Assessing critical thinking in media literacy of secondary school students: special focus to Nallur Division of Jaffna District

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Abstract

After an introduction to information and knowledge society concepts, the influx of new media technologies has the potential to affect the library and education sectors radically. To successfully navigate today’s data-rich and complex media environment, the concepts of literacy, i.e. media literacy and information literacy becomes an increasingly valuable asset. Media Literacy is similar to information literacy, defined as the ability to access, analyze, evaluate, and produce communication in a variety of forms. Media literacy involves critical thinking, analytical skills, and the ability to express oneself in different ways. The objective of this study is to identify specific aspects on critical understanding skills in media literacy of secondary school students selected from Nallur division of Jaffna district by analyzing critical competency to examine, understand, question, and evaluate the ways in which different media produce meaning. Research method of this study is quantitative analysis. Questionnaire designed by the UNESCO with the reference to Global Media and Information Literacy Assessment Framework has been used as the data collection tool. Using stratified random sampling method, 120 students in secondary level from 5 public high schools in Nallur division of Jaffna district were selected for the survey. The results indicate that the majority of the students have to improve their critical thinking and analytical skills in media. They can differentiate the attraction and reality in the advertisements. Even though most of them (62%) have compared the information received from different media to get the authoritative information; many students have inadequate awareness of media regulation to evaluate the ethics behind it. Majority (85%) of students indicate lack of involvement in any media activities. Fewer students demonstrate skills in conducting critical search and participation in development activities using media. Half of the students never participated in critical discussions or other civic activities in online social networks. Perceptions of media education among students indicate
lack of knowledge. Finally, based on the findings from the above survey, it is recommended to implement media literacy development programmes at school level.

Keywords: Media literacy, Information literacy, School libraries, Education