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## SIGNIFICANCE OF MEDIA LITERACY EDUCATION IN INDIA

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### Abstract

*Children and youths are presented to the media like never before some time recently. A few studies bring up how media impacts the more youthful era. In this background, it is vital to help youngsters and teenagers create basic comprehension of the media. Media literacy education however yet to be formally presented at the school level in India can assume an essential part in creating basic intuition capacities in youngsters. The paper concentrates on media and its consequences for children and youths. Then it goes on to build a case for media literacy. At long last it goes ahead to examine a couple of activities in India.*

**Keywords:** Media, Literacy, Child, Youth, India

### INTRODUCTION:

In today's undeniably intervened society, media has turned into a fundamental part of the lives of children and teenagers. A lion's shares of them now have entry to different media and invest impressive measure of energy either staring at the TV or utilizing the Internet. This is genuine in urban India as well as in country territories where owning a TV set has turned into a typical wonder. To sum up, young people today are increasingly living in a multi device, multi platform and multichannel world. The rising media diet of the younger generation is reflected by Sigman (2005) who said, “Children now spend more time watching a television screen than they spend in school. At this very moment, the average 6-year old child will have already watched for nearly one full year of their lives. In fact, most of our children now literally have more eye contact with television characters than with their own parents.”

Earlier the UNESCO's Global Study on Media Violence (1999) brought up that the world's kids spend a normal of three hours every day before the screen. This was no less than 50 for each penny additional time went through with this medium than with some other out-of-school movement, including homework, being with family or companions, or perusing.

In the Indian context, the scope of the media has been expanding complex as of late. As indicated by the India's Readership Survey 2007 Round two, TV has come to around 55.1 for every penny of the homes which incorporates 31 for each penny having satellite associations. Thus 38.3 for every penny individuals have entry to print media; 19.7 for each penny of the general population listen to radio and 1.6 for each penny has entry to the Internet. With

this expanding media nearness, the children and the youths have an assortment of decision to browse particularly when TV is concerned.

The surprising ascent in presentation to media has impact on children and young people. In fact the influences and effects of media can now be felt globally, transgressing social and cultural boundaries. UNESCO (2008) point out, "Children and youth of schooling age are the groups that are most vulnerable to the forces of media influence, and regardless of their diversity in circumstance and surroundings, youth from all corners of the world identify with and share the models of conduct, aspirations and cultural consumption patterns that are evoked by the world media landscape. These groups also react to the notions and content put forward by the media with similar feeling and emotion."

Albert Bandura (1986) also brings up that in numerous parts of living; broadcast vicarious impact has ousted the supremacy of direct experience. Whether it thought examples, qualities and demeanours, or styles of conduct, life progressively models the media.

The effect of media in the conduct of children has been compactly put by Joshua Meyrowitz (1985), who wrote, "Parents could once easily mould their young children's upbringing by speaking and reading to children only about those things they wished their children to be exposed to, but today's parents must battle with thousands of competing images and ideas over which they have little direct control." There are diverse ways in which media influences individuals. These may be long term or short term. Potter (2005) lists five types of media effects. These include cognitive, attitudinal, emotional, physiological and behavioral. Cognitive effects are learning of information and retaining that information in either short-term or long term memory.

Amongst attitudinal impacts, media through information and pictures encourages either making of assessment, change in supposition or fortifies officially existing dispositions. This is extraordinarily utilized by publicists to offer their items. Over the long pull people who get presented to a specific topic ceaselessly begin to put stock in what is being depicted. Ross (2003) citing an investigation of youths watching films in which performing artists smoke noticed that 52 percent of young people took to smoking after they saw the on-screen characters.

Some of the immediate emotional effects include temporary reaction to a particular programme. Be that as it may, in the more drawn out run, media can really stunt passionate development and desensitize a person. Potter noticed that the long haul physiological impacts incorporate expanding resilience to certain encounters and move of cerebrum action. In this connection, Winn (2002) alert that TV guides youngsters into stimulation, keeps their brains working at a low level, and makes them detached acceptors of media messages. Likewise youth who routinely get presented to media violence have a tendency to wind up less touchy to animosity and brutality. The media present pictures that pull in and hold the consideration of people. They have a tendency to modify their conduct to take after what draws in them. The other transitory behavioral impact incorporates the inclination to impersonate. This is particularly valid if there should be an occurrence of kids. Truth is told kids as youthful as two have been found to mirror practices they find in the media.

With regards to long haul behavioural impacts, the UNESCO's Study on Media Violence call attention to that those youth who lean toward forceful media substance might likewise want to be required in a dangerous circumstance. In the milieu of the all pervasiveness of media in the lives of children and the consequent effects on them, it would be worthwhile to look at the increasing global media scenario.

