

Question no 4:

- **What do you know about Media Literacy?**
- **Do you have any Media Literacy Education in school and if so, what do you learn about?**
- **Do you think Media Literacy Education is important, and if so, why?**
- **How do you think Media Literacy Education in your country/school could improve?**



Karlstad Youth Council

We know quite a lot about Media Literacy education. We teach us a little about it in the “middle school” but not enough. But only basic things such as advertising are not always “honest” and that you should not believe everything you see, read or hear. But in high school you can, if you want to, learn more about media and media scrutiny and stuff like that.

The subject is very important when we are living with so much media every day. So really is it very odd that we do not have more Media Literacy education in school. For it is important that we can review what we see and read so we should not be deceived, instead understand it all.

More teaching of the subject. In the “middle school” has it not been much talk on the subject at all. But it should have more teaching hours. You can do it on both practical and theoretical level. It is important for our future.



South Africa Youth Council

Media Literacy is an outcome of Media Studies. Media Studies is a process of enabling / educating media consumers to have a deeper comprehension of media-messages and the significance of having various media-mediums and genres. It is the transformation of audiences from being ‘just recipients’ of media-messages to critical viewers who are able to create and distinguish between these messages (i.e. information, entertainment or education). Consequently Media Literacy is the ability to decode, understand and evaluate messages that come via different media vehicles.

In South Africa, Media literacy Education only exists at tertiary (higher education) level.

Such courses teach

1. How to decode, understand, evaluate and create media messages
2. Manipulation of content (how structural features such as ownership and funding models affect content)
3. Objectivity vs. Subjectivity (who profits, who loses and who has the final say vis-à-vis the final message)

Without Media Literacy Education, the whole process of media consumption will always be a passive and incomprehensible act whereas audiences will forever applaud what they do not understand. Media Literacy Education is important because it will teach audiences to analyze and question everything they see on television, read in the newspapers and hear on the radio thus making the whole process of consuming media messages an active one.

However having said this, samples of high school going children reveal the kind of media literacy they receive in their schools, if any.

Sample 1: This sample consists of 7 boys aged between 13 – 16 years old. They are all in high school, ranging from grades 8 – 9, and in the Umlazi (a township outside of Durban). The 8th participant was a girl – 19years old, in grade 11

Although there is regular access to radio, television and print media at home and the local libraries,

most schools in the area do not offer media literacy as part of the curriculum. Some of the English teachers will use newspaper or magazine articles to highlight topical issues in the class but they never engage the children in different aspects of media, how an article/report/programme is put together. Information learnt regarding media literacy is through the actual consumption of media.

The schools also do not have computers thus the local children have no access to the internet and have no computer skills. The local library has free internet but this is only used by older community members for research, the younger children although in high school, are turned away. Only one child, who goes to an Indian school, had access to a computer. The school uses this to teach basic computer skills, but there is no internet. Despite their disadvantage, this group was very knowledgeable of current affairs through their consumption of media. Even though most of them do not have their own cellphones, they have access to their older siblings' cellphones, through which they access Mixit and download music.

Ideas that surfaced regarding improving media literacy in their schools, was actually having media literacy as part of the school curriculum. Schools getting equipped with computers for learners to get basic computer skills and internet access, as books and encyclopedias are still the only form of research resource for school projects – these are at times outdated and limited for the number of students accessing them.

It was undoubted that this was something the group felt was important to their education and development.

Sample 2: 12 kids from Meadowlands, Soweto Johannesburg, aged between 12 – 17 years old
Information and media literacy enables people to interpret and make informed judgments as users of information and media, as well as to become skillful creators and producers of information and media messages in their own right.

This research was difficult in that the children interviewed did not know what media literacy was, this had to be explained. Although they have access to media their interest was more about consuming the media than finding out how it was made, one child made the example that they were on Mixit and watched television but was not really interested to find out the process it takes for media to reach them as a user. All these children had access to various media within their communities but this was not accessible in their schools and they mentioned that they liked practical subjects about things they can physically go out and do, such as things they learn in Life Orientation class. This was not the response one had hoped to get. This showed the lack of understanding of media literacy and why schools need to offer it, for children to learn the workings of media.

Sample 3: Most participants attend the Hoerskool Louw Geldenhuys (High School) in Linden. Two groups of kids – total of 10 subjects – Conducted at the Waterfront (small mall). The initial intention was to juxtapose findings from urban higher income schools with township government schools – but due to time constraints this was not possible.

