

Empowering Future Generations through Critical Media Education

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ABSTRACT

This article explores the transformative potential of critical media education in preparing future generations to navigate an increasingly complex and digitalized media environment. As digital communication technologies continue to evolve, the ability to critically assess, interpret, and respond to media messages has become essential—not only for personal empowerment but also for active, informed citizenship. The paper repositions media literacy as a dynamic, future-facing discipline that transcends traditional formats, encompassing digital, social, and interactive media. By tracing the development of critical media education and its expanding role in both formal and informal learning contexts, the article highlights how these skills are foundational to building media-resilient youth. Emphasizing critical thinking, ethical engagement, and participatory culture, the paper outlines practical strategies for embedding media literacy into educational frameworks. Ultimately, it argues that equipping young people with robust media competencies is vital to fostering sustainable, democratic societies in the 21st century.

Keywords: Media literacy, Critical media education, Digital communication technologies, Future generations, Critical thinking, and Media competencies

INTRODUCTION

We all live in two worlds; the real world and the media world. The real world is where we come in direct contact with other people, locations and events. We feel that the real world is limited, that is, we cannot get all the experiences and information we want from the real world. In order to get those experiences and information, we journey into the media world.

Therefore, in life, we are continually entering the media world to get experiences and information we cannot get very well in our real lives. But when we finish these experiences, we bring them back into our lives. We are constantly crossing the border between the real world and the media world.

However, there are many places where the border between the real world and the media world is not clear. To illustrate this, consider the following question: Is the news real? Some of you may reply, of course it is real. It is what happened. Journalists do not make up news stories. But when you expose yourself to the news, are you not in the media world? Reading a newspaper or watching the evening news on television means you have left your world of direct experiences and crossed over into the media world. If you were present when an event took place, then it happened in your real world that is difference; real world is occurrence and often and news coverage is media world. So the line between the two worlds must be drawn.

Increasingly, the border between the real world events and the media world is becoming harder to discern. The media does not wait for us to cross over into their world; they bring their messages into our world-much of our exposure to media messages is not planned. We find media messages coming to us every day in the real world but we do not realize how great our media exposure is. We take all these media exposure for granted.

After contributing to the blurring of the line, is the media presenting many of their messages as reality programming? As the media world grows both bigger and more varied, and as the media pump messages into our world without us deciding to cross over the media world to search for experiences, we are in danger of having our sense of reality taken away from us. We can let this happen, or we can take control of our lives.

Taking control is what media literacy is all about. Becoming more literate gives you a much clearer perspective on the border between your real world and the world manufactured by the media-when you are media literate you have clear maps to help you navigate better in the media world so that you can get to those experiences and information you want without becoming distracted by things that are harmful to you. You are able to build the life that you want rather than letting the media build the life they want for you.

Media literacy is a perspective that actively use when exposing ourselves to the media in order to interpret the meaning of the messages we encounter. We build our knowledge structures; we need tools and new material. The tools are our skills. The raw material is information from the media and from the real world. Active use means that we are aware of the messages and consciously interacting with them (Potter, W.J. 2001). But according to Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary, (1994) literacy is the ability to read and write while media is mans of mass communication, e.g. TV, radio, newspapers and books. Yet Wikipedia defines literacy as the ability to read and write. Broadly, literacy may be viewed as "particular ways of thinking about and doing reading and writing" with the purpose of understanding or expressing thoughts or ideas in written form in some specific context of use.

Nevertheless those who fail to develop their literacy in the media will be swept along on a trade of messages. They will have fall sense that they know what is going on in the world simply because they are exposed to so much information. All of this information is superficial unless you analyze it to build a deeper understanding-the media however, can give us a false sense that we are knowledgeable.

Interestingly, our constant exposure to media messages influences the way we think about the world and about ourselves. It influences our world and about ourselves. It influences our beliefs about crime, education, religion, family and the world in general. If our exposure is passive then the mundane details in those messages expert their effects without our awareness. From this massive base of misleading or inaccurate images, we infer our beliefs about the world. However, all of us must continuously decide how closely media messages reflect real life. Over time, we have to come to accept that much of the media world as his real world. For example, who is the President of Kenya? Are you sure? Have you ever meet him? If you have not meet him, how do you know he exists? If you have met him, how do you know he is who he says he is? Consider the degree to which you trust the information and experiences you bring from the media word back into your real world.

