Fact-checking and digital self-defence

UNESCO #GlobalMILWeek “Current needs, future perspectives”
Think corner, Helsinki, 28.10.2019, PhD Kari Kivinen
• Faktabaari is an awarded Finnish fact-checking service bringing accuracy, especially to the public election debates.
• Faktabaari is a non-partisan journalistic service using social media for collecting and distributing factual information with crowds.
• Faktabaari international branch FactBar is linked especially to the European co-operation connecting fact-checking and media literacy stakeholders within FactBar EDU project.

https://faktabaari.fi/
Voter literacy approach

• Faktabaari has co-created with teachers a simplified version of its fact-checking methodology for educators.

• It encourages critical thinking and participation for fact-based public debate and to resist disinformation.

• The method is compatible with IFCN code and "information disorder" vocabulary and ideally adaptable.

• It brings fact-checking and media literacy communities together for apparent synergies.

• The toolkit for educators include examples to inspire, create and share new lesson plans.

• [https://faktabaari.fi/assets/FactBar_EDU_Fact-checking_for_educators_and_future_voters_13112018.pdf](https://faktabaari.fi/assets/FactBar_EDU_Fact-checking_for_educators_and_future_voters_13112018.pdf)
Internet Literacy Toolkit

Pilot project, autumn 2019
I. Schools should provide students with media and information literacy skills, so that they would be able to make their decisions based on facts - not on disinformation or mal-information.

II. Media and information literacy should be included in the national curriculum. That is the most effective and systematic way to guarantee, that teachers will deal with the matter at the school level.

III. Teachers should be trained and they should have updated tools and methods to deal with information disorder.

IV. The interaction between journalists, media experts, fact-checkers and schools is warmly recommended.
Finnish core curriculum

• According to the new core curriculum, all the Finnish schools should provide their pupils basic competences to use information independently and in interaction with others for problem-solving, argumentation, reasoning, drawing of conclusions and invention and they should have opportunities to analyse the topic being discussed critically from different viewpoints.

• The pupils should be able to know where and how to search for information and they should be able to evaluate the usability and reliability of sources.

• The schools should support the pupils’ growth into active, responsible, and enterprising citizens.

Teacher training materials are needed!

- The quantity of information has increased and the variety of sources has been diversified.
- The media landscape is re-shaping constantly.
- It is more and more difficult to distinguish information from dis-information.
- Schools and teachers need an updated set of tools and methods to be able to meet the curricular goals and to provide support and encouragement for their pupils which are confronting and dealing with unclear and conflicting information.
FACT?
Digital self-defence toolkit elements

1. There is a need to analyse the media use / scene of teachers and youngsters. Where do they get their news and information from?
2. Information about ethical principles of journalism.
3. Science > opinion
4. “Fake news” are replaced by Dis- Mis and Mal-information definitions
5. How do real fact-checkers work?
6. Empower students to check the facts themselves by using a check-list and other tools.
7. Disinformation awareness

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- Algorithm awareness is crucial for understanding the functioning of social media platforms – be aware of our information “bubbles”.
- Tools for verifying the authenticity of the photos and videos
- Privacy awareness and ethical reflection about data. Which data do I want to share about myself? We encourage teachers and students to take ownership of their data.
Social media is an essential part of the modern life

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social media services have brought to my life</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Friends</td>
<td>30 %</td>
<td>70 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer support</td>
<td>28 %</td>
<td>72 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feeling of togetherness</td>
<td>23 %</td>
<td>73 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information on interesting subjects</td>
<td>6 %</td>
<td>94 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Way to spend time</td>
<td>5 %</td>
<td>95 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sorrow</td>
<td>47 %</td>
<td>53 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Happiness</td>
<td>7 %</td>
<td>93 %</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

https://www.ebrand.fi/somejanuoret2019/  N=6247 Year 2019
Finnish study on media use of Finnish youngsters aged 13-29 N=6247

- Average use of social media 15 -20 hours weekly mainly during 15-01
- The most popular time is between 18-21.
- The most popular services are WhatsApp, YouTube, Instagram, Snapchat, Spotify and Facebook.

https://www.ebrand.fi/somejanuoret2019/
GUIDELINES FOR JOURNALISTS

PROFESSIONAL STATUS

1. A journalist is primarily responsible to the readers, listeners and viewers, who have the right to know what is happening in society.

2. Decisions concerning the content of media must be made in accordance with journalistic principles. The power to make such decisions must not under any circumstances be surrendered to any party outside the editorial office.

3. The journalist has the right and obligation to resist pressure or persuasion that attempts to steer, prevent or limit communications.

4. The journalist must not misuse his/her position. The journalist may not deal with issues that may lead to potential personal gain nor demand or receive benefits that might compromise his/her personal independence or professional ethics.

5. The journalist is entitled to refuse assignments that conflict with the law, his/her personal convictions or good journalistic practice.

6. When handling issues that concern the journalist's own media, the media concern or its owners, the journalist should make the context of the news item clear to readers, listeners and viewers.

7. It is crucial to observe good professional practice when using the work of others. Sources must be mentioned when information has been published by other parties.

8. OBTAINING AND PUBLISHING INFORMATION

8. The journalist must aim to provide truthful information.

9. The journalist is encouraged to make known his/her profession during the course of an assignment. Information should be obtained openly. If matters that are in the public interest cannot be otherwise investigated, the journalist may carry out interviews and obtain information by means that depart from standard practice.

10. Information obtained must be checked as thoroughly as possible, including when it has been published previously.

11. The public must be able to distinguish facts from opinions and fictitious material. Similarly, photographic and sound material must not be used in a misleading manner.

12. Information sources must be approached critically. This is particularly important in controversial issues, since the source of the information may be intended for personal gain or to damage others.

