

Newsletter on

# Children, Youth & Media *in the World*

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## **CONTENTS:**

### **Children in the World**

[Count Young Citizens in – Media & Elections](#)

[The Role of Inequality and Materialism – Children’s Well-being in Three Industrialized Countries](#)

['Communicating with Children' - a UNICEF Resource Pack](#)

### **Media Access and Media Use**

[Young People and Television Fiction Consumption in Spain](#)

### **Media Education/Media Literacy/Awareness**

[“The Film I Will Never Forget...”](#)

[UNITWIN – Global Chair of Media and Information Literacy](#)

[Videoactive Girls](#)

[The Media Education Movement in Ukraine](#)

[Media Literacy Education for Japanese Children](#)

[ICT Kids Survey in Brazil – Understanding the Challenges in Mediating Brazilian Children’s Internet Use](#)

### **Internet, Computer Games, NICT**

[The Internet Governance Forum 2011](#)

[EU Kids Online Continues](#)

[Teens, Kindness and Cruelty on Social Network Sites in the US](#)

## Children in the World

### Count Young Citizens in – Media & Elections

[Children in the World]

by

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“We have our own opinions and perspectives. We do not say that they are the ultimate truth. People in the media may not agree with them. But that does not mean that they put us down or become offensive while interacting with us. Disagreement must be expressed in ways that are acceptable. We demand respect for our opinions and perspectives.” (1)

*Bhima Sangha, a union of working children in India*

These words ring true for how the media treat children in all countries of the world. Outside the tokenistic ‘children’s pages/programmes’ that showcase youngsters from elite schools, where else do children and their issues feature in the media? How can any media, with a conscience, defend the act of ignoring the needs and concerns of their most vulnerable and most precious population?

### Children as Non-Entities

As statistics go, by their sheer numbers if nothing else, children should be impossible to ignore. For example, 41% of Malaysia’s population consists of children, in Cambodia children account for 47% of the citizenry, and in Nepal and Pakistan they are 48% strong. Yet, in no country of the world does this massive, significant population make it to the main agenda of media or of political processes. The media do not care two hoots about them, the politicians do not even note their existence, and the general public by and large does not take them seriously.

The average mass media scenario in the context of children presents three sets of images. One is of the violation of children’s rights through insensitive/sensational reportage and misrepresentation. The second is of a denial of space for issues related to children, and the third is a denial of space for children to express their own opinions on matters that affect them (2). All three of these aspects indicate that media are far from taking children’s rights and issues seriously. Despite the efforts of children’s movements and number of agencies that advocate for children’s rights, issues related to children fail to garner the attention of media.

Currently, at election time (and indeed at all times), children are non-entities in the media. As they are outside the ‘vote banks’ they totally fall outside the politicians’ radar too.

Clearly, many things have to change – on several fronts.

Considering the abysmal situation of children's rights from the point of view of media practitioners, the first step to redemption would be for them to become aware that children are citizens today – and that adults, including those in the media, have to acknowledge this fact and be accountable to children; that they are bound, as duty bearers by conventions and by sheer good sense, to do so. The media, if they dare, can create enabling spaces where the powers that be are presented for public scrutiny in relation to children's rights. They can also make space available for the expression of diverse views and different perspectives to represent the culture and ethos of society with a definite role of shaping socio-political processes.

### **Consider Children's Rights**

Media should highlight to politicians that 193 countries of the world, through national constitutions and the ratification of international instruments such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), are legally obliged to ensure that the rights of children are realized. A failure to meet this commitment, by all, including politicians and media persons, is a gross violation of children's rights.

Several of the CRC's key articles deal with the basic principles for guiding political decision-making affecting children: The best interests of the child should be a primary consideration in every decision; children have the right to self-determination; their opinions should be heard and valued; they have the right to self-expression and to appropriate information; and each child should be able to enjoy his/her rights without discrimination.

### **Political Engagement in Times of Elections**

For most children today, elections do not amount to much – except being a spectacle that occasionally turns violent. In most cultures, children and youth are kept away from 'politics' as it is considered 'bad' for them until they are 18 years old. Then, at the dawn of this biological milestone, they are expected to attain sufficient civil and political maturity to participate in democracy as the electoral constituency of the state. It is no surprise that the young adults who have no practical experience of participatory democracy fall despairingly short of this expectation. (3)

However, when children themselves have access to knowledge and an understanding of their own rights, and have the means to hold politicians accountable, they have already achieved very commendable results – and have even inspired adults to follow their example.

In Nepal, for example, children pro-actively engaged with conflicting political parties in their country, requesting that they respect 'children as zones of peace' and also take note of children's issues in the comprehensive peace agreement between the government and the Maoists, the signing of which ended the 12-year armed conflict in Nepal. The children's clubs carried out mass mobilization efforts to collect children's views on how their rights should be guaranteed in the forthcoming constitution of Nepal, handing over a letter of appeal to the President and the Chair of the Constituent Assembly. They also organized public hearings, inviting the

constituent assembly members. Furthermore, they succeeded in collecting a million thumbprints, and appealed to the Constituent Assembly to ensure children's rights in the new constitution of Nepal (2008-2009).<sup>(4)</sup>

"We are victims of political, economic, cultural, religious and environmental discrimination. We are children whose voices are not being heard: it is time we are taken into account. We want a world fit for children, because a world fit for us is a world fit for everyone."  
Extract from '*A WORLD FIT FOR US*'<sup>(5)</sup>

The politicians have begun to take note of children – now that they are becoming a force to reckon with.