-What do you know about Media Literacy? Do you have any Media Literacy Education in school and if so, what do you learn about?

Response was mainly that Media Literacy is where they are taught about news of the country. It's a grade 8 and 9 class. The method here is that they are asked to watch the news on TV, and bring to school newspaper clippings of current news where they discuss firstly the news themselves in relation to them (most mentioned crime in the country) in comparison to tabloids and other methods of reporting; and (this seemed secondary) the different manner in which different media address the same issue.

-Do you think Media Literacy Education is important, and if so, why?

It is important because it teaches them different ways of looking at things, and so they've learnt that they should be objective. But many said that the class is pointless because it's the same thing every

week, but they enjoy it because it's the one time they get to speak and challenge the teacher. The class is very informal.

-How do you think Media Literacy Education in your country/school could improve?

It would be better if the class was computer-based. They would like to do things like make their own newspapers with their own news, and make mock TV news and such. It would also be fun if they saw newspapers and TV news and programmes made by children on national TV.



Kuala Lumpur Youth Council

We are quite extensively familiar with the subject of media literacy as we are mostly doing mass communication degrees. Our first introduction to media literacy was in our foundation year through mass communication components such as human communication and media appreciation where we learnt how to analyse media messages. We went quite in depth as we went further with the degree learning of things such as media ownership in relation to media literacy etc and looked at the public sphere as well vis a vis media literacy.

We came up with the conclusion that media literacy is quite important to society, to be able to differentiate between the issues we see in media these days i.e bias, propaganda, censorship etc. Malaysia is a predominantly Muslim nation with quite a strong stand on issues pertaining to media consumption within the country, advertising, music and motion pictures as well...Malaysia is one of the countries that still has a ban on the advertising of alcoholic beverages and tobacco. This being said, media literacy would help the ordinary man out there understand why this is the case, look at censorship differently and understand the politics within media that often times drive politics of a country. This is particularly important for citizens of countries like Malaysia given the strict measures policy makers have on media.

As we are all foreigners in Malaysia, we are not quite familiar with their education set up, if at all media literacy is taught in lower levels of education and the depth to which it is taught. This topic is still pending research among high schools around Kuala Lumpur, looking at International private schools and state run schools.



India Youth Council

- What do you know about Media Literacy?

'The UNESCO Declaration on Media Education or also called the Grunwald Declaration says 'the school and the family share the responsibility of preparing the young person for living in a world of powerful images, words and sounds.'

Media literacy is informed, critical understanding of the mass media. It involves examining the techniques, technologies and institutions involved in media production.

The primary goals of media literacy, in a developing country such as ours are the conscientization, empowerment and liberation of the community and of society as a whole. Its concerns are the promotion of equality, social justice, democracy, freedom, human dignity and a more humane society. The methods or strategies it employs are dialogue, reflection and action. The purpose of media literacy is to empower individuals to control media programming. It is to show people how to shift control from the media to themselves .

We students of Gandhi Media Literacy programme are encouraged to do research on the issue and do survey on the trends in other countries. The overarching aim of media literacy, as we understand through this research, 'is to prepare children to understand and to participate actively in the media culture that surrounds them. The emphasis is on critical understanding and analysis, and increasingly

upon media production by students themselves.’ (Buckingham, 2001, a British media educationist).

- Do you have any Media Literacy Education in school and if so, what do you learn about?

We do not have access to media literacy education in our schools yet. It is not part of curriculum. However there are organizations like Gandhi Smriti and Darshan Samiti, the national memorial of Mahatma Gandhi, who are working at the national and global level to spread media literacy. We are all students of the Gandhi Media Literacy programme.

- Do you think Media Literacy Education is important, and if so, why?

In today’s world of negative influences the child is the easiest and most vulnerable entity and it is very simple to mould his or her identity into whatever you wish to create. With this thought in mind ,it becomes essential to protect the child against such violations and what better weapon can one provide than the weapon of truth and knowledge.

Society today has reached a new level of modernization and with the high degree of technological advancements ,virtual reach has broken through geographic barriers to reach every part of the globe. ‘The media is now at the core of experience, at the heart of our capacity or incapacity to make sense of the world in which we live’.

We have witnessed the transition of the media from the first age of interpersonal or scribal media through the second age of mass media and now, the new third media age of converged digital media. It has, therefore become essential to realize the true potential of media which is now ubiquitous and unavoidable as it has finally overcome its hurdle of limited consumer power. The problem with misuse of power by the media started when the aim of media changed from welfare maximization to profit maximization and the real quality of the media products lay unforgotten.

