



Media Literacy Education: Should it be inclusive in the school curriculum

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Abstract:

Media literacy education aims at creating awareness among the individuals about the media to critically analyze, construct and access, create them to effectively encounter the media messages. This study is aimed at preparing a media literacy questionnaire to examine the level of media literacy among the adolescents females and males. Descriptive method using survey as a technique is employed in this empirical study. A selected from the schools of Jaipur metropolitan city limit and the rural are requested to complete the questionnaire. Mean SD, and "t" test an oval are used to analyze the data and to determine the significant differences with regard to the background variables. The rationale and the relevance behind the need for media literacy education in the school curriculum is being discussed.

Key words: media literacy education, inclusive, school curriculum introduction.

Today's globalised world triggered by the information and technological rapid growth, demands the pedagogical revision and inclusion, to be congruous with this dynamics growth. One such aspect that requires multi tasked, multi handed effort is the media literacy that will empower our young people to combat the media effectively and critically in this media saturated society. This study attempts to examine the level media literacy among the adolescents, and tries to bring out the rationale behind "why we need media literacy education as a part of school curriculum".

What is media literacy?

The widely accepted and comprehensive definition for media literacy is "it is the ability to access, evaluate and create messages in the variety of format either print or non print". The expanded definition for media literacy by the center for media literacy (cml), usa is as follows,

- Media literacy is a 21st century approach to education.
- It provides a framework to access, analyze, evaluate and create messages in a variety of forms- from print to video to the internet.
- Media literacy builds an understanding of the role of media in society as well as essential skills of inquiry and self-expression necessary for citizens of a democracy.

Why do we need "media literacy"?

Conventionally the influential factors on an individual are considered to be family, school, peer group and society but now in this present age media inflation, media influences cannot be undermined or ignored as media occupies enormous space and time in our lives. It teaches, informs, entertains, engages, persuades, shapes the personal beliefs and values and so on. A Media influence on every sphere has been relentlessly examined through numerous research works. The influential power of visual media is even higher than the print media due to its capability of creating unconscious stimuli. For instance, the thematic study by Paul Steven (2009) stated that the visual media has in it its realm social, political and consumerism component that is both influential and expansive and the study emphasizes the need for the educational institutions to provide a more relevant curricula and policy that reflects our post modern culture.

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Review of pertinent literature

Faith (Feb 2011) conducted a study on media literacy education for young children where the author's own concerns about definition of media literacy have given way to a focus on establishing clear goals for media literacy education. The national association for media literacy education (name) articulates these goals: "the purpose of media literacy education is to develop the "habits of inquiry" and "skills of expression" needed to be critical thinkers, effective communicators and active citizens in today world." No matter what the next new gadget is, students will need to be able to analyze the content to which it provides access, reflect on the meaning of that content for themselves and other, and evaluate its utility for accomplishing their own communication tasks. The essence of enquiry-based media literacy education is asking questions. Inquiry comes naturally to most children.

When media literacy education provides an outlet for young students curiosity, children embrace it enthusiastically, because, as the old advertising slogan goes, inquiring minds "want" to know. Guofang and Dianne (Oct 2008) conducted a study on roles of media and media literacy education in the lives of Chinese and American adolescents. Surveys were conducted among Chinese adolescents. Questionnaires about media uses were returned by Chinese 7th-12th graders; the results were compared with data drawn from American national studies on adolescents' media uses. It was found that adolescents in both countries spend a great deal of their time using a variety of media on a daily basis. The results describe the patterns of their media use, and indicate the importance of media literacy education, a 21st century skill. Moreover, media play similar important roles in Chinese and American adolescents' lives so does media literacy education.

Method

This study adopts Survey method where a Questionnaire consisting of 29 items covering all the aspects of media awareness ranging from critical enquiry to effective use of media and media communication and ethics was administered to personal interview as a tool with the heads of the institutions and the higher secondary teachers to know their attitude towards media literacy education.

Population for the study

The higher secondary school students belonging to various Schools in Chennai metropolitan city limit and rural area form the population for this study.

Sample for the study

A sample of (n=216; comprising of 57% females and 43% males) were selected by simple random technique from the following schools, government senior secondary school Sriganaganagar government secondary school hanumangarh. K.R secondary school sangaria.