Being media literate is also so important. Media ability is the ability to apply critical thinking skills to the messages, signs and symbols transmitted through mass media (Cynthia Vinney, 2023).Media messages is not always what they seem. There are often more layers of meanings. The more you are aware of the layers of meaning in messages, the more you can control the selection of which meanings you want. Being more analytical is the first step towards controlling how the media stay in control of you perceiving the world.

According to Everette Dennis, formally Executive Director of the Freedom forum Media Studies Center at Colombia University in New York, media literacy is "potentially as demanding and poisonous to the human spirits as contaminated water and food is to our physical well-being" (Dennis, 1993.4).The media industries provide us with many products that we desire –products that are good for us; but this same media industries also produce harmful by- products and dump them into our culture. If we are not media literate, we don't know the difference and we consume the toxic elements along with the food.

Therefore, developing a high degree of media literacy requires more of that knowledge; it requires the development of skills, more levels of meaning you will be able to perceive in the media-that will help elaborate the beginning of knowledge structures.

Media literacy (Potter, W. 2001.4) is a perspective that we actively use when exposing ourselves to the media in order to interpret the meaning message we encounter. We build our perspective from knowledge structures. To build our knowledge structures we need tools and raw materials. The tools our skills. The raw material is information from the media and from the real world. Active use means that we are aware of the messages and are consciously interesting with them so. The purpose of media literacy is giving us more control over interpretations.

Historically, the earliest attempts at media literacy education are often traced back to the British film institute pushed in the late 1920s and early 1930s to teach analytical skills to media users. Around the same time in America, the Wisconsin Association for Better Broadcasters ought to teach citizens to be more critical consumers of the media.

However, the goal of these initial media literacy efforts, which continued into the 1960s, was to protect students from media by warning them against its consumption. Despite this perspective, the dominance of media –and television in particular continued to grow, even as interest in media literacy education waned

More recently, the advent of the internet and portable technologies that enable us to consume media anywhere and anytime has led to a resurgence in the call for media literacy. Yet the goal is no longer to prevent people from using thoughtful media consumers. In Britain, it has become a standard part of the school curriculum, and in the US, a centralized approach to teaching practical media literacy skills is key.

Education for media literacy also encourages people to ask questions about what they watch, hear and read. Example of media examined includes television, video games, photographs and audio messages. Media literacy education provides tools to help people develop receptive media capability to critical analyze messages, offers opportunities for learners to broaden their experiences of media and helps them develop generate media capability to increase creative skills in making their own media messages.

THEORETICAL APPROACHES AND METHODOLOGY

The study in this chapter employed eclectic approach on how to practice media Literacy-three components; experience, active application skills and maturation. Media scholar (potter W.J 2001) observes that all media messages include four dimensions;

Cognitive; the information that is being conveyed

Emotional; the underlying feeling that are being expressed

Aesthetic; the overall precision and artistry of messages

Moral the values being conveyed through the message

Media psychologist Karen Dill-Shackleford suggested that we can use four dimensions as a jumping off point to improve our media literacy skills, for example, let's say while streaming videos online were exposed to an advertisement for a miracle weight loss drug. In order to better evaluate what the ad is really trying to tell us, we can break it down as research questions arise:

On the cognitive dimension we can assess what information that the ad is conveying to us by asking some of the following questions;

What does the ad promise the drug will do?

Does it seem likely the drug can do?

Does it seem likely the drug can deliver on those promises?

Who would need this kind of drug?

On the emotional dimension, we can evaluate the feelings of the creator on how ad want us to feel;

Do they want us to feel insecure about our weight?

Do they want us to imagine the positive ways this drug could change our lives??

Do they want us to envision the satisfaction we could feel after the drug delivers its quick fix?

On the aesthetic dimension, we can determine how the ad employs messages and image to make us believe the product will deliver on its “after” image nappy?

