True or False? Identifying and Combating Digital Disinformation

LESSON 5 – DISINFORMATION

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Lesson plan for secondary schools

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Dear,

We present to you a scenario of classes on disinformation, a problem that has become an inseparable element of the modern information space. This topic is extremely important, especially in the context of education about digital safety and the development of critical thinking among young people.

Lessons on disinformation require in-depth discussion and analysis, so we suggest implementing this topic as part of at least two meetings with students. The first class should focus on the definition and mechanisms of disinformation, while the next one should focus on the perception and impact of information manipulation on various social groups, including national and social conflicts. We encourage you to take into account the specificity of the group, including the nationality of the students, in the scenario, because disinformation often aims to create divisions and manipulate facts, e.g. about armed conflicts.

The aim of these classes is not only to provide theoretical knowledge, but also to stimulate reflection and develop practical skills in the field of recognizing disinformation and its prevention. We encourage you to flexibly adapt the scenario to the needs of the classroom and consider conducting additional discussions, simulation games and group exercises to better engage students.

We hope that the proposed section of the topic that we present in this lesson plan will allow students not only to understand the dangers of disinformation, but also to equip them with tools to defend themselves against information manipulation.

Best regards,

CyberSec Project Team

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Lesson objectives

- **Explicit purposes**:

  o Understanding the concepts: Students will learn the definitions of "disinformation" and "propaganda" and what forms they can take.

  o Recognizing threats: Students will learn to identify examples of disinformation in different areas of life (media, politics, history).

  o Critical Analysis of Information: Students will develop the ability to assess the reliability of information and to analyze its sources.

  o Counteracting disinformation: Students will learn methods of counteracting propaganda and information manipulation.

- **Hidden Goals**:

  o Development of empathy and social responsibility: Students will understand how misinformation affects society, as well as develop social awareness and sensitivity to the problem.

  o Cooperation and communication skills: Through group activities, students will develop communication skills and teamwork.

  o Development of critical thinking: Students will learn not only to take in information but also to critically analyze it, which develops their ability to think independently.

  o Building emotional awareness: Students will gain a greater awareness of how emotions affect information perception and decisions, which can help them make more rational decisions in the future.

- **Core curriculum**

General objectives related to the core curriculum
https://www.dziennikustaw.gov.pl/D2018000046701.pdf

  o acquiring the ability to formulate independent and thoughtful judgments, to justify one's own and others' judgments in the process of dialogue in the investigating community;

  o combining critical and logical thinking skills with imaginative and creative skills;

  o developing social, moral and aesthetic sensitivity;

  o developing students' respect for knowledge, developing a passion for learning about the world and encouraging them to apply the acquired knowledge in practice.

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Context - keywords

disinformation, information manipulation, critical thinking, responsibility, dialogue

- **Justification for the choice of topic**

    o Disinformation is a growing threat to societies around the world. Manipulating facts and deliberately misleading affects various social groups, including young people, who are particularly vulnerable to false information, especially through social media.

    o In the context of global events, such as wars or social crises, disinformation can lead to the escalation of conflicts and divisions between nationalities, e.g. through manipulation of the conflict between Poland and Ukraine.

    o Education in recognizing misinformation and developing critical thinking skills is crucial for youth to be aware of how to avoid manipulation and make informed decisions.

    o Lessons on disinformation allow you to develop empathy, communication skills and responsibility for your own opinions and actions in the digital world.

Lesson Preparation

- **Materials**:

    o Multimedia presentation

    o Blackboard

- **Space**:

    o The room is equipped with a projector.

    o Arrangement of desks in a way that allows work in groups or individually.

Lesson structure

Purpose	Activity	Time	Materials
Introduction	Presentation of the topic and objectives of the lesson. Discussion of the timetable. Reference to research as part of our project: • Students are familiar with the concept of fake news/misinformation/fake news, but more than 20% do not check the information found on the internet • 45% of students confirmed that they had shared fake news or misinformation • Adolescents have problems distinguishing facts from opinions and recognizing manipulation	3 min	Presentation, whiteboard
Knowledge transfer	Warm up Ask students the following questions: - What countries do they come from? If the group is homogeneous, ask if they know people from other countries. - What stereotypes do you associate with these nationalities? - Where do such beliefs come from? Who could create them? Ask them what they mean by the terms "propaganda" and "disinformation," and then explain the terms. Give examples of where these phenomena are used (politics, economy, media). *[Propaganda:*	15 min	Presentation, multimedia examples

It is a way of conveying information that aims to convince people of an idea or view. Propaganda often uses emotions to influence what we think and feel. It can be used in politics, media, or advertising to urge people to take a certain action or change their minds.
Disinformation:
It is deliberately giving false information to confuse or deceive others. Disinformation looks like real news, but it's meant to mislead people. It is used to harm someone or gain benefits, for example in politics or the Internet.]
Give examples of target groups: representatives of different nationalities, full business or political circles, journalists, etc., and the scale of the phenomenon.