### **Media Can Contribute to Change**

As influential members of civil society, media practitioners can and should use every opportunity to inform politicians and policymakers of such examples on the one hand, and on the other hand create a similar awareness among voters and children.

All public policies, practices and behaviour, without a single exception, have an impact on children. Members of the media can contribute significantly if they begin to connect the macro to the micro situations in relation to children's rights – and to publicize them. They can use the time and space in their productions to appreciate child rights-friendly policies and the people responsible for them – and also use their space to debunk and expose all that which negatively affects children.

During elections, politicians are supremely sensitive to media vibes, making this a very good time to draw their attention to children's rights – through articles and public debates – and to gauge them on their level of commitment to children and their rights.

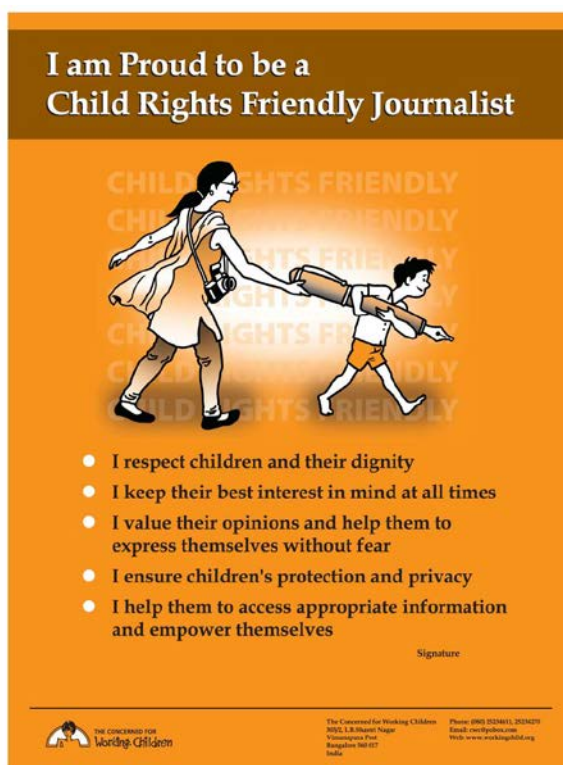
There have been large-scale campaigns by organizations to demand justice for children during elections. In one such example from India, the demands listed included higher allocations for children in the Union Budget; a re-examination of the National Policy for Children to cover issues concerning infanticide, corporal punishment and domestic violence; an ensuring of equal access to education for all children; and a strengthening of the juvenile justice systems<sup>(6)</sup>. Such campaigns would benefit immensely from media support.

In the 'rights framework', a very important role for the media is to guarantee that children's own agendas, as voiced by children, are highlighted before, during and after elections. Children need assistance to move out of their roles as passive bystanders. To achieve this, the media should also create and present opportunities for children to directly express their views to politicians and demand accountability.

These communications should become a part of their democratic education, to allow them to demand recognition as well as understand how their lives are connected to various issues and, above all, realize they can actively influence decisions to be in favour of children's rights.

## Change is Possible - With the Help of Children

Experiences from around the world show that, increasingly, children are making strong affirmations – and they have a way of cutting to the core of the issue and being disarmingly straightforward. They also remain optimistic and believe that change is possible. Hopefully, more members and organizations of the mass media will be motivated by children to choose to perform an affirmative, critical function. They may create forums for civil society discourse and children's participation in the political process, be champions of children's rights, increase the availability of information and knowledge in the public domain, or enable the use of media for the development and protection of as well as education about human rights. Hopefully, they will wake up to their responsibilities and be proud to partner with children and with all child rights advocates to create a world fit for children.



### Notes

1. Bhima Sangha, State Committee Meeting, May 1st 2005, Quoted in 'The media code to realise children's rights, The Concerned for Working Children, 2005
2. *Children's Rights – making Headlines*, Kavita Ratna, The Concerned for Working Children, 2006
3. "Children impact on Governance", Kavita Ratna, The Concerned for Working Children, presented at the international colloquium on children and governance: holding the state accountable, Organised by HAQ Center for Child Rights, 2009
4. Sumnima Tuladhar, Quoted in the Proceedings of the international colloquium on children and governance: holding the state accountable, Organised by HAQ Center for Child Rights, 2009
5. Full Text: 'A World Fit for Us', United National General Assembly Special Session for Children [www.unicef.org/specialsession/child\\_participation/fit\\_for\\_us.html](http://www.unicef.org/specialsession/child_participation/fit_for_us.html)
6. *The Hindu*, March 26, 2009

## **The Role of Inequality and Materialism – Children’s Well-being in Three Industrialized Countries**

[Children in the World]

In 2007, the UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre published an assessment of the lives and well-being of children and young people in 21 nations of the industrialized world. (1, 2) Specifically, the report attempts to measure and compare child well-being under six different headings or dimensions: material well-being, health and safety, education, peer and family relationships, behaviours and risks, and young people’s own subjective sense of well-being. In all, the assessment draws upon 40 separate indicators relevant to children’s lives and children’s rights. Although heavily dependent on the available data, the assessment is also guided by a concept of child well-being that is in turn guided by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

One of many findings was that all countries have weaknesses that need to be addressed, and no country ranks in the top third for all six dimensions of child well-being. However, the United Kingdom (UK) ranked on average lowest of all countries for the six dimensions after the United States.