Does the ad offer testimonials from people that are identified as experts?

On the moral dimension we can examine what the ad makers wanted to say;

Are they equating thinness with happiness?

Are they sending the message that it's a moral failing when someone is overweight?

Are they saying that one has to be loved and respected?

This is one avenue and methods for learning to practice media literacy in everyday life. Remember, the purpose of media literacy in every day's life isn't to enjoy media less, it's to give people tools to be active media consumers.

Not only will media literacy enable you to detect, analyze and evaluate negative or false media messages, it will actually enable you to enjoy media more because it puts control over the media back into your hands. And research shows this is likely to increase your health and happiness.

This study's description research design aided in describing the adoption of AI in newsrooms in Kenya, the factors that drive or hinders its adoption, and the opportunities journalists feel they are offered by adopting AI in the Kenyan newsrooms. That is why the research method adopted is qualitative in approach – it allowed the researcher to go beyond a surface – level comprehension of the problem to deeper understanding. Babbie (2016) posits that descriptive research design attempts to collect data to describe phenomena, conditions, or populations methodologically. Therefore, this study's descriptive research design aided in describing the adoption of AI in Kenya's media practices, the factors that drive or hinder its adoption and the opportunities journalists feel they are offered by adopting AI.

During the study, the researcher targeted personnel working in the media houses digital departments (Weekly citizen and standard newspapers) – media companies were chosen for the strength of their digital platforms, which include several websites and social media accounts, in addition to traditional journalistic content collecting, packaging, and publication. Interviews were done and informants from the two chosen media companies and sampling were done. The researcher selected participants who have knowledge, skills, expertise, and experience on the study problem: reporters (online waters, social media journalists) sub-editors and editors (content/growth), graphic designers and software engineers or web developers. From here, data was generated through their views – a multi-case strategy from informants – data gathering methods to comprehensively obtain information on how the entity runs or performs (Mills, et al, 2010).

FACTORS INFLUENCING DEVELOPMENTS IN MEDIA LITERACY

The development of higher levels of media literacy relies on three components; Experience-the greater our potential is for developing level of media literacy. While we are exposed to the messages, we need to be active in applying in applying our skills. Active application of skills is the second component. Thirdly, is the maturation –this is readiness

Potter, W.J., (2001:17) writes; “sometimes proud parents exaggerates their children's level of development. Proud parents believe that their children can understand and produce much more than they can really can. Sometimes adults overestimate their own abilities, especially concerning media literacy. Being an adult doesn't guarantee that you are highly media literate.”

Experience

The more experience you have with the media and the real world, the more your chance you have to develop your media literacy. More experience can translate into more elaborate knowledge structures. However, age does

not automatically translate into experience. If we stay entrenched in the same habits and place, we are not moving through life-we are not moving through time. This is because a repetitive exposure to only one of a kind medium, vehicle or messages are not broadening experience, so cannot increase media literacy.

Active Application of Skills

We need to be active in applying certain skills when we encounter the media. More exposure or experience will not amount much-we need to apply our skills consciously in order to filter out messages we evaluate as inaccurate, misleading or not useful. We need to analyse messages to get below their surface and perceive deeper meaning. We need to compare what we see in media messages with what we know from our knowledge structures. In short, we need to be active in interacting with the media.

However, if you stay fixed in passive state the continual flow of messages will only serve the reign force a narrow, unbalanced set of information unless you actively seek a wider variety of sources of information your knowledge structure will not become stronger and you will fall into the trap of believing that you are well informed because of all your exposure- when you are scaly becoming less informed as the world changes without you being aware of it.

Unless we stay in our processing messages, our position on the media literacy continuum can degrade to lower levels. Without continually practicing skills, those skills will deteriorate.

Without continually updating and adjusting our knowledge structures, they quickly become out of date and cluttered with unprocessed information.

Maturation

This factor is especially important during childhood and this is why children are often treated as a special group when it comes to media. Our capacities increase as we grow from infancy through adolescence .Physically, as we age from infancy we are able to run faster, jump higher and even lift heavy objects.

