A STUDY ON THE MEDIA LITERATE STATE OF THE YOUTHS OF MANIPUR

Dr RK Lilapati Devi

Asst. Professor, Dept. Of Mass Communication, Manipur University

Abstract: This scholarly undertaking aims to bring light the state of affairs of people's media competency in terms of hands on practical, criticism and consumption of media text—cognition, emotion, aesthetics, ideological and philosophical. The knowledge structures; media effects, media content, media industries, real world and the self are explored using a varied questions. One thousand and five hundred youths are surveyed from various districts of Manipur. The evaluation continuum is divided into categories viz. Highly media literate, moderately media literate, lowly media literate. Based on the evaluations of around thirty five questions based on media literacy aspects of cognition, philosophy, aesthetics and hands on knowledge, we come to the conclusion that Males, females and other genders are moderately media literate.

Introduction: Media literacy is a set of perspectives that we actively use to expose ourselves to the media to interpret the meaning of the messages we encounter. They are knowledge structures which are built upon our skills. These skills are like tools and with raw materials like information from media and real world, we build our knowledge structures. A media literate person when actively use media, he is aware of the messages and are consciously interacting with them. Media literacy is a multi dimensional concept with many interesting facets which needs to be viewed from different perspectives to appreciate media. It runs in continuum. People are positioned along continuum based on the strength of their overall perspective on media. The strength of a person's perspective is based on the quality of knowledge structures. And the quality of knowledge structures is based on the level of a person's skill and experiences. People operating at lower levels of media literacy have weak and limited perspectives on media. They have smaller, more superficial, and less organized structures, which provide an inadequate perspective to use in interpreting the meaning of a media message.

In 1992, the "National Leadership Conference on Media Literacy" convention attempted to construct a single definition of media literacy as "the ability to access, analyze, evaluate and communicate messages in a variety of forms"(Aufderheide, 1993). Potter (2004, 2010) provides a theoretical scheme based on a set of seven specific skills (analysis, evaluation, grouping, induction, deduction, synthesis, and abstraction) and five sets of knowledge structures: media effects, media content, media industries, real world, and the self. Many scholars opined that objective of media literacy is to be about empowerment and emancipation of citizens. Media literacy is not an exclusive domain rather it is a continuum as opined by Potter. A person's quality of knowledge structure has a bearing on this continuum. This continuum is the index of an individual's media competency towards practical skill as well as media criticism: ideological, philosophical and aesthetics. Assessing media literacy largely examines on a

person's knowledge structure of four domains viz: cognition, emotion, aesthetics, moral and hands- on practical skill.

The cognitive domain refers to factual information: dates, names, definition etc. The emotional domain refers to feelings such as love, anger, hate, happiness, frustration. Some people have very little ability to experience emotion during exposure to media, whereas others are very sensitive to cues to generate feelings, fera, hate, lust and other strong emotions. Crafting messages about these emotions require more production skill from writers, directors, singers, musicians, composers and other artists. The aesthetic domain contains information on how to produce messages. This information gives us the basis for making judgements about who are great writers, photographers, actors, dancers, choreographers, singers, musicians, composers, directors and other kinds of artists. It helps us make judgements about other products of creative craftsmanship, such as editing, lighting, set designing, costuming, sound recording, layout and so forth.