Following on this report, a new research study released in 2011 (3) gives an in-depth view of over 250 eight to thirteen-year-old children’s experiences in the UK and in two of the countries that on average ranked in the top third, namely Spain and Sweden. The methodology in the new study consisted of ethnographic family case studies followed by a series of friendship groups with children.

Children in all three countries told the researchers that their happiness is dependent on having time with a stable family and plenty of things to do, especially outdoors, rather than on owning technology or branded clothes. Despite this, one of the most striking findings is that parents in the UK said they felt tremendous pressure from society to buy goods for their children; this pressure was felt most acutely in low-income homes. According to the study, consumer culture in the UK contrasts starkly with that in Spain and Sweden, where family time is prioritized, children and families are under less pressure to own material goods, and children have greater access to activities outside the home.

### **Sources and notes**

1. UNICEF (2007) *Child poverty in perspective: An overview of child well-being in rich countries. A comprehensive assessment of the lives and well-being of children and adolescents in the economically advanced nations*. Innocenti Report Card 7, 2007. UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre, Florence
2. Nine of the OECD countries had insufficient data to be included in the overview.
3. Ipsos MORI Social Research Institute in partnership with Dr Agnes Nairn (2011) *Children’s Well-being in UK, Sweden and Spain: The Role of Inequality and Materialism. A qualitative study*. UNICEF, UK

See also: [www.unicef.org.uk/Latest/News/Research-shows-UK-children-caught-in-materialistic-trap](http://www.unicef.org.uk/Latest/News/Research-shows-UK-children-caught-in-materialistic-trap)

## **'Communicating with Children' - a UNICEF Resource Pack** [Children in the World]

Communication is one of the most empowering ways to improve the lives of children and their families. With the hope to nurture this belief and a new resource pack have been created by Barbara Kolucki, MA, and Dafna Lemish, PhD on behalf of UNICEF.

The resource pack consists of a book and a web site to assist anyone in development or humanitarian work who aims to communicate with children about their rights and ways to healthy development. To be effective it is important to make the communication age appropriate, child friendly, strength-based and positive. The gap between theoretical knowledge in the field and experiences from practice needs to be closed. By combining knowledge from child development and media studies and by drawing attention towards positive examples and inspiring resources the authors have collected and illustrated principles and guidelines for the production of quality communication products to be used to improve the lives of children globally.

The publication can be downloaded here: [www.unicef.org/cwc/index.html](http://www.unicef.org/cwc/index.html)

### **Source**

[www.unicef.org/cwc/index.html](http://www.unicef.org/cwc/index.html)

## **Media Access and Media Use**

### **Young People and Television Fiction Consumption in Spain**

[Media Access and Media Use]

by

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This article presents a study (1) on young people's consumption of television fiction, carried out in Catalonia (Spain), within the GRISS research team at the Autonomous University of Barcelona.

The principal aim of the research, which is situated in the theoretical framework of audience studies, is to identify the key factors in adolescents' consumption of serialized television fiction programmes, i.e. serials, series, sitcoms and animated series. The study has focused especially on the fictional programmes specifically targeted at a young audience, like teen series.

### **Method**

In this study, the relationship between the young target group and television fiction has been analysed through three different approaches:

- a) an exploratory and descriptive analysis of the teen series produced in the past two decades (1990s and 2000s), including a case study consisting in a content analysis of the American teen drama Dawson's Creek;
- b) a theoretical approach to the principal studies on young people's reception of fictional television programmes, carried out during the period 1980-2010 in an international context (including interviews with experts); and
- c) a reception analysis of young people's consumption of fictional television programmes, with teenagers aged 15 to 18, who belong to the middle and late adolescence period according to UNICEF's definition (including survey and focus groups).

## Results

In the first phase, the exploratory and descriptive analysis of the teen series, their most remarkable features were identified. Teen series are serialized fiction products, generally dramatic in style, targeted mainly and specifically at teenagers and featuring teen characters. In particular, they narrate the stories and lives of teenagers, focusing on a single main character or a group of lead characters. Their setting is the high school period and their plots are centred on interpersonal relationships, especially love and friendship. Teen series were originally created in English-speaking countries in the 1990s, but in the past decade have also been produced in other countries following different TV formats.

In the second phase, the theoretical approach to the principal studies on young people's reception of fictional television programmes, the results allowed us to suggest a categorization of the studies according to five main categories:

- a) research on the cultivation effect
- b) research on motivation
- c) research on the meanings appropriation by the young people
- d) research on the construction of adolescents' identities and
- e) research on the consumption and use of fictional programmes.

This phase allowed us to describe the field of research and to set the main characteristics of the third phase, the reception analysis, which can be included in category e, above.

Finally, among the main results of the reception analysis, the following points can be emphasized.

First, the adolescents' gratification in relation to their consumption of several themes developed in the series plots, like love relationships, friendship, mystery/suspense, and action/adventure has been observed. Besides, young people gave positive ratings to all kinds of humour content (characters, plots and gags) in serialized television fiction. For example, they greatly appreciated animated series, especially because "They show absurd situations that make you laugh" (Boy, 18 years old).