Tool description

The tool used for this study is a self developed media literacy evaluation questionnaire, on the basis of the core concepts on which the media literacy rests. These constructs are the media's content, media's ethic, effective learning with the media and media imposed values and beliefs. The developed tool is validated by a panel of experts. The tool comprises of 29 statements to which the responses are sought in a five point scale rating from 1 to 5 (i.e.) agree, neutral and disagree. The summated responses are used to test the hypotheses for the significant differences between the means with regard to the back ground variables.

Data Analysis

Table 1
Significant Difference in Media Literacy between the females and males at the level of significance.05

Gender	Count	Mean	SD	T Value	Remark
male	93	71.37	9.49	1.61	NS
Female	122	73.50	9.87		

Table 2
Significant difference in media literacy between the and standard student at the level of significance. 05

standard	count	mean	sd	T' value	remark
XI	159	72.03	9.88	1.43	NS
XII	56	74.13	9.24		

Table 3
Significant Difference in Media Literacy between the ages 16 and 17 at the level of significance .05

Age	Count	Mean	SD	T Value	Remark
16	148	72.68	10.09	0.25	NS
17	67	72.34	9.00		

Table 4
Significant Difference in Media Literacy between Students of different type of schools at the level of significance .05

Type of School	Count	Mean	SD	T Value	Remark
Government	115	68.52	8.19	-7.24	S
Matriculation	100	77.24	9.32		

Table 5
Significant Difference in Media Literacy among the students with regard to their father's educational background at the level of significance .05

Dimension	Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	df	Variance estimate	Calculated F value	Remarks at 5% level
Media Literacy	Between	2514.46	2	838.15	9.94	S
	Within	17796.03	211	84.34		

Findings, results and interpretations

Form the responses to the individual items, the following deductions are made. The examination of the responses to the items 1 to 10 indicate that only 45% are aware of the media constructed reality and it is important to develop a structured framework for media literacy education to cope up with the bombarding media messages in their everyday life by deconstructing and decoding. The collective responses to the items 11 to 15 indicate that 86% of the total sample are unaware or unknown about the consumeristic motive of media, which follows that media literacy encompassing this awareness is necessarily essential as to empower these growing adults to make self directed rightful choices and not to fall prey to the purposeful conditioning by the media, promoting more generous attitudes and less stereotyping. Similarly, the examination of the responses to the items 21 to 29 on the media ethics and the media ethics and the media's use for learning indicates that a well structured frame of media literacy is important to educate the youth with that skill based abilities for effectual use of the media for their learning needs. As more and more young adults are getting acquainted with the social networking sites, like face book

, twitter, you tube etc. the media awareness becomes crucial and no longer a remote possibility to utilize the media components converged towards learning opportunities and handing safe confined to media's ethics.

Using the summated responses, the level of media literacy estimated for the sample through this media literacy questionnaire is 49%. Now investigating the summated responses, for the significant differences with regard to the back ground variables likely Gender, Standard and age it is found from the table 1, 2, 3 that there is no significant difference in the media literacy with respect to gender, standard and age. Consequentially it implies that neither the gender nor the growth attributes which are congenital contribute to the media literacy as it is skill based approach which is developed which is developed exercised and practiced.

Moreover the looking at the tables 4 and 5 it is found that there is significant difference in media literacy between the students of public (government) and private (matriculation) schools. In addition to this father's educational background which may be regarded as one mark of social background where in the differences with regard to be above may be attributed to the parental intervention on media viewing, expanded exposure and also the informal efforts taken by the private institutions on spreading media awareness like debates, discussions and counseling by their teachers despite the lack of media literacy education in the curriculum.

During the personal interview with 7 school personnel including the principals and teachers, it was learnt that though there is value education for higher secondary students, there was no module on media literacy. Invariably everyone felt the need for media literacy education in the curriculum as they could observe those tangible influences of media on the young people owing to their close day today interactions

with them. Their responses also indicated that teachers must be trained to be effective facilitators of such awareness equipped both technological and pedagogical.

Conclusion:

As rightly said by Alton Grizzle (2011) who works at UNESCO, “People are living in a different and 'new world' today, whether or not they have access to or are participating in the new and emerging information and knowledge societies. This new world requires that new forms of literacy be introduced into education systems”

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