Robert McCannon (2009) writes, "It is an era in which the world's most dominant organizations are the media cartel and their major advertisers. They drive relentlessly for profit, overwhelming busy parents, teachers, counselors, and

preachers. Daily, we create a historic new social experiment with the health of children and democracy. As mainstream media merge into ever larger global conglomerates, advertiser-approved content expands to the exclusion of less profitable, pro-social programming for children and quality news for citizens. The resulting union creates the most powerful institutions of our time, a combination of Big Media and Big Advertisers that controls society, economy and politics- the Wal-Martization of the world’s information, bigger than governments, loaded with billion-dollar ad budgets and manned by lobbyists galore.”

The situation is the same in India and other underdeveloped nations. While the huge worldwide aggregates have stakes in various media houses in India, those which remain indigenously run are a piece of huge corporate houses. With huge cash required in the running of media associations, benefit thought process has taken the middle stage and by and large the promoting division gets more power than the article office. Advertising, market research and media planning sets the scope and pace of media including in the case of ownership pattern and journalistic trends.’ (Bhaskara Rao et al. 2005). Overall public service media has lost ground to the business media. This has brought about publicizing; advancement and sponsorship relentlessly penetrating people in general circle of social and political level headed discussion.

As the contemporary media is moulded by the ‘motive of maximizing profit’ there is expanding commodification of youngsters and youth. Portraying the relationship between the young and the media today Buckingham (2001) says that ‘for the global media industries, the young are the key consumers, whose tastes and preferences are frequently seen to set the trend for consumers in general. “The formation and development of ‘youth culture’ – and more recently, of a global ‘children’s culture’- are impossible to separate from the commercial operations of the modern media. Both in public debate and in research, children are frequently seen to be most vulnerable to media influence; yet they are also seen to possess a confidence and expertise in their relations with media that are not available to the majority of adults. They are defined both as innocents in need of protection and as a competent, ‘media-wise generation,” Buckingham adds.

## **THE REACTIONS**

In the scenery of the rising worldwide media situation, various common society gatherings and media activists have been routinely taking up the requirement for expanded oversight and direction. In numerous occasions, a couple of media associations themselves have been discussing self-control. Large portions of these activists advance the reason for open administration media. A few associations have even been sorting out workshops for media persons to sharpen them on the best way to cover essential social issues like those including kids. In some cases Government organizations issue rules to the media on different projects.

Another imperative reaction to the developing media pattern is to urge the nationals to be media educated. Creating information and basic comprehension of the media and its working is critical to make the natives educated clients of media messages and not detached customers.

## **THE CASE FOR MEDIA LITERACY**

Robert McChesney (2002) says, “The problem we face with a hyper-commercial, profit obsessed media system is that it does a lousy job of producing citizens in a democracy. A solution is real media literacy education that doesn’t just make people more informed consumer of commercial fare, but makes them understand how and why the media system works- so they may be critics, citizens and active participants.”

Media is presently universal and unavoidable. Contending the case for media education, Silverstone (1999) says, ‘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.’ It is for this reason he suggests we need to study the media. The reason for media literacy is to enable people to control media programming. It is to demonstrate to individuals generally accepted methods to move control from the media to themselves. (Potter: 2005) The initial step, as per Potter, in moving control far from the media to the individual is for people to see how the media program them. This programming by the media ceaselessly happens in a two-stage cycle that rehashes again and again. One of these periods of the cycle is the obliging of decisions, and the second stage is the strengthening of experience.

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.’ ‘Children and adults need to be literate in all three of these symbolic systems, and this will require some reassessment of educational priorities. Such a reassessment might well result in an integrated approach to the teaching of language and communication.’

The media is the most powerful type of expression and henceforth it is vital that we understand the significance of media education in youth and youngsters. (Rijuta Lamba: 2008). Sharing her experience of being an understudy of media education, she says that while preparing in media helps understudies to be 'innovative makers of new media items', the preparation procedure battles distortion and control of data.

Media literacy either as an order or even as an idea is yet to saturate in India. Relatively few discourse or projects are planned to advance media education in the nation. In any case, the requirement for media literacy has been all around enunciated by a substantial number of children from various parts of India. In the scenery of no formal media literacy programs in India at the school level, , a study was conducted by child reporters of The Yamuna, the children’s newspaper published by Gandhi Smriti and Darshan Samiti on whether students (classes X-XII) felt on the need for introduction of media literacy in the school system. (The Yamuna, September 2008). Gandhi Smriti and Darshan Samiti is the national memorial of Mahatma Gandhi is based in New Delhi.