Second, the adolescents' use of different media in order to consume fictional



television content, including television and the Internet, has been analysed. Their first choice for watching fictional series is the traditional TV broadcast, but their use of the Internet for this purpose is also quite high. In particular, they use the Internet when the TV is not available or if they miss a broadcast episode.

Third, their preference for concrete and varied representations of young people in the series has been examined. The adolescents in this research prefer funny and good-looking characters, but they also like the three-dimensional and complex ones. In particular, they have a strong preference for teen characters in teen situations, because they can identify with such representations of a youth's life: "I feel more identified with a teen character" (boy, 15 years old); "All these conflicts that could happen to us, too... and some way you can identify with" (girl, 15 years old); "You feel closer to a series set in high school" (boy, 17 years old). The results of this study show adolescents' high preference for teen series and teen content in television programming.

#### Note

1. This research has been carried out within the research team GRISS at UAB (Autonomous University of Barcelona) in the context of two research projects financed by the Spanish Ministry of Sciences and Innovation (ref. CSO2009-12822 and SEJ2006-10067), and with the support of the University and Research Commissioner of the Department of Innovation, University and Company of the Generalitat de Catalunya and the European Social Fund. The study has been presented in the author's PhD dissertation, carried out under the supervision of Professors Emili Prado and Núria García-Muñoz.

#### Sources

Fedele, M. (2011). *El consum adolescent de la ficció seriada televisiva*. Doctoral dissertation. Department of Audiovisual Communication and Advertising I, UAB.

Fedele, M.; García-Muñoz, N. (2010). El consumo adolescente de la ficción seriada. *Vivat Academia*, 111, 48-65.

[Available at: [www.ucm.es/info/vivataca/numeros/n111/PDFs/Maddcop.pdf](http://www.ucm.es/info/vivataca/numeros/n111/PDFs/Maddcop.pdf)]

García-Muñoz, N., Fedele, M. (2011b) Television fiction series targeted at a young audience: plots and conflicts portrayed in a teen series. *Comunicar*, 37, 133-140. [Available at: [www.revistacomunicar.com/pdf/preprint/37/14-PRE-10332-Garcia-Fedele-UAB-EN.pdf](http://www.revistacomunicar.com/pdf/preprint/37/14-PRE-10332-Garcia-Fedele-UAB-EN.pdf)].

García-Muñoz, N., Fedele, M. (2011a). The Teen Series and the Young Target. Gender Stereotypes In Television Fiction Targeted to Teenagers. *Observatorio (OBS\*) Journal*, 5(1), 215-226.

[Available at: <http://obs.obercom.pt/index.php/obs/article/view/389>]

## Media Education/Media Literacy/Awareness

### "The Film I Will Never Forget..."

[Media Education/Media Literacy/Awareness]

by

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When they go to the cinema, 95% of Argentine adolescents mainly choose movies from the US. Only 3% have chosen an Argentine film in the past year, and no one mentioned a European or Latin American film. The same happens when young people rent a DVD: almost all of them choose movies from the US and, in terms of genres, they mainly watch science fiction and terror.

The adolescents' unanimous preference for **only one** type of film is not a minor problem. Access to a diversified cinema is essential to building a strong culture capital among young people. If teenagers cannot go to the cinema, or if they only watch one type of film, their culture capital will certainly be reduced.

Is it possible to broaden young people's choices and help them discover films that are different from those they usually watch? How can we explain to them that in this diversity they might discover a film that leaves a trace on their lives forever?

A recent book compiled by the Media Literacy Program of the Ministry of Education in Argentina asked 20 well known Argentine filmmakers *"What film left a trace on your life and should not be missed by any adolescent?"* Twenty filmmakers with different styles, genres, age, and experience participated, all facing the same challenge: to choose a film, only one, that left a trace on their lives forever...

### **Emotional Impact**

The films selected by the professionals came from Argentina, the US, Europe, and Asia; and from very different genres. The most interesting aspect to explore, however, were the reasons they gave for their choices.

Several filmmakers spoke about the film itself and said they chose it because: "of the values reflected"; "of the feelings it generates"; "of its beauty"; "of the theme" and "it is a masterpiece".

Other filmmakers spoke about themselves – because: "it was the first movie for adults I saw in my life"; "it made me cry", "this film determined my career"; "it helped me to grow up"; "it was the first time I saw my father cry".

All the filmmakers agreed to participate in the book (for free, of course). No one rejected the idea. No one said it was impossible to choose only one movie. All of them were able to name one film they will never forget.

The filmmakers' emotional answers show without a doubt that a film can leave a trace on one's life. Perhaps it is only one movie, but it will be remembered forever.

Now, let's go back to our initial question: Is it possible for young people to watch movies that are different from those they usually watch?

If through reading this book, adolescents in Argentina decide to watch one of the 20 films mentioned by the filmmakers, we at the Ministry of Education will have achieved our initial goal: to broaden young people's cinematographic choices and

preferences.

But, if by reading the filmmakers' words adolescents understand the extent to which a movie can affect one's life, they will not only learn about a new movie they had not heard of before; more importantly, they will discover the power and magic of the big screen... In other words, they will discover the secret of the cinema.

