

Chapter 66

Media Literacy Organizations

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ABSTRACT

Media Literacy is reckoned as an integral part of learning innovations in modern day technology enabled learning domains. In order to facilitate the information handling and interaction procedures, essence of media literacy cannot be underestimated. Many Organizations and institutions in different setups play a significant role in inculcating media literacy among the citizens of a nation. These organizations are carrying out initiatives for facilitating critical thinking, awareness about different media setups to different stakeholders in both real and virtual environments. They provide user-friendly tools for facilitating educators, researchers, policy makers, young media makers, and students to find the information they are looking for in a timely and organized manner. This chapter attempts to explore, identify and analyze various such organizations that facilitate media literacy in different settings.

INTRODUCTION

Media education is a quest for meaning. Much of the value of a quest lies in the search itself as well as in the achievement of the goal. — Chris Worsnop

The current digital age witnesses a paradigm shift in information and communication technology (ICT) giving rise to an innovative practice of literacy termed as computer literacy or web literacy (Livingstone, 2004). According to Kellner and Share (as cited in Gainer, 2010), most of the information is obtained from highly fashioned audio visuals and media layouts. People today usually prefer to retrieve electronic

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information over the traditional print sources. Keeping the shift in mind, it is just inadequate to educate students to read and write only with letters and numbers. Students and citizens need to be well aware about the growing technologies and media so that they can effectively access, scrutinize, evaluate and create media messages of all kinds. It has also become equally important for an individual to possess the necessary skills to handle different types of media available (Media Literacy Project, 2014). Media literacy as a discipline includes the critical thinking skills and offers a variety of methods and styles for the efficient scrutiny of media messages enclosed in any media presentation. It is defined by Dutch Culture Council (2005) as “the whole of knowledge, skills and attitudes that allow citizens to deal with a complex, changing and mediated world in a conscious and critical manner. It is the ability to use media in an active and creative manner, aimed at social participation”. Media literacy enables students to develop a critical understanding of the nature of mass media, the tools used by them, and the impact of these tools. More specifically, it is education helps students to know how the media work, how they can produce meaning to the media and how they can organize and construct. Media literacy also aims to provide students with the skills to create new media products.

The prime objective of media literacy is to address the indiscriminate use of the media. In order to become media literate, users ought to take responsibility to know the programming they use. It does not only involve practical skills, but it also involves media awareness from practice, insights in the mechanisms of commercial communication and the media industry, critical information and strategic skills, and sensible and safe use of media. At present, utmost information is received through the complex combination of text, pictures, and sounds. Media literate individuals are better able to comprehend the complex messages from the digital media. Many educators are of the view that media literacy is an operative and engaging way to apply critical thinking skills to an inclusive range of concerns. To strengthen the public interest to improve socio-political conditions, people need to be media literates. Media literacy empowers people to participate actively in open discussions and deliberations to affect change, and to fulfil their rights and obligations (Martinsson, 2009). It brings the world into the classroom, giving proximity and applicability to traditional subjects such as History, Politics, Health, Psychology and the Creative Arts, making it as a perfect bond for subject amalgamation and interdisciplinary studies. It also embodies and furthers current pedagogies, which stresses student-centered learning, the acknowledgement of multiple intelligences, and the investigation and management – rather than just the simple storage – of information. Media create a mutual environment and hence acts as catalysts for smooth learning. The literacy further boosts users to use multimedia tools innovatively, a strategy that contributes to “understanding by doing” and prepares them for a workforce that progressively demands the use of stylish forms of communication (Valerie, 2014). The concept of Media literacy is widening and becoming more complex as new media are being developed. This means that media literacy is not mere easy task to master the skills and become literate all at once, but it is a part of lifelong learning. Hence, media literacy is of primary significance for all age categories, although it is certainly true that “learn young, learn fair” applies as always. Media literacy as stated by Thoman (1995) comprises of three stages. First stage is the stage of becoming conscious of how much media individuals are learning on daily basis. In the second stage, unique skills required for critical viewing, analysing and questioning what is in media are identified. And in the last stage an individual becomes aware about who produces media, their purpose and media advantages and disadvantages.

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