The study, though not a scientific one as the number of respondents varied, was conducted in Guwahati, Delhi, Belgaum (Karnataka), Solan (Himachal Pradesh) and Hyderabad. Arguing the need for introduction of media literacy at the school level, a large number of respondents pointed out that efficient media training can ‘actually lead to the formation of informed pressure groups to ensure balanced reporting by the media.’ A children’s pressure group can be advocates against media sensationalism, they argue. The students observed that media literacy will make children ‘aware of the media functioning and give them useful insights into the credibility of media reports’.

## **DEFINING MEDIA LITERACY**

Media literacy is informed, critical understanding of the mass media. It involves examining the techniques, technologies and institutions involved in media production. Through training in media literacy students acquire the necessary skills to critically analyze media messages.

Aufderheide (1992) gives a standard meaning of media literacy which says that it the capacity to get to, dissect, assess and convey messages. Progressively however media education is connected to advancement of dynamic citizenship. In this setting, Thoman and Jolls (2005) takes note of that media literacy fabricates a comprehension of the part of media in the public arena and in addition vital abilities of request and self-expression fundamental for residents of a vote based system.

Sonia Livingstone (2003) goes on to add, “Media literacy, like print literacy before it, should be recognized as a key means, even a right, by which citizens participate in society and by which the state regulates the manner and purpose of citizen’s participation.”

The right of citizens to media literacy as put forward by Livingstone has been reiterated by the UNESCO Conference on Media Education organized in Vienna in 1999. The conference stressed, “Media education is a part of the fundamental right of each and every citizen of any country in the world of freedom of expression and the right to information, and is a tool for building and maintaining democracy.” It also underscored that ‘media education should be aimed at empowering all citizens in every society and should ensure that people with special needs and those socially and economically disadvantaged have access to it.’

Silverblatt (2001) gives a more comprehensive definition of media literacy. According to him, media literacy emphasizes the following:

1. A critical thinking skill that allows audiences to develop independent judgements about media content.
2. An understanding of the process of mass communication.
3. The development of strategies with which to discuss and analyze media messages.
4. An awareness of the impact of media on the individual and society.
5. An awareness of media content as a text that provides insight into our contemporary culture and ourselves.
6. The cultivation of an enhanced enjoyment, understanding, and appreciation of media content.
7. In the case of media communicators, the ability to produce effective and responsible media messages.

The primary pre-essential of any media literacy preparing is access to media-from print to electronic to the computerized media. Showing aptitudes of media examination includes basic perusing and survey of different writings, understanding predispositions in media messages and business associations, target gathering of people and procedures of developing media messages. The capacity to break down typical writings lies at the centre of media proficiency. (Livingstone 2003). Buckingham (1998) outlines a six-fold scheme which teaches students to address questions of media agency (communicative purpose, institutional and production context, political economy); media categories (genres, forms, channels); media technologies (production process, access and use); media languages (codes and conventions); media audiences (modes of address, reception and consumption); and media representation (relation between text and reality).

Having a good sense of opinion is really crucial. Just having access to the media or developing analytical skill is not enough. At a time when there is information explosion and abundance of services, it is important for users of media to be able to distinguish biased or exploitative sources and also able to select intelligently from a bouquet of choices. In this context, evaluation is crucial to media literacy.

The fourth component of media literacy is termed as content creation or production of a media product. By taking part in content creation, students are exposed to the processes involved in the construction of media messages and the intricacies involved.

McCannon (2009) lists five traditionally accepted ‘basic principles’ of media literacy:

1. Media messages are constructed.
2. Messages are representations of reality with embedded values and points of view.
3. Each form of media uses a unique set of rules to construct messages.
4. Individuals interpret media messages and create their own meaning based on personal experience.
5. Media are driven by profit within economic and political contexts.

## **MEDIA LITERACY IN INDIA**

The all-encompassing point of media literacy '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)

In the above setting and in the light of the standard definition set forward by Aufderheide, it is advantageous to look at if media literacy training and in what structure is sought after in India. It can be securely said that media proficiency is still to be presented in either formal or non-formal instructive set-up in India. One of soonest activities to help children to create basic comprehension of the media has been the endeavours of Abhivyakti-Media for Development, a Nashik-based intentional association. The project utilizes a participatory procedure to reinforce youth reaction towards the media.

Started in 1995, Abhivyakti's system is being executed in 11 schools of Nashik, Maharashtra. A systemic documentation of youngsters' reaction to media is kept up. Pre and post tests are led to screen and assess the effect of the sessions on media training. The week by week sessions in schools depends on a media syllabus created by Abhivyakti. The media syllabus in the school is for understudies of VI, VII and VIII. Additionally as a feature of this system, Abhivyakti has begun Bal Chitrapat Udayan (Children's Film Park) and components kids' movies consistently. The project, in any case, doesn't give much accentuation to development of media messages. Plus, the compass of the project is constrained to understudies of the schools where it is being actualized.