### **UNITWIN – Global Chair of Media and Information Literacy** [Media Education/Media Literacy/Awareness]

UNESCO and the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC) have created a network of universities around the world to enhance the cooperation, promotion and support of media and information literacy and intercultural dialogue (MILID). A succeeding Global Chair has been created and will be hosted by the participating universities.

The network, called UNESCO-UNAOC MILID UNITWIN, has several objectives including acting as an observatory for critically analysing the role of media and information literacy as a catalyst for civic participation, democracy and development as well as the promotion of free, independent and pluralistic media. Intercultural and cooperative research on media and information literacy (MIL) and the exchanges between universities and mass media in respect to human rights and cultural diversity will also be enhanced.

Another objective is to promote global actions relating to MIL such as adaptation of the UNESCO MIL curriculum for Teacher Education, launched at the first International Forum on Media and Information Literacy in Fez, Morocco, in June 2011 (See Clearinghouse newsletter No. 1 of 2011).

The network currently includes the following universities:

The Autonomous University of Barcelona, Spain  
The University of Cairo, Egypt  
Tsinghua University, Beijing, China  
Temple University, Philadelphia, USA  
The University of Sao Paulo, Brazil  
Queensland University of Technology, Australia  
University of the West Indies, Kingston, Jamaica  
Mohamed Ben Abdellah University, Fez, Morocco

For further information, please contact Jordi Torrent: [torrent@un.org](mailto:torrent@un.org)

#### **Source**

[www.unaoc.org/communities/academia/unesco-unaoc-milid/](http://www.unaoc.org/communities/academia/unesco-unaoc-milid/)

## **Videoactive Girls**

[Media Education/Media Literacy/Awareness]

In many parts of the world girls and women are deprived of opportunities for education and advancement, not least when it comes to learning how to use technology. In Nigeria and India, the Global Fund for Children (GFC) has established experimental programmes to overcome this problem by providing young women with training in video production.

The Videoactive Girls project gives adolescent girls the opportunity to learn the art of digital storytelling and video production in order to amplify their voices and share their stories with a wider audience. The goal is to help the participating girls develop greater self-confidence and self-empowerment. For example, girls within a partner organization to GFC in Kolkata, India, taking part in the project produced videos sharing stories from their lives on topics like child marriage and gender bias. The use of a participatory approach, whereby the trainer considers him/herself a learner too, increases participants' motivation and makes their learning more effective. Besides building the girls' confidence and giving them an opportunity to speak out, the videos also serve as an advocacy tool to raise awareness of their situation.

Toolkits have been developed to share the experiences from these two projects. By sharing these toolkits, the Global Fund for Children hopes to guide other community-based organizations conducting similar work supporting girls' advancement and self-empowerment by allowing them to create their own video productions.

Read more: [www.projectinggirllpower.org/](http://www.projectinggirllpower.org/)

### **Source**

The Communication Initiative, [www.comminit.com](http://www.comminit.com) (August 2011).

## **The Media Education Movement in Ukraine**

[Media Education/Media Literacy/Awareness]

by

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The media education movement in Ukraine is relatively young. Although different media education projects have always existed, the public discussion about the need to create a media education system on different levels dates back only to 2009.

On the 20th of May, 2010, the Strategy of Implementation of Media Education was adopted by the National Academy of Pedagogical Sciences of Ukraine. The main objective of the Strategy was defined as contributing to the development of an effective system of media education in Ukraine, to provide comprehensive training for children and youth in safe and effective interaction with the modern system of

media, to form their media awareness, media literacy and media competence according to their age and individual characteristics. The Strategy aims at preparing and carrying out a **large-scale phased nationwide experiment on the introduction of media education at all levels**. Priority is given to school media education, which should become a key integrative element of forming an integrated system of media education; to media education provision in higher education, especially in training specialists in the pedagogical profile; and to initiating broad public support for the media education movement, including international cooperation in this area.

In 2011, the Institute of Innovative Technologies of the Ministry of Education, Science, Youth and Sports of Ukraine, together with the expert group of NGO representatives (coordinated by the International Charity Foundation Academy of Ukrainian Press), prepared the pilot curriculum of the Media Education (Media Literacy) course (full-time – 54 hours, 1.5 ECTS credits) for pedagogical universities and the pilot curriculum for teachers' retraining in courses in Media Education (full-time training) at postgraduate education institutions. The programme was debated at a number of regional institutes for retraining teachers, and the discussions held during this process revealed a desire to implement the programme.

Nevertheless, the approaches could be defined as largely preventive, i.e., focused on preventing the unfavourable development of children and youth due to the use of media; and educational and ethical, i.e., desiring to consider moral and ethical issues concerning the material of media. The programme was adopted by the Ministry of Education, Science, Youth and Sports of Ukraine in May 2011.

### **Great Progress in Realizing the Idea of Media Education**

In the framework of summer school, the Academy of Ukrainian Press has trained 16 media educators – instructors at the institutes for retraining teachers – to teach the Media Education course to schoolteachers. These summer school participants formed the vast majority of the coordinators of the media experiment on teaching the Media Education course at 82 Ukraine secondary schools, which began in 2011.

Questionnaires conducted two months after a summer school session showed that the participants mostly appeared to be moderators of the processes of media education promotion, initiating the teaching of the Media Education course to teachers and heads of schools during their training at institutes for retraining teachers.

At the same time, starting in September 2011, the Media Education course was introduced at 82 middle schools as an experiment for eleventh-grade students as a separate, optional subject.