13. A news item may be published on the basis of limited information. Reports on subjects and events should be supplemented once new information becomes available. News events should be pursued to the end.

Science is the pursuit and application of knowledge and understanding of the natural and social world following a systematic methodology based on evidence.

https://sciencecouncil.org/about-science/our-definition-of-science/
Description of mis-, dis- and mal-information

**Mis-information** - false information is shared, but no harm is meant.

**Dis-information** - false information is knowingly shared to cause harm.

**Mal-information** - genuine information is shared to cause harm, often by moving information designed to stay private into the public sphere.
Fact-checking?

- **Fact-checking** denotes a process of research that strives to gain a thorough understanding of the truthfulness or likelihood of, for instance, a claim made in public.

- Fact-checking has branched out beyond journalism, however, and plenty of civic activism has developed globally in conjunction with it.

- Specific codes of principles have been developed for fact-checking (e.g. IFCN) which seek to distinguish between proper fact-checking (which aims for objectivity) and other investigative journalism dealing with facts.

- More: [https://ifcncodeofprinciples.poynter.org/](https://ifcncodeofprinciples.poynter.org/)
Trafic lights: true, untrue or “50/50”

• A **true** claim holds true in the context and there are sources to support it. But since fact-checking deals with very specific contexts, the claim can still be untrue in another context.

• An **untrue** claim is clearly false, i.e. the source material and the expert statements are at odds with it. The claim can be either a deliberate lie or simply a careless slip: fact-checking may not be able to pinpoint the motivation behind the claim.

• A **50/50** claim includes factual information but it cannot be regarded as completely accurate. This is especially common in the case of over-simplified views. For example, if an expert states that the claim cannot be either verified or refuted or that it is considered ambiguous or the source material is conflicting, the verdict is usually 50/50. So it is not a matter of being ‘half true’, but rather about not being entirely verifiable or certain.

• There are naturally claims that simply cannot be checked or the verification wouldn’t be meaningful from the point of view of public debate.
Example: Greta Thunberg Case

- February 2019 the Swedish climate activist Greta Thunberg (16) delivered a strong speech in Brussels before EU elections. Thunberg teamed up with IPCC science and scientists and encouraged politicians to take urgent action to combat climate change.
- Thunberg said that politicians should listen to scientists and “follow the Paris agreement and the IPCC reports”.
- Her speech contained four science-based claims that lasted scrutiny of two independent top scientists Professors Ollikainen (University of Helsinki) and Breyer (LUT University).
Greta has done her science homework

Greta’s science-based claims 21.2.2019

1. ”...by the year 2020 we need to have bended the emissions curve steep downward.”

2. ”According to the IPCC report we are about 11 years away from being in a position where we set off an irreversible chain reaction beyond human control.”

3. ”To avoid that unprecedented changes in all aspects of society, [actions] need to have taken place within this coming decade, including a reduction of our CO2 emissions by at least 50 % by the year 2030. And please note that those numbers do not include the aspect of equity, which is absolutely necessary to make the Paris agreement work on a global scale, nor do they include tipping points or feedback loops like the extremely powerful methane gas released from the thawing Arctic permafrost. They do, however, include negative emission techniques on a huge planetary scale that is yet to be invented, and that many scientists fear will never be ready in time and will anyway be impossible to deliver at the scale assumed.”

Faktabaari contacted two independent specialists:
- Christian Breyer, [7] Professor of Solar Economy, LUT University:
  - “I can clearly approve her Brussels speech from a scientific point of view, every single sentence.
- Markku Ollikainen, [8] Professor of Environmental and Resource Economics, University of Helsinki & Chair of Finnish Climate Panel:
  - “I agree on the general approach and arguments 1 - 3

Faktabaari conclusion:
- We checked the science references in Thunberg’s speech for pedagogical use with top scientists from Finland.
- Three science-related claims were found accurate
Disinformation awareness

• Most middle school students can't tell native ads from articles.
  • Most students could identify the traditional ad, but more than 80 percent of them believed that the "sponsored content" article was a real news story.

• Most high school students accept photographs as presented, without verifying them.

• Many high school students couldn't tell a real and fake news source apart on Facebook.

• Most college students didn't suspect potential bias in a tweet from an activist group.

• Most Stanford students couldn't identify the difference between a mainstream and fringe source.

Checklist

It would be good to ask certain questions before liking or sharing a suspicious piece of news:

- **Who is the author?**
  - Can you find a name or reliable web address?

- **To whom it is made for?**
  - Where has it been published first and to which target audience?

- **What does it really say?**
  - Is it an advertisement, a piece of news or opinion of someone?

- **Why is it made?**
  - To whom it is targeted. How did you get it?

- **On what information it is based?**
  - Can you find references?

- **Are pictures authentic?**
  - Is there a real link between the title, photo and text?
  - Would it be wise to check the origin of the photo/video?
WHAT DATA DO INTERNET PROVIDERS COLLECT FROM YOU WHEN YOU BROWSE ONLINE?

Internet providers can collect your data without you being aware, sometimes to improve your user experience, sometimes to sell them to advertisers, and let them know:

- Who you are
- Where you have been
- Who you have been talking to, and
- What you are interested in

#MILCLICKS

MIL Footprint 🕵️‍♂️ Reviewing your digital footprints for MIL footprints
The FaktabaariEDU project brings together fact-checking experts, journalists, media specialists and pedagogues to create internet literacy tools:

1. to support teachers in dealing with social media issues in the classroom context;

2. to activate students to verify their social media content empowered with critical thinking and media literacy skills to resist mis- and disinformation.
Kiitos!

More: www.faktabaari.fi/edu, kari@kivinen.net

FaktaBaari EDU

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Lycée franco-finlandais d’Helsinki
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