Media Contents and Media Production

Children in the News and Children Engaging with the News in South Africa
[Media Contents and Media Production]

by
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The absence or low numbers of children who read, watch or listen to the news

has been the subject of several discussion forums and debates. Recently a discussion forum on IJnet highlighted what some media are doing to encourage children to read their newspapers. (Read more: https://www.ijnet.org/ijnet/ discussions/youth_and_media_how_do_we_get_children_to_consume_the_news)

The general assumption, with which we would agree, appears to be that low numbers of children reading the news is concerning, not only for media but for broader society (1). There are a variety of reasons for the low levels of news consumption by children, an analysis of news content reveals another - exclusion and marginalisation.

Increased Coverage but Still Low

Media Monitoring Africa's (MMA) latest content analysis of a selection of South African newspapers (2) shows that children, children's rights and their issues are afforded very little coverage in the media monitored. The latest data to emerge from the Empowering Children and the Media (ECM) reveals that representation of children has improved, to 11% (from 6% in 2003) of all news monitored in the period. The increase, while significant, is still damning considering that figures from Stats SA show that children account for around 37 to 40% of South Africa's population. Not only does this mean that the core issues of such a substantial portion of our population are not being covered, but it also highlights the media's failure to seize a great opportunity to attract younger readers.

Percentage of Children in the Media

Contains Children
11%

Adults only
89%
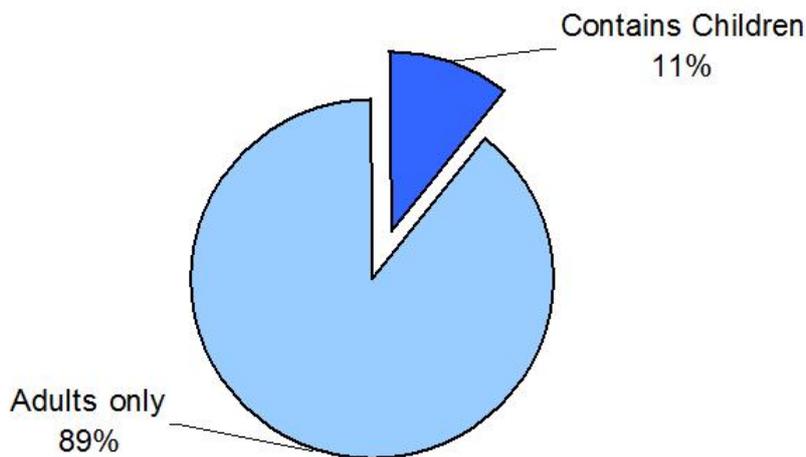
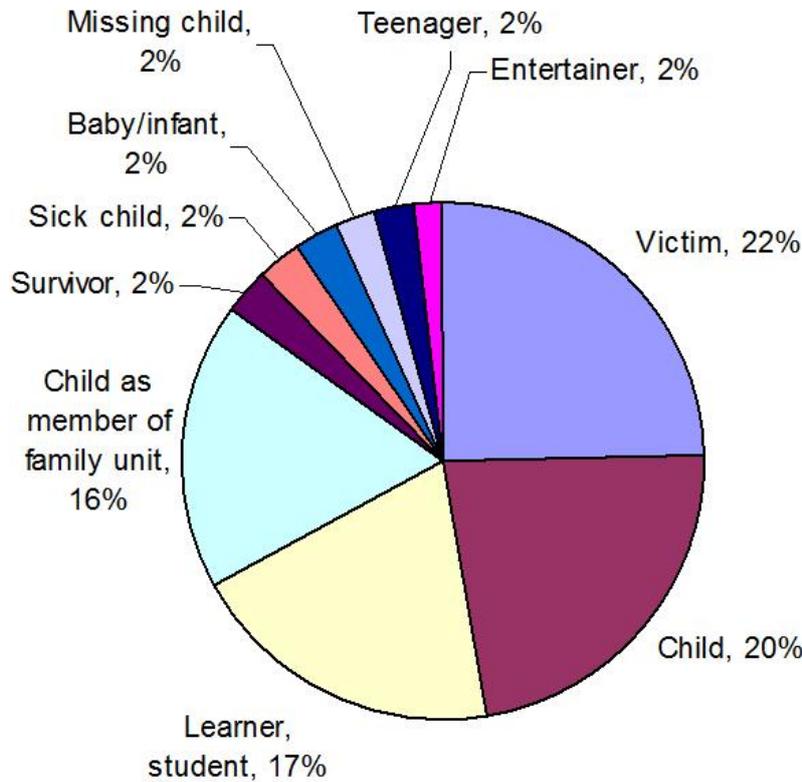The monitoring shows that not only are children's issues frequently sidelined, but careless and unethical reporting often leads to further violations of their rights. 3% of all items about children further violated their rights by being directly or indirectly identified when it was clearly not in the best interest of the child to be identified.
Children are hardly seen and heard even less: Of the 11% of stories that contain

children only 14% of the children are actually quoted. "Hear our voices, let us speak for ourselves." (Child from Troyeville Primary) is a common call from the children MMA works with.

