

CORRECT USE OF MEDIA LITERACY IN EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

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Annotation: This article analyzes the issues of developing and properly utilizing media literacy in the process of school education. Media literacy is considered a crucial factor in fostering students' abilities for critical analysis of information, distinguishing reliable sources, independent thinking, and the development of digital culture. The paper provides practical recommendations for cultivating a culture of responsible media use among school students, protecting them from the influence of harmful information, and enhancing teachers' competence in this area. The article also highlights effective methods of using digital technologies in classroom activities, approaches to analyzing media content, and criteria for assessing students' media literacy skills.

Keywords: media literacy, school education, information culture, student, digital technology, critical thinking, information security.

Introduction

Media literacy refers to a set of knowledge and skills that enable individuals to analyze, evaluate, and create media content in various forms. It allows students to identify propaganda, censorship, manipulation, and biased representations within mass media; to assess the credibility of information sources; and to understand the ownership and financial background of media messages. In other words, media literacy is the ability to apply critical thinking to the process of interpreting messages and symbols transmitted through the media.

Today, mass media are among the most influential factors shaping the lives of young people. Television, the Internet, social networks, video games, and other media platforms directly affect children's worldview and value system. Therefore, developing media literacy from an early age within the school education process is of crucial importance. Through the cultivation of media literacy skills, students gain the ability to critically analyze, evaluate, and create independent media products. The process of developing media literacy is known as **media education**. It helps students properly interpret mass media, analyze their content, and consume information responsibly. Through media education, learners acquire information culture and the ability to consciously use and evaluate media sources. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) has recognized media education as a key priority for cultural and educational development in the 21st century. The organization emphasizes media literacy as a means of enhancing individuals' critical thinking, information evaluation, and decision-making abilities, while promoting the capacity-building of policymakers, teachers, journalists, and youth organizations in this field. One of the earliest organizations devoted to the study and promotion of media literacy is the National Telemedia Council (NTC), established in the state of Wisconsin, USA. For more than 50 years, the organization has published the scholarly journal *Telemedium*, actively disseminating ideas related to media literacy. Today, media literacy is being widely studied and integrated into educational systems around the world. In Asian countries, the introduction of media literacy into education has followed a somewhat different trajectory compared to Western nations. Since the 1990s, significant progress has been observed in the field of media education across East Asia, and various programs dedicated to media literacy are currently being implemented throughout the Asia-Pacific region. In recent

years, the sharp increase in the flow of information and the expansion of digital technologies have led to a rise in content that may negatively affect human consciousness alongside beneficial information. This situation has intensified the need to develop media literacy, especially among students and young people. Traditionally, media literacy was viewed merely as the ability to read and analyze texts; however, today it encompasses understanding why, by whom, and for what purpose information is created.

The Main Part

At the summit held in Samarkand, the issue of media literacy was extensively discussed, and a number of key tasks and proposals were identified in this area. President Shavkat Mirziyoyev proposed that UNESCO develop a comprehensive strategy for the advancement of media and information literacy. This strategic initiative is intended to protect young people from manipulation and disinformation, as well as to promote critical evaluation of information and responsible engagement with media. Additionally, within the framework of the summit, it was proposed to organize a cultural content festival for children and youth. This initiative aims to foster creative media production among young people, expand opportunities for dialogue, and cultivate responsible approaches to the selection and use of information sources. Furthermore, strengthening media literacy enables participants to acquire skills in verifying sources, understanding the purpose of information, and recognizing the potential for manipulation. This is particularly significant as a means of combating biased information and disinformation. UNESCO's 43rd session official documents emphasized that media literacy is essential for promoting universal human values, tolerance, mutual understanding, and solidarity. This initiative is especially important in the context of global disinformation and cultural conflicts. Moreover, President Mirziyoyev stressed that media literacy serves as an effective tool for protecting young people from manipulation and ensuring social justice and the safeguarding of public opinion in the information space. In addition, at UNESCO's 43rd session, it was planned to develop a "Media & Information Literacy" (MIL) training program for educators. This program is intended to facilitate the effective implementation of media literacy in schools and educational institutions and to foster critical thinking skills among the younger generation. Thus, the summit held in Samarkand represents a significant step forward in advancing media literacy and promoting responsible engagement within the global information environment.

School students are exposed daily to massive amounts of information from diverse sources — the Internet, social media, television, advertisements, and video games. Therefore, teaching them to critically analyze information and verify its credibility has become one of the primary tasks of the education system. A media-literate student asks questions such as: "Who benefits from this message?", "Do I need this information?", and "For what purpose was it created?". This approach fosters independent thinking and conscious decision-making. The main goal of media literacy is to shape students into active members of a democratic and lawful society, developing their ability to analyze, select, and critically respond to information. The International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences defines media literacy as the ability to analyze, create, and evaluate media products with a sense of civic responsibility. Professor S. Firestone of the Royal University of London views media literacy as a movement that encourages individuals to understand the cultural significance of audiovisual and textual messages. British political scientist R. Kibey interprets media literacy as the capacity to transmit, analyze, and assess information. According to M. Gutierrez, media literacy encompasses the ability to use multimedia tools, analyze them, and evaluate new information technologies.

In the modern era, manipulative information disseminated through the Internet and digital platforms has become a factor threatening national security. As noted by the renowned Indian photojournalist **Pabak Sarkar**, the first step toward media literacy is the ability to ask the right questions. Hence, teaching school students to approach any type of information critically is the most effective means of ensuring their information security. In the contemporary world, media — including mass communication channels, cinema, theater, various branches of art, cultural sources, and all types of information transmitted via the Internet — exerts a direct influence on human consciousness and worldview. Therefore, developing media literacy within the school education system enables students to correctly perceive information, analyze it critically, and accurately evaluate its content.

The increasing interest in media education, media literacy, media criticism, and media studies reflects the growing need of modern society to participate actively in the global information space. The primary aim of these processes is to understand the economic, political, moral, and cultural factors involved in the creation and dissemination of information, to analyze their essence, and to evaluate their impact on human consciousness. Fostering media literacy among school students not only enhances their ability to work effectively with information but also cultivates independent thinking, critical analysis, and social responsibility. In this sense, media literacy has become an integral component of today's educational system.

Conclusion

The development of media literacy in school education is increasingly recognized as an essential element of the modern learning process. In the current era of rapid information technology advancement, fostering students' ability to use media tools consciously and responsibly is a pressing educational priority. Media literacy empowers students not only to receive information but also to analyze, evaluate, use it purposefully, and create their own media products. Research findings demonstrate that media literacy plays a significant role in broadening students' intellectual outlook, enhancing their critical thinking, and helping them adopt an objective approach toward various sources of information. Moreover, it serves as an effective safeguard against information attacks, fake news, manipulative influences, and harmful online content. Establishing an effective media literacy framework in school education involves improving teachers' media competence, integrating modern technologies into the learning process, and teaching students to analyze and interpret media content critically.

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