Despite the fact that not formally presented as a subject in the educational system in India, the National Council of Educational Research and Training have included media in a few school course readings. The new part broad communications and correspondence incorporated into the social and political life for class VII understudies examinations how media sets motivation and how showcase has gotten to be fundamental to its working. The part has secured all types of mass correspondence including TV, radio, movies and daily paper and the Internet. Other than zones like business sector, innovation and media's part in the public arena has been talked about in the section. The area on how media sets plan likewise contains contextual investigations to help understudies comprehend the ideas and activities to fundamentally dissect reporting by daily papers. There is a likewise a section on promoting which clarifies the idea of publicizing alongside different types of promoting and how it controls us into purchasing things we needn't bother with. Notwithstanding this media have been incorporated broadly in all the subjects in type of exercises.

Another activity to advance media literacy education is the Gandhi Media Literacy program. The activity was begun by Gandhi Smriti and Darshan Samiti as a component of the centennial year of Indian Opinion in 2003. Mahatma Gandhi had begun the diary begun in South Africa in 1903. With the adage as what Gandhi had written in his Autobiography, 'Reporting is for administration', the project goes for creating basic comprehension of the media. It plans to prepare understudies to deconstruct media messages furthermore include them during the time spent substance creation. The Samiti distributes a youngsters' daily paper, The Yamuna furthermore once in a while train understudies to create radio projects. Despite the fact that the system has been executed in a few sections of the nation, there is no solid module or created markers of the preparation procedure. Additionally, the project doesn't prepare understudies to create assessment aptitudes. Another significant issue has been the association of a set number of coaches to confer aptitudes in media education. Despite the fact that the system has contacted a predetermined number of people and there are difficulties to extension, numerous have profited from the preparation program.

The system is being executed in both urban zones of the nation like New Delhi, Solan (Himachal Pradesh) and provincial regions like Bettiah, Champaran. While the system has possessed the capacity to enable numerous



understudies and advance dynamic citizenship; others have possessed the capacity to create extensions of correspondence with kindred understudies and sharpen them on media and other social issues.

A few learners in Champaran, Bihar now even try to challenge the nearby Panchayat races. Ratna Kumari, a member from Kumarbagh Brindavan Ashram, Bettiah, Champaran is sincere when she says that it was not overnight that she considered challenging the nearby races. "Prior we would scarcely read the daily paper or listen to the radio. As there is still no power in our town, TV is beyond the field of play. Be that as it may, after we got included in the projects and exercises of Gandhi Smriti particularly the media preparing program, we began perusing the daily paper basically. We had meagre interests in what was going ahead around us, however now we immovably trust that we have to realize a change. We understand how the individuals who are running the framework are taking needy individuals for a ride. In the event that we youngsters keep on being aloof, the circumstance will drop further. There will be no minds debasement and poor organization." Her perspective on the need of youth to work to achieve a change is shared by a greater part of different young ladies who have been a piece of the media literacy program.

Then there are various associations which bestow preparing to understudies in media generation. While the point is not to create basic systematic aptitudes to deconstruct media messages, the push is to give preparing in creating media items. Case in point, NalandaWay Foundation, Chennai, Tamil Nadu has started 'Eastside Story' venture which is proposed to make a system of youngsters' group in the ages 12 to 18 to learn and do ventures in news coverage, theater, performing expressions and media. (Dominguez et. al. 2007) So far 13 short movies, 27 radio creations, one online gateway and a music collection with nine tunes have been delivered. A portion of the effect of the task incorporates moms dismissing early relational unions for their little girls; schools guaranteeing sheltered and clean toilets for their understudies; tabloid-sized blurbs, Tappa Writta in Krishnagiri area of Tamil Nadu have made better mindfulness about issues that influence their neighbourhood.

#### **CONCLUSION:**

An essential part of media literacy education is to incorporate basic intuition into the school educational modules utilizing day by day life issues of youngsters and youth as they are displayed in the media. It is additionally an approach to create innovative relational abilities for the 21st century.

Actually media literacy training isn't simply to help youth comprehend the media better. It is truly to help them comprehend society better; subsequent to the media is an essential course to social association. As it is perpetually genuine that the media let us know about our own lives and those of removed others, adding to societies, values and types of social support, it is additionally always genuine that kids must draw in with media basically. (Sonia Livingstone in a meeting with Rijuta Lamba, The Yamuna, October 2008).

While the activity to advance media proficiency preparing ought to not just originate from neighbourhood schools, intentional associations and governments, there should be interface between educators, professionals of media proficiency and guardians to guarantee its more prominent effect. Likewise there is have to include sharpened writers in the process so understudies are consistently presented to how standard media capacities.

The media proficiency programs in India should be investigated basically as far as their effort and effect. The lessons learnt from every one of these activities should be reported. Besides efforts needs to be made to develop appropriate curriculum that would suit the needs of both urban and rural children.

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