Top 10 Child Role Representation 2010

Missing child, 2%
Teenager, 2%
Entertainer, 2%
Baby/infant, 2%
Sick child, 2%
Survivor, 2%
Victim, 22%
Child as member of family unit, 16%
Child, 20%
Learner, student, 17%

In terms of the roles children are given in stories, 22% of all children in the news are identified as victims. Twenty percent of children are identified as "child" with no other attributable role. Seventeen percent of children are identified as pupils/learners. Sixteen percent of children are identified in a familial role, e.g. brother/sister/son/daughter. These four roles account for 75% of all the roles children occupy in the news. Clearly not only are the roles limited but the high level of victims (down from 25% in 2003) remains cause for concern.

Efforts of Improvement are Made

While these trends are common to several mass media there are media taking a more positive approach. In the monitoring period there were a number of clear attempts by media houses to focus more on covering children's stories and including children's voices. *The Star*, for example featured a page by Children on Worlds Aids Day. Also there is a clear commitment by newspapers to improving ethical professional standard of reporting on children. This is highlighted by the adoption of MMA's guidelines for reporting on children by the Independent Group of Newspapers. Others, including the Avusa group, have also included a

dedicated section on children in their internal guidelines. Sadly these efforts remain the exception.

It may well be that the majority of news tends to be negative and certainly the media have a clear duty to report abuse and other violations of children's rights (3), but portraying children in such a limited manner is neither fair nor accurate.

In general terms it is hardly surprising given the limited, often stereotypical representation of children that they choose not to read newspapers. MMA's monitoring findings are supported by the comments made by children MMA works with.

With each new group of children MMA has discovered that each year for the last seven years, the majority of children do not read newspaper or watch the news on television. Asked why they do not, children have said the following: "it makes me scared," "we are not in the news," as well as, " the media only show bad things that happen to children."(4)

Strategies for Change

Questions arise as to how to change the current situation. How do we encourage children to engage with the news? How can we encourage media not only to include more children but also more children's voices?

The good news is that there are several strategies all over the world that can and are being employed to address exactly these issues. Some include children producing their own high quality stories for the media. MMA uses strategies that include working with media and advocating for higher quality reporting when it comes to children. Other strategies MMA apply involve giving children critical media literacy skills. Central to the success of any of these however is the real and meaningful participation of children.

MMA has found that not only is it possible to encourage children to engage with the news, but also that it is by hearing the voices of children that some of the biggest media groups in South Africa are changing their approach to reporting on children.

This is what some of the children we worked with had to say after they had acquired critical media literacy skills and asked how participating had impacted their engagement with the news:

• "I would never read or watch news but now I enjoy reading"
• "Now I am aware of everything and I still think they should have more children"
• "Instead of looking at headlines for interesting stories I read the story"
• "I now read more newspapers"
• "Whenever I read the newspaper I concentrate on how they write the story about the child"
• " I have not been reading newspapers [in the past] but [now] I am reading a

lot of newspaper and listening to news"
• "I am now more able to criticize the media and its choices"
• "Before I used to just read the newspaper and not really get into details but that has now changed"
• "It has changed the way I read, watch and listen in the way that now it has become more interesting and valuable to me"
• "It made me read newspaper although they were boring and now to me it is like playing a game"
• "Now when I read the newspaper, I read it with the understanding and can tell what journalist have left out"
• "When I read or watch something I check if the children have a say in it"(5)

The logic is clear and simple, an informed child reader today will be an older reader tomorrow and a child reader today will encourage her/his parent to engage with the news as well – and that is good news for our children, society and the media.

Notes
1. Media Monitoring Africa (MMA) would agree with this assumption. The media's role as fourth estate while sometimes insufficiently fulfilled is nonetheless essential to the effective functioning of democracy. It is also critical however, that citizens are informed about their rights, and can play an active role in their democracy. For far too long this argument has been applied largely to adults, yet it is equally important for children.
2. The period monitored is from September 2009 to end March 2010.
3. Again this is an issue that the children themselves raise. The work we do with them clearly demonstrates that children want to know about abuse and the bigger political issues as well.
4. These quotes taken from workshop with children from Troyeville Primary, and Park Senior Primary School.
5. All quotes taken form formal evaluation workshop held with children form Troyeville Primary, Park Senior Primary and East Gate Primary Schools'. Contact MMA for further details

A National Study on Children's Television Programming in Canada
[Media Contents and Media Production]

by
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With approximately 5.6 million children between 0-14 years old, young people

comprise more than one sixth (17.5%) of Canada's total population. Almost half (48%) of the 8 to 15 year old Canadian children have their own televisions (Canadian Teacher's Federation, 2003). Canadian preschoolers (2-6 years old) are estimated to spend approximately 19 hours (18.8) per week watching television, and this number is in the same range for older children (7-12 years old) (BBM Canada, 2009).