We mature cognitively-when we are young, our minds are not developed enough to allow understanding of obstruct thoughts like those required by mathematical reasoning e.g. multiplying 4x5 which is very difficult for us when we are at 4 years. We mature emotionally (Goleman, 1995) and morally (Kohlberg, 1981).As we reach higher levels of maturation intellectually, emotionally, and morally, we are able to perceive more in media messages.

MEDIA LITERACY EDUCATION

While Media Literacy is expanded conceptualization of literacy that includes the ability to access and analyze media messages [Wikipedia] as well as create, reflect and take action, using power of information and communication to make difference in the world, media literacy education is the process used to advance media literacy competencies and it is intended to promote awareness of media influence and create an active stance towards both consuming and creating media.

Education for media literacy encourages people to ask questions about what they watch, hears and read, for example through television, video games, photographs and audio messages. Media Literacy education provides tools to help people develop receptive media capability to critically analyze messages, offer opportunities for learners to broaden their experience of media capability to increase creative skills in making their own media messages.

In the recent past, a wide variety of media literacy education initiatives increased collaboration in some nations of Europe and North America- many cultural, social and political factors shape how media literacy education initiative are believed to be significant. Mind over media literacy is an example of an international collaboration in media Literacy education; It is digital learning platform that relies on crowd dance, examples of contemporary

propaganda shared by educators and learners from around the world. For scholars who are developing media literacy programs, the study of propaganda has become increasingly important, especially with the rise of fake news and disinformation.

However, media literacy programs may emphasize the component below;

Critical thinking; understanding how media literacy works and how media messages are constructed questioning the motivation of content producers in order to make informed choices about content selection and use; recognizing different types of media content and evaluating content for truthfulness, reliability and value; recognizing and managing online security and safe risks.

Creativity; Advancing competencies through activities that involves creating, building and generating media content, often through collaboration.

International dialogue; practices of human communication, empathy and social interaction including those that challenge radicalization, violent extremism and hate speech.

Media Skills; The ability to search, find, navigate and use media content and services.

Participation and civic engagement; Active participation in the economic, social, creative, cultural aspects of society using media in ways that advance democratic participation and fundamental human rights.

Research shows that media literacy is associated with increased resilience in children and youth that is effective in a wide variety of context and learning environment. Media literacy competencies are frequently measured using self-report measures, where people rate or agree with various statements. These measures are easy to administer to a large group of people. Some researchers use performance –or competency –based measure to examine people’s actual ability to critically analyze news, advertising or entertainment.

Media literacy programs that focus on political attitudes and behavior are thought to provide the cognitive and social scaffolding needed for civil engagement. Research on high school students has shown that participation in a media literacy program was positively associated with information –seeking motives, media knowledge and news analysis skills. Experimental research has shown that young people aged between 15-27 who had received media literacy education in schools were better able to evaluate the accuracy of political content, even when it aligned with their existing political beliefs

In conclusion, therefore, digital media literacy is a valuable skill for digital age. According to David Bevigson, CEO and founder, signal AI, data is essential to business in today’s digital world. However, simply having the right technology and technical skills to handle rising level of data is not enough. Organizations need a workforce that has the ability to look beyond the numbers in front of them, interpretation the data to make informed decisions.

With today’s younger generations growing up in a digital –first world, there is a minimum level of digital media literacy that is essential, not just in everyday life-it is media literacy, layered with digital .the influence of social media, technology and online resources is rampant and unavoidable. However, with this increased reliance on technology, digital media literacy is gaining recognition as the most valuable tool for lifelong learning.

It’s important for everyone to have a basic understanding of how media works, and how to find accurate and honest reporting. We no longer gather news from just papers but through televisions, social media and on-line reporting. There is an increased number of venues in which information can be received and it is important to understand the technology needed to access, compile and share the information. However, the technology which uses AI as its foundation, but can generate fake media and news post whose sources remain questionable.

Nevertheless, digital media literacy enables people to have skills, knowledge and understand to make full use of the opportunities presented by both traditional and new communications services. Being literate in digital media

also helps people to manage content and communication and protect themselves and their families from potential risks associated with using their services (Ofcom)

But the grand question is; how do we go about addressing and combating this challenge? As a society we need to confront this issue with a top down approach, beginning with the way we educate our children schools. Change the curriculum must be implemented, which reflect the increasing requirements to analyses and interpret media and complex data sets in the workplace.