In September 2011, surveys of the teachers/participants in the experiment showed that the teachers of this course in the schools had a relatively low level of media literacy and media competency, and that their great wish was to achieve a high level of competency and gain new knowledge in the sphere of media.

Thus, we can see great progress in advancing the idea of media education. The biggest problem, however, is still the issue of teacher training. The problem lies not as much in theoretical training as in understanding the integration of media education in different spheres of modern life, in acquainting oneself with the real, practical existing models of media education. In our opinion, these skills are best attained within the current models of media education.

### **Media Literacy Education for Japanese Children**

[Media Education/Media Literacy/Awareness]

Mami Komaya in Japan has been studying and performing research on media literacy education for fifteen years, and her findings are now collected in a new book (1). Besides describing different approaches to media literacy education, the book presents her seven studies on media literacy education in the home for pre-school children and for children in elementary school, respectively. She also constructs an ecological environment model of media literacy education and children.

Komaya's format for media literacy education reflects the media values of Japanese people. The studies include practical material such as videos, instructions and lesson plans that she has developed for children, parents and teachers. One special focus is elementary schoolchildren's understanding of commercials.

Komaya's book is well worth reading. It is also needed, as there are few research studies on media literacy education for children of young ages.

#### **Note**

1. Mami Komaya (2011) *Media Literacy Education for Japanese Pre-school and Elementary School Children*. Tokyo, Kazama Shobo Co. Ltd.

### **ICT Kids Survey in Brazil – Understanding the Challenges in Mediating Brazilian Children's Internet Use**

[Media Education/Media Literacy/Awareness]

by

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Information and communication technologies (ICT) have been significantly transforming central aspects of social life, particularly for children. The growing use of the Internet by Brazilian children poses challenges to the government, families, educators, and the children themselves.

Based on the findings of a nationwide survey carried out in Brazil in 2010, the ICT

Kids conducted by CGI.br (5) and NIC.br (6), this article discusses the Internet use of Brazilian children, illustrating the challenges of mediation and briefly presenting policy issues relating to mediation. The study is based on face-to-face interviews in households conducted for the purpose of investigating Internet use and appropriation among children aged five to nine years.

### **Media Literacy and Mediation of Internet Use**

In general terms, media literacy skills involve three basic abilities – knowing how to: access messages, evaluate the quality of information, and produce content using various languages and platforms. Once they have mastered these skills, citizens will be able to better interact with media and, according to Martinsson (2009), through this experience will also be able to improve critical thinking and autonomy, solve problems, and develop more sophisticated communication and expression skills. These skills are critical to the development of an active and informed citizenship.

While on the one hand media literacy is a relevant aspect in the preparation of citizens who are capable of critically using media, the mediation of Internet use on the other hand combines the benefits of the Internet with the minimization of its risks and dangers. Parents, guardians and educators play an important role in the process of mediation (Livingstone & Helsper, 2008). The strategies implemented to regulate the use of media by children vary according to the different circumstances and contexts in which the Internet is accessed, and also according to the resources used to mediate its use and the agents involved in the process. Understanding the process of mediation is relevant since it reflects the changing relations among social structures and agents (Livingstone, 2009). Mediation implies the possibility to influence the relationship one establishes with a specific medium in a certain way (Simões, 2011).

### **Brazilian Children and the Internet**

In Brazil, 51% of children aged five to nine years declared they had already used a computer. When it comes to Internet use, this percentage is only 27%. Computer and Internet use by children in Brazil is uneven nationwide, and varies according to factors like age and socio-economic status. Survey results reveal that the older the age group, the higher the percentage of children who use the Internet. Among five-year-olds the proportion of Internet users is 14%, whereas among nine-year-olds it reaches 34%. Social class (7) also features as a relevant factor: in higher income households, the proportion of Internet users is 57% and in medium income households, it reaches 27%, whereas in lower income households only 8% have used the Internet.

Access to the Internet among children aged five to nine years takes place mainly in the household, as mentioned by 47% of the children who have already accessed the web. Access at another person's home ranked second, mentioned by 37%. There are also other locations of access to the Internet frequently used by children aged five to nine years: school was mentioned by 33%, followed by LAN houses (8) (27%).

It is noteworthy that the location of access to the Internet varies according to the age of the child. In school, for example, the percentage of Internet use is lower among five-year-olds (17%) and higher among nine-year-olds (39%). Interestingly, the situation is reversed when it comes to households: while 50% of five-year-olds claimed to have accessed the Internet from their households, only 42% of nine-year-olds had done so. Older children are the most present at LAN houses – 36% of nine-year-olds claim to access the Internet from this location. Among five-year-olds, this percentage is lower – 28%.

When asked “Who do you use the Internet with?” the majority of children aged five to nine years old claimed to do so alone, that is, unsupervised. More than one-third of Brazilian children in this age range who have already accessed the Internet (39%) mentioned being alone while using the Internet.

When the child is not using the Internet alone, the presence of his/her mother is the most mentioned (35%). Others mentioned were relatives (29%), teachers at school (28%), siblings (26%) and friends (25%). This suggests that the child perceives the presence of different agents of mediation during his/ her Internet activities, and this varies according to various circumstances under which the Internet is used.