How do Children's Programs Fare in Canada?

Canadian children's programming has been widely recognized in the past for its high quality, but what is the state of this programming in 2010? The current study, conducted by researchers from the Centre for Youth and Media Studies (GRJM/CYMS) at the Université de Montréal, aimed to address this question with a content analysis of television programming for Canadian youth (children 2-12 years old), funded by The Alliance for Children and Television (ACT-AET) and CTVglobemedia (CTVgm) through the CTVgm/CHUM tangible benefits fund.

Going beyond traditional questions about television violence and stereotypes, this innovative study investigated a nationally representative sample of nearly 200 hours and more than 500 programs during one week of children's programming across nineteen television broadcasters. Research questions included: Are Canadian productions different from productions from other countries? Considering Canada's new demographic realities, how are visible minorities being portrayed on children's TV? Are seniors present in children's programs? What is the overall level of "well-being "of the characters presented in these programs? Do they engage in cultural activities? Do the programs present environmental issues? The study also went further by analyzing audience viewing ratings to attempt to answer the question: Do Canadian children overall prefer Canadian productions?

Our analysis shows that both educational and specialty broadcasters account for more than 90% of children's programming in Canada (41% and 49%, respectively), while only 9% is provided by public generalists and a mere 1% by private generalist broadcasters. This imbalance raises questions about the role that public and private generalist broadcasters assume today in children's programming.

Animation Dominant Genre

As far as program genres are concerned, our study indicates that animation is overall the most dominant genre in Canadian children's programming. With two out of every three programs being animation, it is particularly prevalent in preschool programming. In terms of the variety of program genres, comedy and drama appear to be marginalized when it comes to 2-12 year olds. Animation tends to portray a lesser amount of certain types of content than live-action programs. For example, our analysis shows that animation presents fewer visible minorities and does not convey as many positive program issues and human social values as live-action programs. On a more positive note, themes of

informal education are fairly prevalent in all genres of children's programming.

Representations of Minorities and Gender

When looking at racial profile of main characters in children's programs, the majority of human-type characters are European white. In terms of portrayal of minority groups, Canadian children's productions do not differ much from the demographic profiles found in the Canadian Census data, showing a relatively similar representation of Blacks, Latinos and, to a lesser extent, Asians. However, seniors and disabled people are quite underrepresented in all children's programs. This raises questions as to whether children's television content should better represent these groups.

Our findings regarding gender representation in children's programs are even more striking. That is, male characters are much more prevalent than female ones (nearly two to one). This being said, no gender differences were found in terms of physical appearance (e.g., average weight and height), race, behaviors that could be deemed violent, problem-solving styles, interracial interaction, and cultural consumption. Moreover, all main characters generally exhibited relatively high pleasant feelings, which reflected high ratings in terms of their emotional "well-being".

Canadian Productions Preferred

Our study also explored how Canadian productions distinguish themselves from those of other countries. In this regard, we found that Canadian productions have the highest percentage of live-action programs, which provide more opportunities to present positive program issues (e.g., understanding about the world we live in, stimulation of reflection, or interactivity with the viewer) than other types of programs. Canadian co-ventures with the U.S. and co-productions with other countries also present these kinds of issues, but in a more limited way, given that animation dominates these types of productions.

Based on an analysis of the Bureau of Broadcast Measurement (BBM) data, we linked each broadcast program to viewing results for the week in which we conducted the content analysis. Based on the top 100 programs, we found that children in the age between 2-11 are overwhelmingly watching children's programming. Considering the top 10 programs, we found that 2-6 year-old French and English-speaking children largely prefer Canadian content. Although this preference for Canadian productions was also found for 7-11 year-old French and English-speaking children, it seems to decrease as children grow older.

International Comparison

Finally, some of our data, such as program genre, were compared with the data from the most recent international study conducted by Dr.Maya Götz and her colleagues from the International Central Institute for Youth and Educational

Television (IZI). The IZI international data included samples of children's fictional programming from over twenty different countries. The results showed that the percentage of animated fictional programs on Canadian TV (75%) is lower than the international average (82%). In addition, the number of people (live-action) programs is slightly higher (14%) than the international average (10%). In fact, Canada is among the top five countries producing live-action children's fictional programs with Israël, India, Belgium and Argentina).

The second phase of this study, which will be conducted in the coming year, will focus on the ways children and parents appropriate media and media content (including the Internet). This research will further explore the meanings they give to media during daily social interactions with family and friends.

Note
André H. Caron is Full Professor and Bell Chair in Research on Emerging Technologies in the Département de communication at the Université de Montréal. He is the founding Director of the GRJM/CYMS (Centre for Youth and Media Studies). Jennie M. Hwang is a visiting Professor in the Département de communication at the Université de Montréal. The results of the current study have been presented at the 2009 Children, Youth & Media Conference in Toronto, and was also presented at 2010 the Karlstad World Summit meeting on children and media in Sweden.

