FACT SHEET

Media literacy education

1.   Background

1.1   This fact sheet aims to provide members with background information about media literacy education. It covers the concept of media literacy education, the development of media literacy education in Hong Kong, and the relevant deliberations at the Legislative Council.

2.   Media literacy education

Definitions

2.1   According to the definition given by United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization ("UNESCO"), media education:

(a) deals with all communication media and includes the printed word and graphics, the sound, the still as well as the moving image, delivered on any kind of technology;

(b) enables people to gain understanding of the communication media used in their society and the way they operate and to acquire skills in using these media to communicate with others; and

(c) ensures that people learn how to:

(i)   analyze, critically reflect upon and create media texts;

(ii) identify the sources of media texts, their political, social, commercial and/or cultural interests, and their contexts; and

(iii) interpret the messages and values offered by the media;

(iv)   select appropriate media for communicating their own messages or stories and for reaching their intended audience; and

(v)   gain, or demand access to media for both reception and production.[1]

2.2   In brief, media education is the process of teaching and learning about media,[2] through which one learns to become media-literate.   According to the European Commission[3], media literacy is the ability to access the media, understand and critically evaluate various aspects of the media and media contents, and create communications in a variety of contexts.   A media-literate person is able to decipher the purpose and message of media rather than accepting it at face value; make positive media choices; select healthy alternatives to media consumption; develop critical thinking and viewing skills; and understand the political, social, economic and emotional implications of various forms of media.[4]

Target recipients of media literacy education

2.3   According to a recommendation adopted at the UNESCO conference on "Educating for the Media and the Digital Age" held in Vienna of Austria, in 1999, media literacy education should aim at empowering *all* citizens in every society and should ensure that people with special needs and the socially and economically disadvantaged have access to it.[5]   The participants of the Conference also agreed that media literacy education should be introduced not only within a country's national curriculum but also in the tertiary, non-formal and lifelong education.   These echo the view of the National Association for Media Literacy Education of the United States[6] that the purpose of media literacy education is to help individuals of all ages develop the habits of inquiry and skills of expression that they need to be critical thinkers, effective communicators and active citizens in today's world.   As such, media literacy education is not limited to children and young people.   Adults also need the opportunity to gain or enhance the relevant competencies as well.

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[1]   United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (2008).
[2]   Buckingham (2001).
[3]   European Commission (undated).
[4]   American Academy of Pediatrics (1999) pp.341-343.
[5]   United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (2008).
[6]   The Association is a national membership organization devoted to advancing media literacy education in the United States.

Media literacy education in Hong Kong

School curriculum

2.4   In Hong Kong, subjects taught in primary and secondary schools are grouped under eight key learning areas ("KLAs")[7]. Instead of being introduced as a stand-alone subject in the school system, media literacy education is embedded within one of these KLAs – Personal, Social and Humanities Education ("PSHE"), to provide cross-curricular learning opportunities.[8] According to the Curriculum Development Council[9], the major contents of PSHE "are taught in a number of humanities and social subjects, together with related elements incorporated in cross-curricular programmes on moral and civic education, environmental education, sex education, media education etc." During the process of inquiry into the PSHE issues, students need to develop competencies such as self-management, critical thinking and problem solving. These objectives, particularly the emphasis on the development of critical thinking, are considered to be related to the core concepts of media literacy education.[10]

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[7]   The eight KLAs are Chinese Language Education, English Language Education, Mathematics Education, Personal, Social and Humanities Education, Science Education, Technology Education, Arts Education and Physical Education.

[8]   Curriculum Development Council (2000) and Education Bureau (2011).

[9]   The Curriculum Development Council is a free-standing advisory body appointed by the Chief Executive of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region to give advice to the Government on matters relating to curriculum development for the local school system.

[10]   Chu (2009) p.87.

2.5   Under the new senior secondary ("NSS") curriculum introduced in 2009, media-related elements are also included in Liberal Studies – one of the core NSS subjects.   As stated in the Curriculum and Assessment Guide of Liberal Studies ("C&A Guide"), "the coverage of Liberal Studies includes contemporary issues, [and] media resources are important sources of information [for these issues]…Students will learn to critically evaluate information, phenomena and ideas presented in the media, so that they can distinguish between fact and opinion and sense objectivity versus bias. Through discussion of issues in these resources, students will learn to base their conclusions on sound evidence and relevant sources of information, rather than on ignorance and prejudice."   To enable students to apply the knowledge, skills and perspectives gained through the major areas of study in Liberal Studies[11], they are required to conduct an "Independent Enquiry Study" ("IES") on topics of their own choice.   As suggested in the C&A Guide, "media" can be one of the themes of enquiry for IES.[12]

Institutions or organizations providing media literacy education in Hong Kong

2.6   Apart from schools, media literacy education is provided by some of the tertiary institutions in Hong Kong.   For instance, the course on "Media Literacy and Media Education"[13] is offered as an elective for students of the Postgraduate Diploma in Education Programme of the Chinese University of Hong Kong, and the course on "Media Literacy in a Changing Society"[14] is offered as a General Education course for students of the Hong Kong Baptist University.

