

**Health Literacy in Childhood and Adolescence (HLCA):  
Exploring and Developing Theories, Concepts, and Models on Health Literacy in  
Childhood and Adolescence (HLCA-TeCoMo)**

Janine Bröder\*, Orkan Okan\*, Dirk Bruland\*, Ester Lopes\*, Ullrich Bauer\*, Paulo Pinheiro\*  
Bielefeld University, Germany, Faculty of Educational Science, Centre for Prevention and  
Intervention in Childhood and Adolescence (CPI)

**Key Words:** Health Literacy, Health Promotion, Childhood and Adolescence, theory-building,  
conceptual framework

**Abstract** (max. 3500 characters) - currently 3487

**Introduction:** Recent evidence has highlighted the critical impact of low health literacy on health and its importance for health promotion and prevention. Interestingly, it seems that rather little health literacy research puts children and adolescents at the core. This contrasts with the importance given to childhood and youth for healthy human development, and for health and well-being throughout adulthood. For the next three years, the German "Health Literacy in Childhood and Adolescence (HLCA)" consortium strives to tackle this shortfall by exploring a multidisciplinary perspective to health literacy within this target group. This consortium's sub-project "Theories, Concepts and Models (HLCA-TeCoMo)" was launched in April 2015. It specifically aims (a) to scope and synthesise the available evidence related to child/adolescent health literacy concepts, models, and definitions; and (b) to develop an integrated definition and conceptual framework of health literacy, capturing dimensions related to the target group.

**Methods:** In the current phase, a systematic literature review is performed to identify existing concepts, models and definitions of child/adolescent health literacy, as well as relevant child development factors. Scientific online databases covering multiple disciplines, among others, health/medical (i.e. PubMed) and educational research (i.e. ERIC), are searched to identify scientific evidence reporting on the concepts in question. A content analysis will be carried out to identify relevant dimensions of health literacy in children/adolescents. These results, and at a later stage, the developed definition, model and conceptual framework will be opened for expert review. Here, possible channels are a Delphi panel and consulting the consortium's scientific expert advisory board.

**Results:** Preliminary results of the literature review suggest that evidence of definitions, concepts and models for health literacy in children/adolescents is poor when addressing it from a medical/public health perspective. Instead, health literacy in the target population is rather well conceptualised in adjacent disciplines, especially in the context of school health education. So far, the role of contextual and structural factors promoting or limiting the genesis of child/adolescent health literacy and the acquisition of relevant skills and knowledge has been poorly conceptualised. Moreover, it seems evident, that child development factors, intergenerational and power relations, children's image and their role as active citizens within the community and societal settings (i.e. health care, school) need to be considered when addressing health literacy in the target group. The importance of children's rights and ethical dimensions to child/adolescent health literacy is highlighted as well.

**Preliminary Conclusion:** TeCoMo strives to innovatively open up the field of health literacy in children/adolescents from a public health perspective to integrate perspectives of literacy and developmental studies, socialisation, psychology, educational science, respectively. As such, TeCoMo aims at contributing to the evidence base and understanding of health literacy within children and adolescents by providing a hands-on conceptual framework and model. The model could be operationalised for assessing health literacy within the target group, as it will be conducted within the sub-project "Methods of Measuring Health Literacy of Children"

(HLCA-MoMChild).