The Situation of Children's Television in Asia
[Media Contents and Media Production]

Situation of Children's TV in Asia is the name of a survey conducted in 2009 by the PRIX JEUNESSE Foundation, Germany, and presented at the Asia Media Summit in Macau the same year.

Research partners in 20 Asian countries examined two separate weeks of children's programming in each country. To be included in the study, TV channels should have at least a 5% market share among the child audience in the country. To qualify as a children's programme, it should aim at an audience up to 13 years of age.
The countries included were Bangladesh, Bhutan, Brunei, Cambodia, China, Fiji, India, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, The Maldives, Mongolia, Nepal, Pakistan, The Philippines, Singapore, South Korea, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Vietnam.

Although there was great cultural variation and the situation differed rather strikingly between the countries, the study showed that on average the commercial and subscription channels offered by far more children's programming (79% of the programmes coded) than the public channels did (21%).

Moreover, 80% of the children's TV programmes had been produced outside the country where they were broadcast – only 20% had been produced locally.

The public broadcasters had a more balanced mix of in-country productions and international productions than the commercial/subscription channels did.

The largest part (50%) of TV productions offered to children in Asia had been produced in North America, mostly in the US. One-third of the programmes had been produced in Asia, with Japan leading the field. Regarding bought-in programmes only, the proportion of US-produced programmes was higher.

The report concludes that ways must be found to offer children an opportunity to encounter their own culture in children's TV programmes, and that there must be a
healthy balance between local and international TV programmes for children.

Source
www.prixjeunesse.de

Africa's Best Channel for Children
[Media Contents and Media Production]

On March 7th, the UNICEF International Children's Day of Broadcasting, a new pan- African children's TV-channel was launched. **Africa's Best Channel, ABC**, aims to be "an African window into the world and a global window into Africa". Prior to the ABC Africa has not had a broadcaster completely focused on children and youth.

Few African broadcasters have even dedicated slots for children and youth programs. Due to lack of resources, adult programming is given priority and the programs aired for children and youth are usually dated, given free of charge or paid for by a sponsor. In this internationally produced content African children and youth rarely see content reflecting their own continent or diverse or positive images of their own culture. ABC wants to change this media image served to the young by providing content that is *relevant, responsible and reliable*. The focus will be on content with an African perspective but also offering international programming.

Strong Social Responsibility Ethos

The concept of media literacy is a fundamental thought behind the creation of the channel. Since media play a central role in the lives of children and youth media literacy is necessary to be able to think critically, evaluate and create media messages. Media is an important tool for democracy and can also serve as means for information on how to solve troubles or achieve social or political change. Hence, content of relevance and good quality for children and young people is essential.

Another important device for the ABC is "for young people, by young people" where young people are empowered to participate in the production of their own content. Role models that can be related to are important in affirming one's own cultural background, value systems and indigenous knowledge.

ABC's Origin

The ABC is a legacy project from the 5th World Summit on Media for Children (5WSMC) hosted by South Africa. Ms Firdoze Bulbulia, with many years of experience from the area of children and broadcasting, who organized the 5WSMC, is also one of the creators of the ABC.
The ABC is broadcast from Lagos, Nigeria and available in a channel bouquet in West Africa (DSTV West Africa). The aim is to broadcast a daily 2 hours and 12 hours over the week end. The ABC is looking forward to exchange and co-production opportunities with partners abroad.

For more information, please contact Firdoze Bulbulia, moments@icon.co.za

Media Education/Media Literacy/Awareness

World Summit on Media for Children and Youth 2010
[Media Education/Media Literacy/Awareness]

The sixth World Summit on Media for Children and Youth took place in Karlstad, Sweden, on June 14-18, 2010. The overriding theme was "Towards a New Global Vision for Children, Youth and Media – Challenges in young people's world of communication". Being held in different continents every three years since 1995, this global movement is committed to developing and improving quality media for children. The chairperson of the World Summit Foundation Dr. Patricia Edgar, who organized the first Summit in Melbourne, Australia, emphasized that during these fifteen years technological advances have brought about a dramatic revolution in the children's media production industry profoundly altering the relationship between media and young people.
The Summit provides a forum for, among others, media producers, broadcasters, regulators, media educators, researchers, and NGO's working with children and media. This time it was organized by the City of Karlstad, Karlstad University, and the county of Värmland in Sweden. The event gathered about 1,000 delegates from 70 countries who during the five days presented and discussed a range of issues related to media for young people.

It is impossible to summarize the 180 sessions and, above all, the important social networking that happened during the Summit. Much information is found at the website of the Summit, www.wskarlstad2010.se, where the programme is exhibited, as well as the objectives, previous Summits, organizers, sponsors, minutes from the keynote speakers, the summary of the final session, the challenges brought out by the delegates, the recommendations made, and much

more.

In sum, six underlying key themes were identified:
• access and diversity
• ethics and responsibility
• technology and content
• participation and creativity
• critical thinking and integration
• protection and empowerment.