2.7   In addition, major youth organizations (such as the Hong Kong Christian Service ("HKCS") and the Breakthrough Limited) and some non-profit making bodies (such as the Hong Kong Association of Media Education ("HKAME")) also play a part in the promotion of media literacy education in Hong Kong.

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[11]   There are three Areas of Study in Liberal Studies, namely "Self and Personal Development", "Society and Culture" and "Science, Technology and the Environment".
[12]   Curriculum Development Council and Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority (2007).
[13]   Faculty of Education, the Chinese University of Hong Kong (2011).
[14]   "Media Literacy in a Changing Society" is a pilot course introduced in the 2011-2012 academic year.   See General Education, Hong Kong Baptist University (2012).

Hong Kong Christian Service

2.8   HKCS has been involved in media literacy education since the 1990s. The organization specifically assigns a project officer to plan and organize programme activities for primary school students who are the main service targets.   Services provided by HKCS on promoting media literacy education include:

> (a)   publishing the bi-monthly "Media Express" to discuss different media phenomena and the hidden message in media;
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> (b)   organizing talks for social workers, teachers and parents periodically to enhance their awareness of media literacy education and equip them with the skills in implementing media literacy education; and
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> (c)   publishing a book entitled "Bringing Media into Classrooms – A Sharing on Lesson Plans and Teaching Experiences" in 2003, which provides a collection more than 20 lesson plans for teaching media literacy education created by local school teachers.

Hong Kong Association of Media Education

2.9   HKAME is a not-for-profit organization established in early 2000 by a group of volunteers who are concerned with the media and cultural environment in Hong Kong.   It aims to bring media literacy education to every Hong Kong citizen, particularly students, teachers, social workers and parents.   HKAME's major programmes and activities relating to media literary education include:

> (a)   organizing seminars, conferences, teacher training courses and workshops (such as workshops on advertising and news analysis);
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> (b)   contributing media education columns in local newspapers;
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> (c)   facilitating   exchanges   with   international   media   education organizations;
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> (d)   advocating for inclusion of media literacy education into the school curriculum; and

(e) offering advice to schools on their funded projects on media literacy education.[15]

Breakthrough Limited

2.10   The Breakthrough Limited provides media literacy education to enhance young people's critical and independent thinking through various means, including publication of books and magazines, production of teaching kits and video learning packages, and conducting research.

2.11   Between 2001 and 2002, the Breakthrough Limited conducted a large-scale media literacy education project – the Media and Information Literacy Education Programme (MILE), which was allocated a grant of HK$6 million by the Quality Education Fund. It aimed to promote media literacy education among students, teachers and parents through a range of media literacy education programmes and resources, including workshops, teaching kits, books, media education camps for students and train-the-trainer programmes.

2.12   Some of the key initiatives of the MILE project included:

- creating an Internet platform known as the Media and Information Literacy Network. The Network was operated from September 2001 to December 2002, providing media literacy education resources, discussion forums, latest news of MILE and announcements of media-related activities for students and teachers;

- operating three Resource Centres, which provided on-site reference services for students, teachers and youth workers to help them gain access to various types of media literacy education resources, such as books, teaching aids and curriculum packages; and

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[15]   Hong Kong Media Education Project (undated).

- conducting three training programmes for primary and secondary school teachers, which helped them introduce media literacy education in schools. One of the programmes entitled "Information Education Programme" was a workshop series aiming to facilitate teachers in developing students' skills in searching, evaluating and organizing media information.

3. Member's motion

3.1 The Council meeting held on 17 November 1999 debated a motion without legislative effect on "Education on media literacy", urging "*the authorities to promote education on media literacy across the board, opposes the establishment of a Government-appointed press council and hopes that the media will expeditiously set up an effective self-regulatory mechanism which safeguards freedom of speech and of the press, protects personal privacy and preserves public morality.*" The motion was carried.

3.2 Most of the Members expressed support for the promotion of media literacy education by the Government whereby the pubic could make better media choices and play an active part in supervising the media. Nonetheless, individual Members expressed concern that it took time for the effect of media literacy education to occur. There was also a view that media literacy education was not the only way to safeguard freedom of speech and the press and protect public morality, and thus the changes it could bring about should not be overestimated.

Research Division
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Tel: 3919 3635

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