Literature Review: In this thick multimedia environment, importance of media literacy cannot be over emphasised. Cultural studies and critical pedagogy have begun to teach us to recognize the ubiquity of media culture in contemporary society, the growing trends toward multicultural education, and the need for media literacy that addresses the issue of multicultural and social difference. There is expanding recognition that media representations help construct our images and understanding of the world and that education must meet the dual challenges of teaching media literacy in a multicultural society and sensitising students and the public to the inequities and injustices of a society based on gender, race, and class inequalities and discrimination. Recent critical studies see the role of mainstream media in exacerbating or diminishing these inequalities and the ways that media education and the production of alternative media can help create a healthy multiculturalism of diversity and more robust democracy. They confront some of the most serious difficulties and problems that currently faced by educators and citizens. Feminist theory and standpoint epistemologies provide major contributions to the field of critical media literacy. For example, combined cultural and feminist studies allow for an "epistemological standpoint which acknowledges difference(s) of identity, the cultural constructedness of 'Theory', 'History', and 'Truth', and the cultural dynamics of our own labor as academic researchers and teachers". It was linked a feminist political commitment to transformation with recognition of media misrepresentation and stereotyping. This required unveiling the political and social construction of knowledge, as well as addressing principles of equity and social justice related to representation. Through the inclusion of some groups and exclusion of others, representations benefit dominant and positively represented groups and disadvantage marginalized and subordinate ones. Research has suggested that these youth may draw heavily from mainstream culture as it is depicted in the media (e.g., television, movies, magazines, advertisements) in their efforts to assimilate and belong and as they construct their identities in a new cultural and linguistic context (Feliciano, 2006, cited in Brzoska, 2009).

The so-called "Net Generation" youth, their engagement with social issues and knowledge of civic literacy begins with informal experiences around participatory media (Jenkins, 2006). Examples of such participatory media include online publishing environments such as blogs, wikis, fiction-writing sites, online journals (Blogger, Wikipedia, Fictionpress, Livejournal), video- and file-sharing sites (YouTube), as well as social networking sites (Facebook, Myspace). In these spaces, youth engage in multiple forms of self-expression that often involve taking on, representing, and defending specific values and perspectives. Hence it is quite crucial that

these youths have a standard level of media literacy so that they can approve or challenge the message.

Method:

Study Design: one thousand and five hundred youths are randomly selected from all districts of Manipur, six hill districts and ten hill districts. As per Census 2011, Manipur, a north eastern state of India has population of 28.56 Lakhs Eight hundred and ninety five males , five hundred and ninety six females and nine trans genders constitute this sample. Age group is between eighteen and thirty five. Variables like marital status, employment status and educational qualifications are included.

Questionnaire is distributed among the youths. Analysis is based on the following constructs bearing the broader literacy spectrum of cognition, aesthetics, philosophy and hands on knowledge. Each construct is designated into numerals for the convenience of the study viz: identification of the key plot in a movie or TV Serial(1), identification of type of character in a movie or TV serial(2),   identification of theme of a movie or TV serial(3), classification of genre of movie or TV serial(4), key points of information in the newspaper(5),   balance way of reporting a news(6), mode of presentation of the same story from two or more newspapers(7), bias approach towards political party or political figure(8), acceptance of stereotypical image or character of media portrayals of gender/ethnicity/ profession(9), media stereotypes (10), state of media exposure (11), attention on media exposure (12), protection from a myriad of media text(13),   influence of media in socialization activity(14), information fatigue(15), different advertising approaches(16), Knowledge of various brand names and brand ambassadors (17), enjoyability of watching ads (18), ability to analyse creativity of ads.(19), knowledge of ethical advertising (20), Reason for subscription of newspapers (21), literacy of ad content(22), knowledge of criticism of news(23), knowledge of kinds of news(soft news/ hard news..)(24), awareness of the concept of advertorials (25), awareness of concept of fake news(26),   knowledge of media personalities/ media industries(27),   knowledge of public relations (28), knowledge of advertising world (29), knowledge of cinematic art (30), knowledge of handling DSLR camera (31),   usage of fb(uploading photo/ updating status etc.)(32), acceptability of the idea that cinema influences the culture of a society (33), level of hands on skill on film editing/ photo editing/ audio editing(34), tendency to control the way of thinking out of exposure of media(35).

