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ASSESSMENT COMPONENT: 1

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Doctorate in Education (EdD)

ECDE7020 Research Proposal

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Start Date	April 2025	End Date	September 2025

PhD by Research	PhD Practice Based	PhD by Published Works	Professional Doctorate (including DBA, DProf, Ed D)	MPhil by Research	MPhil Practice Based
☐	☐	☐	☒	☐	☐
MA by Research	MSc by Research	MRes			
☐	☐	☐			

Proposed Research

Proposed Research Question and sub-questions
Main Research Question: How effective is the Digital Competence Framework (DCF) in addressing media literacy challenges, particularly in combating information pollution, when compared to Finland's media literacy education model? Sub-questions: ● What is the relationship between digital competence and media literacy in the context of education policy? ● To what extent does the Digital Competence Framework (DCF) in Wales incorporate key elements of media literacy education? ● How well does the Welsh education system equip students with the skills to identify

and counteract information pollution?

- What lessons can Wales learn from Finland's media literacy education policy?

Background & Context (approx. 500 words)

In the digital age, media literacy has become an indispensable skill for navigating an increasingly complex and volatile information environment. The rapid growth of social media and digital platforms and technological iterations have not only accelerated the dissemination of information, but also contributed to the proliferation of misinformation and disinformation, and in the face of increasing "information pollution", education systems must equip students with the critical skills needed to critically assess digital content. Media literacy education is essential for fostering critical thinking, digital competence and responsible media consumption, especially in an era when false narratives can have a serious impact on public perceptions, democratic processes and social cohesion.

The Digital Competence Framework (DCF) was introduced in Wales in 2019 as part of the new curriculum reforms, aiming to integrate digital literacy and competency skills into all levels of education for students aged 3-16. The framework emphasizes problem-solving, communication, collaboration, creativity, and critical thinking in digital contexts, aligning closely with the objectives of media literacy education (Tom Crick, 2022). However, the extent to which the DCF explicitly addresses media literacy challenges, such as combating information pollution, remains a key area for investigation.

Finland, widely recognized as a global leader in media literacy education (Giannetto, 2024), has implemented a comprehensive and cross-curricular approach that integrates media literacy into subjects such as history, language, and social studies. The Finnish model places strong emphasis on critical thinking, source verification, and understanding media's role in society, positioning students as active and informed participants in the digital world. Studies indicate that Finland's media literacy education has contributed to higher levels of trust in media, greater resilience to misinformation, and stronger critical thinking abilities among students (Koivula et al., 2021).

In contrast, Wales' approach through the DCF is relatively new, and while it covers digital competence broadly, it is unclear how effectively it equips students with the skills to critically engage with and counteract misinformation. Some scholars argue that media literacy should be more explicitly embedded within the framework rather than being a secondary component of digital competency (Livingstone & Helsper, 2020). Others suggest that a comparative analysis with Finland's model could offer insights into strengthening Wales' media literacy education efforts (Buckingham, 2019).

This research holds significant importance for several reasons. Firstly, evaluating the effectiveness of the DCF in addressing media literacy challenges will contribute to ongoing policy discussions in Wales. Secondly, by examining Finland's approach, this study will provide comparative insights that can identify best practices and inform educational improvements in Wales. Lastly, given the global concern over digital misinformation and its societal impacts, this study contributes to broader discussions on how education policies can foster digital resilience and critical engagement with online content. By analyzing the relationship between digital competence and media literacy within Wales' education system, this study aims to determine whether the DCF adequately prepares students to identify, analyze, and counteract information pollution. Moreover, drawing comparisons with Finland's model will help highlight strengths, weaknesses, and potential areas for policy enhancement in Wales.

Aims & Objectives (approx. 250-500 words)

This research aims to evaluate how effectively the Digital Competence Framework (DCF) equips Welsh students with media literacy skills, particularly in identifying and combating misinformation. By analyzing the relationship between digital competence and media literacy education within the context of educational policy, the study seeks to understand the extent to which the DCF addresses key challenges in media literacy. Furthermore, a comparative analysis with Finland's media literacy education policy will help identify strengths, gaps, and areas for improvement in Wales' approach. Drawing insights from Finland's successful practices, the research will explore potential strategies for enhancing media literacy education policy in Wales.

Research objectives:

1. Examine the role of digital competence in media literacy education through a comprehensive review of policy documents, curriculum guidelines, and existing literature on the Digital Competence Framework (DCF) and the Finnish education model.
2. Evaluate the extent to which the DCF integrates essential media literacy components, including fact-checking, source evaluation, critical thinking, and recognition of media bias.
3. Conduct a comparative analysis of Finland's media literacy education model and the DCF in Wales, emphasizing distinctions in policy implementation, curriculum design, and student outcomes.
4. Identify and evaluate best practices from Finland's educational approach that could be effectively applied to the context of Wales, providing evidence-based recommendations for policymakers and educators.