We are now exposed to the media more than ever before. It is therefore essential that we prepare ourselves for any misuse of power by our very own fourth estate because misuse and power are the flip sides of today’s society and we have to be able to counter the negative influences that are being propagated.

Therefore , it is extremely essential to be media literate in today’s world because as Prof Ulla Carlsson, International Clearning on Media and Children puts it, (The Yamuna Editor, Rijuta Lamba had the privilege of interviewing her online for our September 2008 issue) “The medialized symbolic environment we live in today largely shapes the choices, values and knowledge that determine our everyday lives. When discussing issues regarding democracy and development we often forget that media literate citizens are a precondition. An important prerequisite for the empowerment of citizens is a concerted effort to improve media and information literacy - skills that help to strengthen the critical abilities and communicative skills that enable the individual to use media and communication both as tools and as a way of articulating processes of development and social change, improving everyday lives and empowering people to influence their own lives. Media and information literacy is needed for all citizens, but is of decisive importance to the younger generation - in both their role as citizens and their participation in society, and their learning, cultural expression and personal fulfilment. A fundamental element of efforts to realize a media and information literate society is media education.”

- How do you think Media Literacy Education in your country/school could improve?

Media literacy education in our country is still a relatively new concept which reaches only to a few people in the urban areas and lesser in rural areas. The first issue to be addressed while thinking of media literacy is eradication of illiteracy in the country and a radical change in our education system so that it is more child friendly and has a constructivist approach . Once we address these issues, only then can we move forward and introduce media literacy in the curriculum of every school and into the lives of the people.

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Australia Youth Council

To me, Media Literacy means to know about media and the effects of it. Not just that, but also to know and understand how to use it. I know that there are many Media Literacy websites that explain what media is; how to use it and problems associated with it.

At Spinifex State College Mount Isa in rural Queensland, Australia, we have an arts program. This program includes Drama, Visual Art, Media, Junior Dance and Music. The main media literate subjects offered to us are Media and Film, Television and New Media (FTV+NM). I do the OP eligible course which is FTV+NM. It's an AWESOME subject! In class we learn about Film and the history of movies; how to write treatments, scripts, and business letters; how to create a production; types of media; Film Democratisation and the influences of media (including the future). I find it very interesting and I love learning about the media. It is, of course, my favourite subject! However although we have an arts program in Mount Isa, because we are a small rural mining town, more often than not people put 'The Arts and Media' second, or even last; prioritising science and maths for having a trade.

Yes, I do believe that Media Literacy is very important, after all society revolves around it like money.

If you don't know about media than how can we improve on it for the future generations? People need to also realise that media isn't just there to entertain you – everything has a message and often is the outlet for personal expressionism and commenting. The media is also very powerful in the 21st century and people should be informed of its powers of persuasion and bias.

Media Literacy Education could be improved in our school by having more programs, promotions and opportunities to explore Media in society, and the importance of it. Being a small rural mining town, it is very hard to promote The Arts and Media (including Media Literacy) because Xstrata, Ernest Henry and Rio Tinto are what brain-washes our town. Therefore to improve Media Literacy Education in this area maybe we could have some kind of joined art program in the mines, or that the mine funds for the community. We could have associations and more plays/shows.

Amy Kello – Year 12 Spinifex State College Mount Isa, Queensland



Slovakia Youth Council

- What do you know about Media Literacy?

In our group of five people there was just one person who knew something about it.

Media Literacy teach us how to distinguish the values of good and unadvisable programs for us and also what should we choose from the program menu.

- Do you have any Media Literacy Education in school and if so, what do you learn about?

There was only one person from our group who've had the Media Literacy Education at school – not as a single separate subject but as the occasional part of some other subjects only.

- Do you think Media Literacy Education is important, and if so, why?

The importance of Media Literacy Education is individual, dependent on the ability of each person to distinguish and to understand the suitability of the programs.

A lot of children and young people spend their free time mostly at the computer or watching TV channels without any selection. It means that for the majority of children and young people, the Media Literacy Education is very important.

- How do you think Media Literacy Education in your country/school could improve?

In our schools, it should be done through some attractive forms, not a boring one, just as the presentation of the teacher's opinion only. The theme is supposed to be interesting for young people.

Some practical presentations from various representatives of media professions, watching movies, debates with professionals and directors should be suitable and more appropriate than lecture forms. For students, a boring method of education would make the Media Literacy just another subject of a school ballast.