Ask your students:

- How do they understand "propaganda prevention" Can you give examples?

[Prevention of propaganda and disinformation:
These are activities aimed at protecting against false or manipulated information that tries to influence our thinking and behavior. We learn to recognize false information and not to succumb to emotions or beliefs that are deliberately distorted. It protects us from manipulation so that we can make independent and informed decisions based on facts.]
- Who is responsible for countering disinformation?

Ask:

- Is anyone outside of school a volunteer in any community? Ask for examples from the area of volunteering.

- Does anyone know a positive example of the countries where the students come from?

Explanation of the word "interpretation", examples.

Analyze the impact of emotions on the reception of information, e.g. how the interpretation of information by a stressed and relaxed person differs.

[Event: On social media, someone shares information that your colleague was involved in illegal activities.
Emotions, various, for example:
Anger (at the person who shared it).
Uncertainty (how this will affect the colleague and his reputation).
Shame (will others think I've become friends with him).
Reaction: A. Emotional:
Anger makes you think about the need to defend your colleague.
Uncertainty leads to fear of what will happen.
B. Behavioral:
Anger: You write a post to explain that this is not true.
Uncertainty: You call a colleague to ask what happened.
Shame: you can limit your social media activities.]

Ask your students about examples of disinformation in history, media, politics, environmental protection, elections, and at school, among their friends.

Strong emotions
A human state conducive to the correct reading or understanding of information.

Questions for students – one or more questions can be asked:

- (reading information) Who do you think will understand the text faster and better: **the person who is scared in panic, or the one who**

	has just finished playing with friends? Why? • What emotions can affect how we react to the information we see on the Internet? **Have you ever made a decision in emotional emotions that later turned out to be wrong?** What was it? • (control) If everybody could control their emotions, what emotions would you want to have in difficult situations? **What emotions are the most difficult for you to control**? How do you deal with them? • (optimism vs pessimism) Who in class feels more optimistic and who is pessimistic? What makes you feel this way? **How do you think optimism or pessimism affects how we perceive information in the media?** • (Examples of emotions in disinformation) **What strong emotions do you feel when you see something disturbing online?** How do these emotions affect how you feel about this information? Can emotions influence whether we believe in fake news? How? • What strategies can you use to better deal with emotions that may affect your assessment of information**? What can you do to check if the information is true when you feel strong emotions?** Examples of disinformation at the level of history, media, environmental protection, elections.			
Practical exercises	Interpretation game. Aim of the exercise: Understand how nonverbal communication can affect the interpretation of information and the potential consequences of misinterpretation.	20-30 min		

Preparation:
Divide the class into two groups:
participants and observers.
Participants will make movements and
observers will analyze changes in
interpretation.

Course of the exercise:
Determine the movement: In a group of
participants, choose one person who will
show a simple non-verbal movement at the
beginning (e.g. waving their hand, jumping
in place, turning around themselves).
Students in this group must observe the
movement and repeat it, passing the last
movement to the next person in the line.
Passing the movement: Each person in the
queue repeats the movement (in practice,
subsequent people slightly modify it, e.g.
changing the pace, adding their own
element).
The last person in the group makes the final
move.

Observation and analysis:
Observers (the second group) observe the
entire process, noting the changes that
have occurred in the interpretation of
movement.
After the exercise, the observers share their
observations on what changes they have
noticed in the movement. Was it easy to
recreate? What changes were the most
surprising?

Discussion:

Participants share their feelings about how
they felt while handing over the movement.
What was easy and what was difficult?

	Ask participants about situations in which incorrect interpretation of nonverbal cues could lead to problems. Examples to consider: In an electric battery factory: How could misinterpretation of safety signals affect the safety of workers/the final product? In the shelter: How could a wrong reading of emotions affect relationships with the patients? In the military: How could misinterpretation of orders lead to dangerous situations?		
Discussion of the results and discussion	Finally, encourage students to reflect on the importance of understanding nonverbal communication in everyday life and in the context of different social and professional situations. How can you improve your ability to read non-verbal signals? Questions for students – one or more questions can be asked: - **Who is responsible for understanding the "interpretation"?** What factors can affect whether we understand the information correctly? Are there differences in liability between the sender and the receiver? - What language was the original message in and in which was it read? What challenges can arise when translating information? Does the change of language affect interpretation? - **Is the author of the text/thesis an expert in a given field, or is he or she a "Facebook expert"?** How can you check the credibility of a source? What qualities should a reliable expert have? - **If the interpretation can be unconscious, is disinformation a conscious message affecting specific groups of society?** What are some examples of disinformation that was designed to manipulate public opinion? - **What are the patterns of the categories of truth and untruth?** How can we classify information? What criteria do we use to assess what is true and what is false?	10 min	Blackboard. Youtube internet access screen