And there were three overriding challenges/recommendations:
• Listen to the voices of children and work with them.
• A broad concept of media and information literacy is essential and needs to be promoted.
• A dialogue is essential between different sectors and actors (children, youth, parents, educators, media producers, journalists, researchers, etc.) to understand and deal with the challenges of the digital media age.

The Global Youth Media Council

The Global Youth Media Council at the Summit was composed of some 35 young people, aged from 13 to 21 and representing more than 20 countries. They created a website (www.wskarlstad2010.se/gymc.php) and a Facebook page, their own YouTube channel and a film shown at the closing ceremony. They also decided upon the six most important media issues and recommendations affecting young people over the world which you can sign here: www.ipetitions.com/petition/areyouwithus

Limited access to the Internet
• Governments, mobile operators and media multi nationals should work together to insure free or affordable internet access in schools and libraries.

Making sure children are safe using the Internet
• Education about the danger on the Internet, starting in primary school, including rights and obligations

Children and young people are not involved in making decisions
• More articles written by children and youth in national and local newspapers
• Every country should have a Youth Media Council – to comment on children's TV content

Negative representation of children and young people in the media
• Media must adopt existing ethical guidelines on reporting on children and youth, to include a balanced representation.

Lack of media literacy
• Media education should be a part of the curriculum from an early age in every country.
Commercial interest versus social responsibility

• Only products that are linked with children's positive development should be associated with children's media
• More non-commercial newspaper/radio/tv channel, funded by foundation, governments and charities.

The Research Forum

A special Research Forum at the Summit was organized by The International Clearinghouse on Children, Youth and Media at Nordicom, University of Gothenburg. The aim of the Research Forum was to provide a space for distinct knowledge of immediate importance to children, youth and media, based on outstanding research and of relevance not only to researchers but also, to a great extent, to teachers/media educators, media professionals, regulators/representatives of authorities, decision-makers, voluntary organizations, and interested individuals. The Research Forum comprised five sessions including a plenary session, that is, altogether 24 presentations by researchers from all over the world.

At the Plenary Session of the Research Forum aspects of inequality, gender, democracy and children's rights in relation to media were called attention to. The four subsequent sessions were dedicated to the following themes (www.nordicom.gu.se/clearinghouse.php):

• Media literacy and education
• Children, media, consumption and health
• Media ethics and social responsibility
• Communication for social change

This research knowledge will be spread to interested persons outside the Research Forum and Summit, meaning that the Clearinghouse at present is producing its *Yearbook 2011* based on the presentations.

The Next Summit

Many participants expressed their enthusiasm about the Research forum, the Global Youth Media Council, the World Summit as a whole and the possibilities it offered for sharing knowledge and contacts and stimulating further work and action towards realizing quality media for young people. The movement will definitely continue – the next World Summit on Media for Children and Youth will be held in May 2013 in Bali, Indonesia.

Sources
Please, see links in the running text.

How to Measure the Level of Media Literacy in Europe?

[Media Education/Media Literacy/Awareness]

The European Commission (EC) defines 'media literacy' as 'the ability to access the media, to understand and to critically evaluate different aspects of the media and media contents, and to create communications in a variety of contexts'.

The Commission stresses that media literacy relates to all media, including television and film, radio and recorded music, print media, the Internet and all other new digital communication technologies. It is a fundamental competence not only for the young generation but also for adults and elderly people, for parents, teachers and media professionals. Media literacy is considered as an important factor for active citizenship in today's information society.

In 2009 the Commission came forward with a Recommendation that all its member states and the media industry need to increase people's awareness of the media.

In 2009, the Commission also issued a report "Study on Assessment Criteria for Media Literacy Levels - A comprehensive view of the concept of media literacy and an understanding of how media literacy level in Europe should be assessed". The study has been carried out by the EAVI Consortium (including the European Association for Viewers' Interests, EAVI; Centre de Liaison de l'Enseignement et des Médias d'Information, CLEMI; Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, Université Catholique de Louvain, and the University of Tampere) and was coordinated by Paolo Celot and José Manuel Pérez Tornero.

The objective of the study was to analyse the most appropriate criteria for the assessment of media literacy levels. Two main dimensions within media literacy were identified:

- Individual competences, drawing of a broad range of personal and social capabilities, and embracing increasing levels of awareness, the capacity for critical thought and an ability to produce and communicate a message.

- Environmental factors (a set of contextual factors affecting the individual competences), such as availability of media and information, freedom of expression, media education, media policy, the roles and responsibilities of stakeholders in the media community, media plurality, and civil society/civic participation.

During 2010, these criteria to assess media literacy levels are being tested and refined, and the Commission's plan is to report on the actual media literacy levels in the member states by 2011.