Analysis:

Level of Continuum:

a) Maximum number of Males / Females / Others responding to " to a large extent" will be counted as highly literate, "to some extent" as moderate and responding to "not at all" and "not interested to identify" as being low literate.
The questions (continuum of literacy constructs) viz. 1, 2, 3, 4,5,9,19, 20, 23,24,25, 26, 31, 35 were given options : to some extent (Moderate), to a large extent (High), not at all, and not interested to identify (Low).

b) Maximum number of Males/ Females/ Others responding to option "Yes" are counted as High, to some extent as "Moderate" and to "No" and :not interested /Can't say3" will be counted as Low. Questions pertaining to these continuum are constructs contained in questions: 6,7,8,10,16,18,22,31,33

c) Maximum number of Males/Females/Others responding to the perception   level high are counted as "High", Moderate as Moderate, Low as Low   very frequently as high,

sometimes as moderate and never as low. Questions pertaining to these continuum are constructs contained in questions: 11,12,13,14,15,1617,27, 28,29,30,32

Outcome:

1.	Mod	Low	High
2.	Mod	Mod	High
3.	Mod	Mod	High
4.	Mod	Mod	High
5	Mod	Mod	Mod
9	Mod	Mod	Mod
19.	Mod	Mod	Mod
20.	Mod	Mod	High
21	Mod	Mod	Mod
23.	Mod	Mod	Mod
24.	Mod	Mod	Mod
25.	Mod	Mod	High
26.	Mod	Mod	Mod
31	Mod	Mod	Mod
35.	Mod	Mod	Mod

6	High	High	High
7.	Low	Low	Low
8.	High	Low	Low
10.	Low	Low	High
11.	Mod	Mod	Mod
12	Mod	Mod	Mod
13.	Low	Low	Low
14.	High	High	Low
15.	High	Low	High
16.	High	High	Low
17.	Mod	Mod	Mod
18.	Mod	Mod	Mod
19.	Mod	Mod	Mod
22.	High	High	High
27.	Mod	Mod	Mod
28.	Mod	Mod	Mod
29.	Mod	Mod	Mod
30.	Mod	Mod	High
33.	High	High	High

Males		Females		Others	
Mod (f) =25		Mod (f)= 25		Mod (f)= 18	
High (f) = 7	Total : 35	High (f) = 5	Total : 35	High (f)=12	Total : 35
Low (f) = 3		Low (F)= 5		Low (f)= 5	

In the analysis of the continuum of the responses to the thirty five constructs of the media literacy, we counted the highest frequency of the continuum among males, females and other

sex. It is found finally that Male youths turn out moderately media literate, females and other sex also moderately media literate.

Discussion and Conclusion: Imparting media literacy is the need of the hour in the present day society. We are bombarded with a myriad of media messages every second. Unless the audiences are media literate to a certain level, it is highly likely that they would be misled, they will be tuned to a half baked information world. It has always been an important concept that a highly media literate person enables to one   to be a better citizen in society. He will not act deaf and dumb in his responses to many actions of media producers. There are other agents who can effect the process like the role of media educators in effecting these values to the society. Questions like to what extent is an individual "media literate" if she just appreciates the aesthetics of a message without going further with it bear another aspect of deeper , critical media literacy apart from having a sound awareness of the happenings around him. This calls for a specific kind of evaluation.

The discourse we conducted are pieces of information to check the level of awareness, skills and deeper ability of handling media messages in terms of cognition, aesthetics and so on. The knowledge structure of youths are given a number of levels upon which they are suited for. The overall evaluation is to bring about the broader goal of effectuating media literacy in the State. The result of the finding can facilitate government in imparting new policy programs that would serve to foster a good level of media literacy.

Limitation of the study: it was a rigorous study analyzing the various aspects of media literacy on youths of Manipur state. Data were collected from all the districts of the state. Questions were framed on thirty five constructs of various aspects of media literacy. There were thirty five tables altogether. Due to its huge volume, the data was compressed to other derivatives counting on only audience, bearing highest percentage on the response. Tables are not shown here.

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