Results reveal that the agent of mediation varies according to the location of Internet use. It is at home where the mother (65%), father (64%) and siblings (45%) are the most present during Internet use. Even though the household is the place where the child most often uses the Internet without supervision, it is there that the presence of different mediators is greater. The presence of peers (friends and siblings) is the most mentioned at LAN houses. At school the teacher is by far the most present, contrasting with the more diffuse presence of different mediators at other locations.

With respect to Internet use in the household, nearly half the parents who own computers declared that the computer is located in the living room (44%), that is, a location to which every family member has easy access. Twenty-five per cent declared that the household computer is located in the parents’ bedroom. On the other hand, 21% of parents of five to nine-year-old children declared that the computer is located in the child’s bedroom, an environment that allows for greater privacy during online activities.

Another important aspect revealed by the ICT Kids 2010 survey refers to the different sources of ICT skills acquisition by children, which may be relevant in the promotion of media literacy. Twenty per cent of all children who had already used a computer declared they had learned to do so on their own. Teachers are the most mentioned in this process – cited by 37% of children who have used a computer – stressing the relevance of the school environment for this learning process. Relatives were mentioned by 27% of the children: the mother by 23% and siblings by 22%.

In terms of online activities, 90% of Brazilian children aged five to nine years are playing online games. Looking up information on the Internet is carried out by 35% of children, social networking was mentioned by 29%, and 25% declared that they chatted with friends or relatives via MSN.



## **Parental Mediation Patterns in Brazilian Households**

The ICT Kids 2010 survey investigated the following strategies for parental mediation of their children's online activities: (i) Blocking Internet websites; (ii) Controlling the time spent online; (iii) Sitting with the child when online; (iv) Talking to the child about Internet use; (v) Checking the websites visited by the child; (vi) Does not control or restrict Internet use. Among these, the most mentioned activity is talking to the child about Internet use (41% of parents/guardians); in second place is controlling the time spent online (34%); 31% of parents claimed to sit with the child when online; 21% declared that they do not restrict or control the child's Internet use ; and finally, 20% check websites visited by the child, while blocking Internet websites was the least mentioned activity (only 15% of parents/guardians).

In terms of gender differences, girls in Brazil are more subject to parental mediation of Internet use than boys: 28% of parents claimed not to control or restrict boys' Internet use but when it comes girls this percentage is halved to 14%.

Another factor that seems to influence parental mediation is the Internet experience of the parents themselves. The ICT Kids 2010 survey measured whether parents are Internet users (have used the Internet within the three previous months). The data revealed that parents who are Internet users tend to mediate more of their child's online activities than those who are not active Internet users. Among parents who declared that they do not control or restrict the online activities of the child, 35% are not Internet users while only 16% are.

Similarly, the presence of a child's mother or father during online activities is more frequent when parents are Internet users. Furthermore, parents whose children declared to have acquired ICT skills with them are predominantly Internet users. This suggests that the parents' Internet skills and online experiences will have an impact on whether and how they will mediate their children's use of the Internet. In this sense, media literacy is an important aspect of the discussion since, if well provided to the average citizen, it can affect mediation strategies.

## **Conclusion**

Protecting children and providing a safer environment for online activities demand the discussion of a political agenda that approaches this challenge, and also require the definition of a proper framework to design public policy. This exploratory study contributes to the understanding of phenomena related to the mediation of young children's Internet use in the Brazilian context by providing information to policymakers, educators and parents who seek to understand the risks of online activities.

Further research is necessary to evaluate the impact of parental mediation on Brazilian children's online experiences to understand its effectiveness and to minimize children's exposure to risks. Child online protection is currently insufficiently discussed in Brazil, and data on children's Internet use and mediation

will allow for the definition of a proper framework for public policy development there.

#### Notes

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2. Guilherme Canela is Coordinator of the Communication and Information Sector, UNESCO, Brasilia Office
3. Juliano Cappi is Survey coordinator, CETIC.br
4. Tatiana Jereissati is Survey analyst, CETIC.br
5. CGI.br – the Brazilian Internet Steering Committee
6. NIC.br – the Brazilian Network Information Center
7. The Brazilian economic classification criteria, developed by the Brazilian Association of Research Companies (Abep), was used to create economic (or social) classes for the survey. Its objective is to create an economic classification of society based on an inventory of assets – of household equipment – and on the head of household's level of education (CGI.br, 2011).
8. A LAN house is a commercial establishment where people can pay to use a computer with access to the Internet. This establishment usually offers many services, among them printing, photocopying and typing. LAN house is the term most commonly used in Brazil, but in some places it can also be called cyber café or Internet café (CGI.br, 2011).

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## Internet, Computer Games, NICT

### The Internet Governance Forum 2011

[Internet, Computer Games, NICT]

by

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The Internet Governance Forum (IGF) is a global multi-stakeholder forum, initiated by the UN, where the Internet's governance and future are discussed. The sixth conference took place 26--31 September 2011 in Nairobi, Kenya, and had the theme "Internet as a catalyst for change: access, development, freedoms and

innovation". The Swedish Media Council (*Statens medieråd*) attended the IGF to monitor seminars concerning children, youth and the Internet.

### **Internet Should Not Only Be Safe, But Also Feel Safe**

Media literacy played a prominent role at this year's IGF. In previous years discussions concerned infrastructure, access and speed, while this year the concerns were safe/right/wrong usage, media literacy education, behaviours online, etc. Although children learn while online, they should attain media literacy and develop social and technical competence.

