham (2013), teaching *with* the media. This fact also raises some questions about the limits of ICT and media education and their similarities and differences. Whilst social dynamics in Colombia significantly limit the integration of media education in the curriculum, it is crucial to keep discussing the local context's benefits, concerns, impacts and challenges. This would require seeing the media

beyond its technological determinism by understanding that “*it is also a human activity that organises reality into readable texts to facilitate action*” (Jacques, 2022, p.10). Researchers may design strategies to guide teachers into the pedagogical scopes of using media digital media rather than letting them fall into technological determinism.

Future studies can delve deeper into teachers’ cognition in order to better observe the conceptualization of media education. Thus, it is important to address the various methodological issues encountered during this research. Firstly, in terms of the quantitative method, it is relevant to design an instrument through collaborative efforts with other stakeholders so it can be better adapted to the unique characteristics of Colombian educational context.

Secondly, improving the translation process between English and Spanish is crucial. As a proposal, it is recommended to outline an appropriate procedure for checking the language equivalence of the instrument in both qualitative and quantitative methods (Hobbs & Tuzel, 2017). Exploring other alternatives to approach to the target audience is essential and could include collaborating with educational institutions as a way to have access to a larger sample when it comes to conduct quantitative research. Qualitative methods on the other hand can be varied so that teachers can be actively participating in the process of data collection, utilizing narratives or autoethnographies (Weninger & Liang, 2024), (Martin Ossa, 2019).

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Digital media has become an indispensable component of all the fields of contemporary society, influencing work, culture, communication and education on a global scale. As its impact is exponentially growing, the implementation of media education in society is increasingly critical, specifically in educational environments like schools. Studies about media education at schools have traditionally been focused on young people as the target audience. However, despite the critical role of teachers in disseminating knowledge, they seem to receive less attention within the research community, especially in the complex contexts of developing countries. In Colombia, other priorities must be addressed, and issues like the social gap and the digital divide tend to marginalise the implementation of media education and media literacy. Thus, this research aims to explore the representations and experiences of Colombian schoolteachers when it comes to promoting media education in their settings. By conducting a mixed methodology comprising semi-structured interviews and an online survey, this thesis aims to recognise their cognition about media education and how they overcome their challenges concerning digital media. Data collected showed that social disparities are indeed a significant barrier. Nonetheless, Colombian school teachers implement diverse strategies to overcome the challenges encountered when fostering media education.

Keywords: media literacy, media education, teachers' cognition, representations, experiences, socio-economic perspectives.