	- **Is disinformation punishable by law**? If it was, would it change the course of information in society? Could stricter rules change the way people share information? - **What would happen if the electricity or the Internet was turned off for a day?** How would this affect the spread of disinformation? Would people find other ways to exchange information? - **Is each of us involved in the spread of disinformation, whether we want to or not?** What actions can lead to the unwitting spread of false information? What are the personal responsibilities in this regard? - **What emotions can influence how we share information?** Do you feel that your emotions can affect what you share on social media? How can this be controlled? - **What steps can we take to reduce the impact of misinformation in our environment?** What actions can we implement as individuals to improve the quality of the information we share with others? We watch together: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pQsoS-1_WEE		
Summary and reflection	Summary of key issues. Disinformation is the deliberate spread of false information that can influence our thinking and decisions. Strong emotions can increase belief in false information and make it easier to spread it. Critical thinking is key in recognizing misinformation and separating facts from opinions. Reliability of sources is essential – it is always worth checking who the author of the information is and whether he or she is an expert in a given field. Translating messages and passing them on can change their meaning – it is worth considering the original meaning of the text.	5 min	Presentation

Conscious sharing of information – before you share something online, make sure that the information is true.

An encouragement to reflect on the topic.

- What can each of us do/change in ourselves to increase our resilience to disinformation?
- How to diagnose and vaccinate yourself from "propaganda"?

Optionally (if time is available) presenting the ABCD Method to students.

[The ABCD method is a simple way to stop and consciously approach the information we receive, rather than acting impulsively. It helps to create a space between the stimulus (e.g. false information) and our reaction. It is a method that teaches how to be more aware and responsible in the face of misinformation.

Step 1: A – Aware
Stop and pay attention to what you just read or heard. Do you feel strong emotions such as anger, fear, or excitement? Does this information seem suspicious?
Example: You saw a social media post that someone from your school did something wrong. Before you believe this information, stop and be aware of your emotions.

Step 2: B – Breathe
Take a deep breath. This will allow you to calm down and gain a moment not to react immediately. Remember that the first reaction to information can be emotional.
Example: Before you share this information with others, take a breath and calm your thoughts. This will help you keep your distance.

Step 3: C – Curious
Be curious, but in a positive way. Ask yourself: Where does this information come from? Is the source reliable? Do others

	confirm this? This may be the time to conduct a short study or verify the data. Example: Check to see if others are talking about the event too. Are there any trusted sources (e.g. teachers, official school profiles) that confirm this information? Step 4: D – Decide Once you've examined the information, decide what to do. Should you believe and share this information? Or maybe it is better to ignore it? Choose a conscious response instead of a reaction to emotions. Example: After thinking about it, you decide not to share this information because you are not sure if it is true.]	

Optional homework

- **Talk to your family about misinformation** – ask if they know what it is and if they know examples of misinformation they've seen in the media.

- **Think about what you can do** as an individual to avoid spreading false information – write down your ideas.

- **Think of three steps a country could take** to prevent disinformation – how do you think the government can protect people from fake news?

- **Simulation of the situation** (ABCD Process – How to react to disinformation). The aim of the exercise is to teach students to react consciously to information that may be disinformation and to develop critical thinking skills. Divide students into small groups (3-4 people). Each group receives a scenario or social media post that may be misinformation, such as false information about a student, false gossip at school, alarmist health news. Each group goes through the steps of the ABCD method. And he prepares for the discussion in the next lesson.

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Resources and knowledge for teachers

Examples of websites and educational portals

- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pQsoS-1_WEE
- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bsZch5kKZjM&t=1s
- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CJu69eRu6Rg&t=1s
- https://wojownicyklawiatury.pl/
- https://euvsdisinfo.eu/
- *Improvements to the EU Code of Practice on Disinformation* https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/priorities-2019-2024/new-push-european-democracy/protecting-democracy/strengthened-eu-code-practice-disinformation_pl
- *Russian propaganda in the information space of Georgia before and after the conflict in August 2008*, Irina Tkeshelashvili, DOI: 10.4467/20827695WSC.21.003.14710
- Student interview on Radio LUZ, Wrocław University of Technology: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B9bGEbl-8sI&t=700s
- *Poland in the crosshairs of disinformation*: https://www.gov.pl/web/sluzby-specjalne/polska-na-celowniku-dezinformacji
- *European Parliament resolution of 1 June 2023 on foreign interference in all democratic processes in the European Union, including disinformation (2022/2075(INI))* https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-9-2023-0219_PL.html
- Shaping Europe's digital future: *Tackling online disinformation:* https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/pl/policies/online-disinformation

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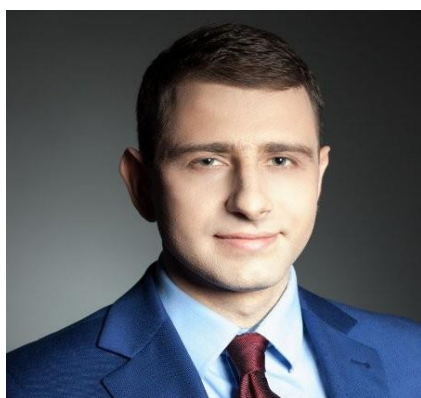
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More information about project

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