With the proliferation of digital technologies fundamentally changing the nature of the workforce ecosystem, it is in turn exposing industries across the broad to digital media literacy skills shortage. The challenges this creates should be embraced through innovative solutions that rework traditional education curriculum at a primary level all the way through to employer –employee relationships.

This is an area of importance, as education policy must be adapted to help parents and students learn at home, increase digital media literacy and boost digital education structures. The ability to interrogate how data is being used to tell story and show how it visualized is a virtual skill.

The lack of digital education has led to the current imbalance workforce between the need for technical skills and the available work force to provide them. While this deals directly with “hard” skills like tech implementation, the corresponding “soft” skills of the same coin include the ethics behind the technology and the objective analyses of the news and research, where they came from, how they were conducted, and if they were create in good faith.

Rapid and on-going changes in the nature of work itself are evolving the relationship between learning and work making them more integrated and connected than ever before. Reskilling and upskilling have become imperative to growth for organizations This creates both a challenge and an opportunity to build robust work-centered learning programs, helping people consume information and up level their skills in the natural course of their day-to-day jobs. To help accomplish this, organizations must begin to think about how they can build a data culture that encourages answers to a wide range of exploratory questions around data in society and business.

How do we make our employees more curious about data storytelling? How can we better encourage people to ask open-ended questions about data, and not take everything at face value?

Digital media literacy has become important for almost every professional line of work. Companies need more people with the ability to interpret news, information and data, to draw insights and to ask the right questions in the first place. These are skills that everyone can develop, and there are many ways for individuals to up-skill themselves and for companies to support them.

Earlier this year, the Department of Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) announced pro- technology regulations and initiatives to ensure an ongoing focus include ethical online advertising, developing UK’s National Data Strategy and working on a response to the Cairncross Review into Journalism in the digital age which includes a digital media literacy strategy.

However, Artificial Intelligence (AI) is one of those technologies that directly lends itself in helping empower digital media literacy efforts. The technology itself is able to:

Aggregate content from exclusive, premium and reliable sources around the world.

Categorize the subject matter(s) within the article and determine sentiment

Highlight quotes and display the results in an easy-to-read format

Accurately recognize and tag entities (people, places, organizations and companies) and topics (any subject our clients want to follow from acquisitions to workplace diversity).

It is important that the AI is built ethically, with diverse team of programmers to ensure its free of bias – at signal AI the purpose us to provide customers with insights into the media, using AI to complete analysis and processing a vast amounts of global textual data including news, spokespeople, quotes, online content and marketing material as well as academic and legal documentation.

So, digital media literacy is in our DNA because using information and technology to find, evaluate, create, and then share that information. While we use AI to reduce the burden that the human worker faces while analyzing data, the use of that technology itself requires training and updates as time and ethics progress.¹

¹ <https://newdigitalage.co/technology/digital-media-literacy-the-most-valuable-skill-for-the-digital-age/>

DIGITAL LITERACY IN KENYA

Kenya is still experiencing the birthing pains of creating a foundation of a digitally savvy population (Kipkemboi, N. 2004). With a median age of 19 years, reflective of how youthful the country is, digital literacy remains a core pillar in establishing a digital-first country.

The unveiling of the DigiTruck: Digital literacy skills programme at the Mobile World Congress exhibitions in Barcelona recently attended by the author has revealed the digital skills gap still needs to be filled.

However, following the Kenya DigiTruck, a collaborative project by the Ministry of ICT and Digital Economy through the ICT Authority, Ministry of Youth Affairs, Huawei, Safaricom, gsm, Close the Gap, Computers for Schools in Kenya and National Affirmative Action Fund, it is clear the hunger by Kenyan Youth for digital skills is high.

DigiTruck conducts free training on digital skills, targeting the youth via a mobile classroom that is aimed at the unreachable. The report has revealed that one of the most acquired skills over the last four years the programme has been running is maximum utilization of smartphones. The use for jobs by the Kenyan Youth demographic that is hardest hit by unemployment. The skills acquired through DigiTruck are also coming in handy in the self-employment arena.