Sources
http://ec.europa.eu/culture/media/literacy/index_en.htm
http://ec.europa.eu/culture/media/literacy/studies/index_en.htm

Teaching Media Literacy While Considering Learning Disabilities

[Media Education/Media Literacy/Awareness]

Media literacy is an important competence today and there are many teaching resources available. 'Switch On!' is a new addition and is particularly aimed at professionals teaching or caring for people with learning disabilities.

The 'Switch on!' teaching resource is mainly concentrated on moving image media since, according to the authors, people with learning disabilities watch more television and films on DVD than others. With a take-off in the seven key competences for media literacy (1) described in The Charter for Media Literacy (www.euromedialiteracy.eu) a variety of learning objectives suitable for the kind of learner 'Switch on!' is aimed at are presented. Teaching topics goes from "Introduction to media languages" to be of interest to all learners, to the more specialized aspects which can be adapted according to learners ability.

No previous background in media studies are necessary to use the teaching resource, but to prepare for issues that may arise in the discussions and make the most out of the learning experience there is a introductory section with key issues for teaching. 'Switch On!' is designed to be used in formal settings like further education colleges (students over 16 years) or in informal settings like e.g. day centres. It was written by Cary Bazalgette and Marion Janner and is published by British regulatory authority Ofcom. Please go to http://stakeholders.ofcom.org.uk/binaries/research/media-literacy/switch-on.pdf to access resource in full text

Note
1. Media literate people should be able to:

• Use media technologies effectively to access, store, retrieve and share content to meet their individual and community needs and interests;
• Gain access to, and make informed choices about, a wide range of media forms and content from different cultural and institutional sources;
• Understand how and why media content is produced;
• Analyse critically the techniques, languages and conventions used by the media, and the messages they convey;
• Use media creatively to express and communicate ideas, information and opinions;
• Identify, and avoid or challenge, media content and services that may be unsolicited, offensive or harmful;
• Make effective use of media in the exercise of their democratic rights and civic responsibilities.

Read more: www.euromedialiteracy.eu/charter.php

Source
www.ofcom.org.uk

Platform for Media Literacy Research Online

[Media Education/Media Literacy/Awareness]

For those into media literacy research there is a new web site, a platform for professional researchers, policy-makers/regulators and practitioners where knowledge and expertise in the field can be shared. The International Media Literacy Research Forum, IMLRF, provides a site for international exchange of research done within a wider framework. Membership in the Forum is open to countries, organizations as well as individuals. An increased awareness of approaches taken to media literacy in different cultures can serve to refine the participants own techniques and facilitates communication between interested parties.

The founding members of the IMLRF are:

The Australian Communication and Media Authority (ACMA);
The New Zealand Broadcasting Standards Authority (BSA);
The Canadian Association of Media Education Organisations (CAMEO);
The Dublin Institute of Technology (DIT) in Ireland;
The United States National Association for Media Literacy Education (NAMLE); and
The Office of Communications (Ofcom) in the United Kingdom.

Source
www.imlrf.org

Media Access and Media Use

Social Network Sites and Young People's Developing Identities on Cyprus
[Media Access and Media Use]

by
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The present research aimed at studying how young people are possibly affected in the continuing formation of their socio-cultural identity by their use of social websites such as Facebook, with a focus on the following areas: online/offline relationships, online/offline participation in civic activities (international or national), online/offline consumership, and online/offline pursuit of professional goals. The questionnaire agenda also included questions about the sample's attitudes toward other cultures, the Turkish-Cypriots in particular, and possible

future co-existence with them, in light of a still divided Cyprus.

The research method used for this study was semi-structured individual interviews with students from the University of Nicosia. Among 27 randomly chosen participants aged 18-25, 17 were female and ten were male. The sample included mostly Greek Cypriot students, one Turkish Cypriot student, four exchange students studying in the Erasmus programme, seven graduate students and 20 undergraduate students. The study was conducted during the period of October, 2009 to January, 2010.

Active, Interactive or Non-active

The results revealed that while the majority of the respondents used Facebook, some chose not to. As to consumption, traditional media advertisements seemed to prevail, although online purchasing is gaining popularity, particularly of goods such as clothes, airplane tickets, books and DVDs. Furthermore, these purchases are usually made through websites such as Amazon or e-bay rather than under the influence of Facebook ads. There is also a general distrust of online advertisements about employment, and students indicated a preference for the Cypriot government website.

The results also showed that most of the students voted in elections although very few belonged to political parties, online or offline, and there was a lack of trust in political parties and institutions, all created on Cyprus during its 50 years of independence. This reminds one of Castells' (2004:68) statements that: "When new political institutions are created, or recreated, they are defensive trenches of identity, rather than launching platforms of political sovereignty."

As to online/offline civic activities (called "Causes" on Facebook), about one-third responded to Red Cross, the protection of animals, health issues (cancer or Internet addiction), slogans against the abuse women and children, writing verses or collecting signatures protesting the theft of the corpse of the late president Tassos Papadopoulos. There was a preference for local causes over global issues, and virtually no interest in participating in activities such as demonstrations. This lack of political interest and participation seems to resonate in the conclusion by Hafez (2007:100) that "there is a chasm between increasing international interaction and the Net's meager political relevance and power to mobilize. This web creates a virtual world which often lacks a corresponding real-world counterpart." Moreover, it appeared that social sites are primarily used to strengthen offline social networks.

