Media Literacy as a basic life Skill for Modern World

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Abstract: *Science has brought changes in every aspect of human life. It has facilitated medical, engineering, constructional developments and education is no exception to it. With the advancements in educational technology, media has entered in educational settings. Audio-visual aids, multimedia approach, mass communication, virtual education all are outcomes of it. Different types of media provide bulk of information. All the information we fatch from media is not always authentic and truthful and if grasped with evaluation, it can bring lots of adverse effects. The concept of media literacy has germinated from the idea of enabling children in analysis and evaluation of media messages so that they can judge the truthfulness of the message along with its hidden aim and goals. Present paper is an attempt to throw light upon media literacy education, its aims, benefits, skills and role of teacher.*

Key Words: *Media, Media literacy education, life skill, role of teacher.*

1. INTRODUCTION:

Modern time is a fast changing technology based era that provides multifaceted development opportunities and bears multi dimensional effects on human being. Today technology has touched each and every aspect of human life like social, economical, moral, spiritual and so on. Education is no exception of it. Education itself is a life changing process that directs an individual on the path of development by inculcating essential skills and virtues. It promotes personal growth that leads to social and national development.

In past few decades efforts has been made to make learning environment more congenial. Every student posses different abilities and skills and learn through different learning styles i.e. auditory, visual and kensythesis. Different learning styles and concept of involvement of sense organs on one hand and development of different media germinated the seed of technology based education. Audio-visual aids and teaching machines were the first tryouts in this field which subsequently progressed towards e-learning, multi- media approach and virtual education. All these approaches are based on different media like newspaper, magazines, internet, television, digital boards and so on.

Media donates a medium. This medium can be text (books, newspapers), visual (T.V., internet) or auditory (radio). These media have not only made place in educational process but also have become an integral part of our day to day life. Our life is majorly governed by the information, we collect from different media. Media convey various massages which have both positive and negative effect on us and especially on child's mind.

Internet has flooded our lives with information but somewhere knowledge is missing. As Jhon Naisbitt (1982) remarks, "we are drawing in information but starved for knowledge". This is a matter of great concern and demands thoughtful deliberation.

2. MEDIA LITERACY EDUCATION:

Excess information, limitless messages and their positive and negative effects has worked in the development of a new branch of learning- Media Literacy Education. It has become essential to make children aware of different types of media messages and to create essential skill for it. Media literacy is the ability to access, analyze, evaluate and create media. (www.medialitracyproject.Org). In an information technology driven era, it is quite easy to get information but on the other hand it is quite skilled job to find suitable information which is authentic, un-biased and purposeful. In nutshell, accessing true and authentic information is not an easy task to perform. Media literacy helps students to access right media for right information. A media literate person develops the ability to analyze a media message critically. Analysis of different aspects compounds of message helps in identifying its underlying motive and hidden goals. Third important aspect of media literacy is- evaluating a message. Media literacy helps children critique media representation, teaching them to distinguish between reality and fantasy as they compare media violence, media heroes and media role models and real life roles and expectations (Canada center of digital and media literacy). Evaluation involves judgment, and judgment is always based on knowledge and insight about what media message is showing and what is its hidden aim. Media literacy helps in distinguishing between virtual and real world.
Media literacy also makes children capable of creating a message. Knowledge and deep understanding and critical thinking work as foundation for creation.

3. IMPORTANCE:

Media literacy education helps a person to develop an insight of virtual and real world. As Potter (2004) defines Media literacy as "the set of prospective from which we expose ourselves to the media and interpret the meaning of the message we encounter". Media literacy generates right prospective and approach towards different media and more importantly it gives idea to understand the underlying meaning of the message being delivered. There are numerous benefits of Media literacy education. In classroom situation it brings the world of media to students and connects learning with real life. Teacher creates a helpful and supportive environment in which students learn to analyse and create. By focusing on process skills rather than content knowledge students gain the ability to analyse any message in any media.(www.medialit.org) it is evident that media literacy mainly focuses upon skill development: ability to understand and analyse, synthesis and evaluate.