This research seeks to fill a **gap** in the literature by directly comparing the media literacy components of the DCF with Finland's established education model. While previous studies have analyzed digital competence frameworks and media literacy separately, few have examined their integration within policy and their effectiveness in combating misinformation. Furthermore, comparative studies between Finland and Wales in this specific domain remain limited, making this research particularly valuable for education policymakers, teachers, and researchers in media literacy education.

By achieving these objectives, the study will contribute to ongoing educational policy discussions in Wales and beyond, offering a critical perspective on how media literacy education can be enhanced to meet the challenges of today's information landscape.

Proposed Plan of Work

Planned development	Target date for completion
Reading and writing of introduction and literature review	April - May 2024
Refining research questions and methodology framework	April - May 2024
Writing the methodology chapter	May - June 2024
Designing questionnaires and interview questions	June 2024
Piloting and refining the questionnaires and interview questions	Late June - Early July 2024
Conducting surveys and interviews (data collection)	July 2024
Analyzing collected data (mixed-methods)	August 2024
Writing up research findings and discussion	August - September 2024
Writing conclusions and finalizing the study	September 2024
Proofreading, revisions, and submission preparation	Late September 2024

Proposed Methodology (approx. 500 words)

This study employs a retrospective design to evaluate the effectiveness of the Digital Competence Framework (DCF) in Wales by analyzing university students who were within the target age group (3-16 years) at the time of its implementation in 2019. A mixed-methods approach will be utilized, integrating qualitative data from policy and text analyses with quantitative data from questionnaires and interviews, to investigate differences in media literacy education and their impacts.

Since a longitudinal study is impractical due to the difficulty of obtaining baseline data before the DCF's implementation, this study adopts a retrospective research approach by surveying and interviewing university students currently aged 19-22, who were 13-16 years old when the DCF was introduced, to evaluate its long-term impact on media literacy awareness.

Sampling Strategy

This study focuses on Welsh university students aged 19-22, as they represent the first generation exposed to the DCF during their adolescent years (13-16 years old in 2019).

University students are a practical and reflective sample compared to secondary school students, as they can better recall and evaluate their past media literacy education.

According to the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) data, students aged 20 and under remain the largest group of university entrants despite a 5% decline over the past five years (from 40% to 35%). Meanwhile, the proportion of students aged 25 and over has increased.

These enrollment trends confirm the feasibility of recruiting university students within the target age range of 19 to 22 for this study, thereby ensuring a representative and readily accessible sample.

Data Collection and Analysis

To explore the differences in media literacy education and assess the effectiveness of the DCF in Wales, this study adopts a mixed-methods approach, integrating both qualitative and quantitative data collection and analysis.

Qualitative Approach: Policy and Text Analysis

Data Collection:

1. Policy Analysis: Reviewing official Welsh government documents on the DCF and Finland's media literacy education policies to examine their scope, objectives, and implementation strategies.
2. Text Analysis: Analyzing curriculum guidelines, policy reports, and media discourse to explore how media literacy education is framed within the Welsh and Finnish education systems.

Data Analysis:

Thematic analysis will be applied to policy documents, curriculum materials, and media discourse to identify key themes and differences in how media literacy is integrated into

both education models.

Quantitative Approach: Surveys and Interviews

Data Collection:

1. Survey (Questionnaire for Welsh University Students):

A structured questionnaire will be designed to measure students' media literacy awareness and their ability to identify misinformation. The survey will assess self-perceived media literacy competence, exposure to DCF-based education, and attitudes toward digital information credibility.

2. Interviews: Semi-structured interviews with a subset of survey participants will provide in-depth insights into their educational experiences under the DCF.

Data Analysis:

1. Quantitative Data (Survey Responses):

Descriptive and inferential statistical analysis will be conducted to identify patterns and correlations between students' DCF exposure and their ability to critically assess digital information credibility.

2. Qualitative Data (Interview Responses):

Thematic analysis will be used to identify recurring patterns in students' perceptions of media literacy education in Wales.

Introductory Bibliography

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AI Acknowledgement

I confirm that I have not used any AI tools in the research and creation of this assignment.

I confirm that I have not presented any AI generated materials as my own work.

I confirm that I have copies of my drafts, notes, and other resources I used, which I may be asked to provide in evidence.