The Issue of 'Us' and 'Them'

Perhaps the most striking result of the study concerns Otherness, more specifically the Turkish Cypriot "Others", and about feelings of ethnicity or nationalism. The attitudes expressed by the interviewees toward Turkish Cypriots were strong and complex. On the one hand, most stressed their preference for

Greek Cypriots as friends and admitted to thinking in terms of "us" as the Greek Cypriots, and "them" as the Turkish Cypriots. Even in cases in which the interviewees had met Turkish Cypriots on Facebook, their acceptance of them in real life was very meagre; on the other hand, some also believed that the two communities could co-exist albeit with great difficulty. As to other immigrant communities on Cyprus, some believed that the Greek and Turkish communities actually had more in common, but some blatantly admitted to being "racists" themselves.

Of course we cannot describe the localized ethnicity of Greek-Cypriotness, as a phenomenon of "defensive trenches of identity", a reaction to "global elites" that Castells (2004:34) notes in other countries, but it could be a reaction to the immediate threat of the invasion and the continuing occupation, which have become a cumulative experience in the collective consciousness of the Greek Cypriots, thus affecting their social representations on a group level. It can, in other words, "be an ethnic nationalism or a territorial identity functioning as a refuge and solidarity". (Ibid: 68). This is where identity politics in the corporeal world (on Cyprus) take leave of expected or anticipated (globalized) identity politics on the Internet and particularly among, perhaps, Facebook users, as the local identity supersedes any extension of the self over time and space, with reactions, responses, feelings and attitudes being generated by the local geographical and political realities on the island, harsh and unchanging for the past 36 years.

One of the most worrisome aspects of the collective identity of young Cypriots that deserves further research is their avoidance of contributing to the public sphere offline, this being perhaps a defensive reaction to possible global disorder and unchecked change.

Conclusively it is true that the Internet can provide young people forums of new communities and political life, and they can experience the challenges and rewards of democratic participation. Nevertheless, there is perhaps reason in what writers like Hafez (2007:117) maintain, that "the Internet is an important but overestimated medium", always "in relation to real- life world local and geo-political factors."

References
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Increasingly Younger Internet Users in Swedish Survey
[Media Access and Media Use]

By the age of four, more than half of Swedish children have begun their acquaintance with the Internet. In nine years, from 2000 to 2009, the age at which 50% or more of an age group have begun using the Internet has decrease by one year annually from 13 to four years. These are some of the results from

the study *Young Swedes and the Internet*, a survey conducted by the World Internet Institute (www.wii.se) presented in May 2010.

Parents' Educational Level Matters

Survey results show that parents' educational level is significant in great differences in Internet use among preschool children. It is considerably more common among children of well educated parents to begin using the Internet on a regular basis at a young age even though Internet access is available in most Swedish families. As a consequence, children start school with different levels of experience.

Watching video clips and playing simple online games are the first activities to attract children's attention. As they grow and acquire skills like reading and writing, as well as make new friends and discover their own fields of interest, their use of the Internet changes.

Keeping in Touch and Creating Content

At the age of 10-11 years, differences between boys' and girls' Internet use become visible. Girls prefer web communities about horses or fashion, for instance, while boys play online games like *World of Warcraft* or check out e-marketplaces. At this age the time dedicated to the Internet begins to differ, mainly due to more intense game-playing among boys. Instant messaging is the most popular way to communicate among those younger than 15 years, and is used on a daily basis. As children become teenagers they dedicate more time to, and also find more variety in, their Internet use. Their interest in news, societal information, e-commerce and finding facts and information online increases.

Young teenage girls are more active than boys of the same age on social networking sites (SNS), but as the teenager grows (16-25 years) the gender difference gets smaller and SNS, foremost Facebook, attract three of four. Young people also dominate in producing user-generated content. Seventy-three percent of the respondents who upload videos online and 65% of the bloggers are younger than 25 years, which is also valid for 60% of the members of social networks and 54% of users uploading digital photos. Most active on the social networking sites are girls in their late teens.

About the Survey

Young Swedes and the Internet is an extension of the yearly survey on Internet use among the Swedish population conducted by the research organization World Internet Institute (www.wii.se). The World Internet Institute conducts studies on the Internet and its effect on humans and society from the viewpoint of social and behavioural science. Since 2007 the survey has asked questions of parents of young children about their use of the Internet, and since 2008 has interviewed young people aged 12 and up.