Media literacy helps to recognize misinformation and bias hidden in message which in turn removes many dilemmas, taboos and misconceptions at personal, social and cultural levels. Merten (2010) analysed a large subset of academic literature on media literacy education. He argues that knowledge and skill about media affects culture, sex, alcohol consumption, view towards females, change the perception of students positively and reduce the adverse effect of media. Media messages are often quite attractive so the capture the attention and interest of audience very easily. The glorify things that are physically, morally or socially not right but they convey it in a very positive way. Children and adults absorb the information very easily. Media literacy education can bring positive behavioral changes by promoting the ability to evaluate. Kupermidth and Scull (2012) performed a study and showed a significant reduction in the behavioral intention for alcohol and tobacco abuse in students who participated in media literacy programme.

Media content are highly purposeful and attack on the psychology of people. The way they convince for the product or information, are highly effective. Wrong information on social media can lead to chaos, rage and riots. Negative news can create a large chine of rumors resulting into hatred and violence. Austin et al (2006) suggests that media literacy training increases the individual's doubt about media content. This increased doubt make person active to find the hidden truth, aim and consequences of a particular message.

Media literacy education plays a role in the dispersion of scientific knowledge about media across society (rosenbaum, 2008). This statement signifies that Media literacy does not only make a student wise consumer of media but also spreads this knowledge in the society so that people can be manager of information rather than passive receivers.

4. MEDIA LITERACY SKILLS:

Media literacy education is based on developing some skills in students. Media literate youth are better able to understand the complex messages we receive from television, radio, internet, newspaper, magazines, books, video games and all other forms of media (www.medialiteracyproject.org).

Media literacy generates awareness about art of message formation. It has mainly two components i.e., how messages are formed (structure, attractiveness, duration etc.) and how they are dispersed. Students learn to question the message in media literacy program. Questioning evolves what, why and how of media message. Third component of media literacy is critical analysis. This involves analysis, synthesis and evaluation of media. Last component of media literacy is action learning which means applying the knowledge for problem solving and message creation

Media literacy education inculcates essential skills for all of the above stated aspects. Critical thinking, reflection and ethical behaivour are the core of media literacy (Canada centre for digital and media literacy). Media literacy develops critical thinking skills which helps students in authenticating information and examining issues plagiarism and copy writing. Skill of refection helps students to recognize bias, misinformation and lies. Buckingham (2003) suggests that in teaching learning environment 'Media literacy education enables students to reflect systematically on the process of reading and writing, to understand and to analyse their own experiences as reader and writers'. Skill off refection demands active dialogue between teacher and taught. Active participation of students in learning process is the key to greater awareness and better ability towards media.

Another important skill is of evaluation. Evaluation envelops judgment. It is a process in which worth or value of an object, process or phenomenon is decided according to certain agreed rules. Analysis and synthesis of media leads to evaluation. Students judge media messages on the basis of their own experiences, skills, beliefs and values.

5. TEACHER'S ROLE:

Teaching about media needs depth of knowledge, right communication skill and an unbiased point of view. Teachers should effectively present media message to be evaluated. The key is to find right teachable moments when students are active and ready to learn. Students should be ready to drop and enough time should be given to them in order to understand and analyse the message. Group and individual task should be given to them to create an authentic new message. To clear ambiguities and doubts, positive and negative examples should be presented simultaneously followed by detailed discussion. Involving students in learning process is a must and for it teacher should raise interest, generate awareness and facilitate attention. Small training programs can be useful in this direction. Kupermidt

and scull (2011) concluded that even one day workshop on media literacy education was effective on the participants' knowledge of Media literacy. Effectiveness of media literacy training program was also established by Geraee et al (2015). In their study they made 2 groups and found that effectiveness of training program improved the intervention group students for having an active, critical reaction towards Media messages. Teaching Media literacy is a highly skilled job and should be done attentively otherwise teacher can inculcate his personal use and biased in students unconsciously.

6. CONCLUSION:

In an information flooded and technology driven era it is quite essential to make children future ready by developing skills and abilities. A negative message, half or misinformation can have drastically negative consequence. Media literacy education is demand of modern world with an aim to make students unbiased critical analysis, wise consumer, message creators and skillful evaluators of media.

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