### **Youth Participation at the IGF**

A group of young people from the UK participated. The purpose of having young people present is to make young people's voices heard and meet the industry, governments and NGOs. The young people were prepared to talk about the Internet based on their own experience, and participated as youth panels at a number of seminars. They were asked questions by their mentor and also asked questions themselves.

Some seminars saw the participation of young people from both East Africa and Europe, and the differences in Internet usage were notable. In Europe young people use the Internet for amusement, while in East African countries it is used by youths to discover the world and strengthen themselves, and as a tool in local development work.

The young people from the UK suggested that we talk about human rights and citizenship instead of digital rights and digital citizenship, that all subjects need a youth perspective, and that we can learn from each other across generations. The youths felt that online anonymity fosters equality but that they need to learn more, and that it is necessary to have a dialogue about what online privacy is and why it is important.

The youth panel was brought to the IGF by the British organization Childnet, who said that the young people were not used to talking about the Internet and were thus not familiar with the concepts used during the conference.

For more information about the Forum, please visit: [www.intgovforum.org/cms/](http://www.intgovforum.org/cms/)

For more information in English about the Swedish Media Council, please visit: [www.statensmedierad.se/Om-Statens-medierad/In-English](http://www.statensmedierad.se/Om-Statens-medierad/In-English)

### **EU Kids Online Continues**

[Internet, Computer Games, NICT]

The large research project EU Kids Online II (2009-2011) has now reached its end. It was headed by Professor Sonia Livingstone and Dr Leslie Haddon at London School

of Economics and Political Science (LSE), UK, and financed by the EC Safer Internet plus Programme. The project aimed to gather concrete empirical data to inform the promotion of a safer online environment for children. Interviews with approximately 25,000 internet-using nine to 16-year-olds and (separately) one of their parents in 25 European countries were performed. The interviews dealt with, among other things: opportunities presented by the internet; risks on the internet; children's experienced harm of something on the internet; children's digital skills; what the parents know about their children's internet experiences; and parent, teacher and peer mediation.

Many reports, as well as articles, papers and presentations, have been published from the project, and a couple of books are underway. Besides publications presenting data for all participating countries, a network of research teams in each country have published national findings.

In September 2011, the final report was launched: *EU Kids Online September 2011* by Sonia Livingstone, Leslie Haddon, Anke Görzig and Kjartan Ólafsson, with members of the EU Kids Online Network. In connection with this launch an international conference was held at LSE on 22-23 September: "Children, risk and safety online: Research and policy challenges in comparative perspective". Some 250 delegates – researchers, policymakers, industry, educators, NGOs and government – from over 40 countries participated. The conference included plenary sessions and several parallel research sessions.

The project publications – as well as reports, books, etc., from the preceding project EU Kids Online I (2006-2009) – are available at [www.eukidsonline.net](http://www.eukidsonline.net) together with the conference information.

### **EU Kids Online III**

And the project continues. In November 2011, EU Kids Online III started. It is a multi-national thematic network that will go on for three years. This new project is also funded by the EC Safer Internet Programme and led by Sonia Livingstone and Leslie Haddon. It embraces an even larger network than EU Kids Online II, encompassing 33 European countries. The network will identify all available research, conduct in-depth statistical analyses of the EU Kids Online database (now publicly accessible), and explore qualitative ways to research the meanings of online risk for children.

Read more: [www.eukidsonline.net](http://www.eukidsonline.net)

### **Teens, Kindness and Cruelty on Social Network Sites in the US** [Internet, Computer Games, NICT]

The social and emotional climate teens experience on social network sites is the focus of a recent study by the Pew Internet & American Life Project ([www.pewinternet.org](http://www.pewinternet.org)). Do teens find these relatively new online social spaces

friendly, hostile or somewhere in between? How do they respond to the experiences they have?

The use of social media has become so common in the lives of American teens that it is almost synonymous with being online. Among teens 12-17 years old, 95% are now online and 80% of them are users of social network sites (SNS). Concern has been raised among parents, teachers, policymakers and advocates about the nature and intensity of online encounters among teens, personally felt or observed. Since this environment still is quite new, social norms of behaviour and etiquette are still being formed and may vary from group to group.

### **Mostly Positive Experiences**

Most of the teens in the survey who use social media say their peers are mostly kind to one another on these sites (69%); however, this reflects a less positive view than that of adults using SNS (85%). As many as 88% of teens using social media have witnessed others be mean or cruel on SNS, and 15% have been the target of online meanness themselves. No statistically significant differences by age, gender, race or socio-economic status could be noted. Overall, however, teens responding to the survey were more likely to report at least one positive experience (78%) from their interactions on SNS than negative (41%).

### **Responses to Online Cruelty**

According to the teens online meanness or cruelty is most often ignored, which is also their own most common reaction, but many report having seen others defend or stand up for the victim. According to the teens in the survey, parents are the source they turn to for advice about online behaviour and how to cope with their experiences. But other sources of general advice on safe and responsible online use are also mentioned, like peers, siblings and teachers.

The data presented are from a three-part, multi-modal study including interviews with experts, several focus groups with middle- and high-school students, and a national telephone survey of teens and parents. The study was performed in April-July, 2011.

### **Source**

<http://pewinternet.org/Reports/2011/Teens-and-social-media.aspx>