New Trends and Old Habits — Media Use among Hungarian Youth
[Media Access and Media Use]

Many adults are worried about the impact of media on young people. Still, parental mediation in the use of television is very low. Parental involvement in their children's use of the Internet is even lower, with 90% of respondents' parents never or only sometimes checking what their child is watching or doing while online. These are some of the results of a survey conducted by psychologist Éva Kósa, professor at Pázmány Péter Catholic University, Piliscsaba, and sociologist Miklós László at Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest, in Hungary. Education in media literacy was also found to be rare, with 67% of the respondents believing this is important but 58% saying they did not receive this education at school.

The report comments on some of the results from a questionnaire that was part of an array of studies/research (questionnaire, interviews, focus groups, content analysis, etc.). A total of 2,024 students from primary and secondary schools aged 12 and 17 years participated. The study is a follow-up to a prior one, conducted in 2005.

Other results reveal information regarding young people's media use and preferences as regards media devices. In 2005 15% of families did not have a computer, whereas in 2009 it has become a piece of "basic equipment", with only 3% saying they do not have one. Among families, 40% had Internet access at home in 2005 while in 2009 the share was 84%. The use of the Internet, computer use in general and PC games are also major factors in the notable growth in time spent with media compared to figures from 2005. Total screen time (TV, video/DVD, Internet, computer use and PC games) went from 411 minutes in 2005 to 575 in 2009, an increase of 164 minutes.

According to the authors of the report, the growing amount of time spent using media in combination with a low level of parental mediation and lack of media education is troublesome. Effective steps are needed to promote the healthy development of children and young people, for successful and competent social integration and for the improvement of media understanding.

Child and Teen Consumption in Focus at International Conference

The 4th International Conference on Multidisciplinary Perspectives on Child and Teen Consumption (CTC 2010) was held in Norrköping, Sweden in June 2010. Organizer of the event was the Department of Thematic Studies – Child Studies at Linköping University.

This recurrent conference aims to establish and continue a dialogue between specialists from a variety of academic disciplines in order to explore the phenomenon of children and teens as consumers in today's society. The multidisciplinarity of the event was reflected in all the different papers presented in sessions under headings like "Targeting Children through Media", "Game Play as an Arena for Informal Learning and Consumption", "Victims or Heroes, Vulnerable and Competent Consumers" and provided basis for many fruitful discussions. The role of, use of and relation to media in various aspects of young people's consumption is inevitably dealt with, by consumption of advergames, as targets of advertisements or in viewing media celebrities as consumption promoters.

About 120 participants attended the conference representing 20 different countries. During the two and a half day long event 73 papers were presented. Keynote speakers were Professor Ann Phoenix, University of London, Great Britain, Professor Steve Woolgar, University of Oxford, Great Britain and Professor Elizabeth Chin, Occidental College, Los Angeles, USA.
The first CTC international conference was held at the European Centre for Children's Products, Faculty of Business Administration, University of Poitiers, France 2004 and has then been organized every second year. Next CTC will take place in Milan, Italy, in 2012.

Read more: www.tema.liu.se/tema-b/ctc2010

The Digital World of Young Children: Emergent Literacy
[Media Access and Media Use]

New ways of learning among young children are emerging as a consequence of the use of digital media. Personalized and mobile media, including cell phones, television, video games, smart devices and computers, surround children across the globe. Opportunities to develop emergent literacy skills are everywhere, and developmental milestones are changing. Factors that may be affected include attention, information processing speed, social collaboration, attitudes and digital literacy.

Until recently, interest in young children's digital media-based learning opportunities has been quite poor. The white paper *The Digital World of Young Children: Impact on Emergent Literacy*, written by early childhood education experts Jay Blanchard and Terry Moore at Arizona State University, contains a good number of references to recent research and studies, indicating an increased interest in the field. Besides research, UN statistics are also provided

on technology/digital media infrastructure and demographics for developing and least developed nations. The report takes a first look at the everyday world of digital tools and media surrounding three- to five-year-old children and focuses particularly on non-intentional learning opportunities in developing and least developed nations.

The white paper, published by the Pearson Charitable Foundation, was presented at the 2010 Consortium for School Networking (CoSN) International Symposium, held in Washington DC February 28-March 3 2010. The report is available in full text online: http://www.pearsonfoundation.org/downloads/ EmergentLiteracy-WhitePaper.pdf.

Source
www.pearsonfoundation.org

In Brief

The Clearinghouse and UNESCO Sign Agreement on Cooperation
[In Brief]

In June 2010 The University of Gothenburg and UNESCO signed an agreement, a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), establishing a close cooperation between the International Clearinghouse on Children, Youth and Media at Nordicom and UNESCO. The aim of the MoU is to develop and promote knowledge about children, youth and media in a global perspective, in particular, the importance of exchange of knowledge regarding media and information literacy is emphasized.

"The challenge of today is to develop policies balancing the two goals of *maximizing opportunities* and *minimizing risks* for young people in the digital media culture" says Professor Ulla Carlsson, director of Nordicom and the Clearinghouse. "To achieve this, there is a need for new knowledge. The MoU provides an important framework for the fruitful cooperation between researchers within and between disciplines and national borders".
The agreement is valid for the coming five years.