Use of MS Excel to calculate business budget for instance, went up from 37 per cent before the training to 71 per cent after the training. This is a huge step, especially in the micro and small businesses, which are highly informal, to create proper record keeping, a huge factor in the ability to get credit.

Further, through the digital skills training that targets rural communities, use of PowerPoint to make presentations to show business ideas went up from 34 per cent to 70 per cent. Amidst the tough economic times that many Kenyans are facing, the DigiTruck: Digital Literacy skills program report noted that over the four years of the programme, the percentage of those who buy things online dropped from 59 per cent prior to the training 50 per cent after the training.

The demand for general computer and packages training remains high for the majority of learners, with programming and coding, web development and design and digital marketing following closely. The demand for these skills is higher for the age group 30 – 35 years.

The report noted myriad challenges that Kenya needs to overcome if digital literacy is to be eradicated from the community to pave way for a proficient digital super highway. Many rural areas remain inaccessible, making the biggest challenge for students to be long distances to training areas. Inadequate time and poor transport or lacks of fare come close second and third, respectively.

However, when all is said and done, what matters is the bottom line: are the trained individuals able to create or get a job and in the process make money? Well, when the DigiTruck project started, 37 per cent were unemployed, but after training, 31 per cent remained without employment, reflecting a marginal drop of 6 per cent self-employment rate declined 7 per cent, those studying increased by 3 per cent, those employed part-time 4 per cent and those employed full-time increased 5 per cent.

With this report as a reflection of digital literacy intervention at a grassroots level, the Kenya Kwanza regime that was elected on a bottom-up economic transformation model, with digital superhighway being one of the pillars, can actually take huge lessons for further intervention.

Infrastructure and logistics improvements are of critical importance to ease access across the country, provide reliable power and enable provisions of laptops to participants for use during and after training. There is also need to strengthen partnerships with local business and industries to create more job opportunities for trained individuals, create entrepreneurship – focused modules for income generation, tailoring payment plans to course cost and consider exploring financial assistance or scholarships for individuals having financial obstacles.

Therefore, as the world is quickly adopting Artificial Intelligence and 5G, a population that is well equipped in basic digital literacy skills should ideally experience a faster transition to the new and future tech. no wonder (Mathiu, M., 2004) writes and concludes in his opinion column “If I were to set up a media organization, the first thing I would buy is the most advanced AI in the market. Not to write stories for me but automate and make brutally efficient the entire news process: Research and back grounding, analysis, member crunching and report writing, productivity monitoring, drafting of routine stories, tasking and a million other simple tasks. And free the journalists to do what a computer will not in the near future: Empathize, create, imagine, feel, reach out and all those other things that creates a connection with the consumer and builds a reputation.”²

² Mr. Mathiu, a media consultant Steward-Africa, is a former Editor-in-Chief of Nation Media Group.

As the digital age permeates every corner of the nation, Kenya’s youth are emerging as the architect of change, wielding transformative power if digital literacy. Digital literacy is opening doors of opportunity and igniting a spirit of innovation and empowerment. In Kenya, as in many parts of the world, access to technology remains unequally distributed. Urban centres bask in the glow of high – speed internet and cutting-edge devices (Obiero., March 2, 2004), while rural and marginalized communities struggle with limited connectivity and scarce access to digital resources. This digital divide threatens to perpetuate socio-economic. Yet amidst these challenges lies a beacon of hope – the power of digital literacy to bridge divides and level the playing field.

However, digital literacy is more than just computer literacy; it is a dynamic force that equips young people with the skills and knowledge to not only navigate the digital world, but to thrive in it. From coding and programming to digital marketing and entrepreneurship, digital literacy opens up a world of opportunity – it empowers Kenya’s youth to unleash their creativity and forge new paths to success. Innovative initiatives are springing up in Kenyan schools and communities. Coding clubs, STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) programmes and mobile learning platforms are revolutionizing way young Kenyans engage with technology.

Classrooms are being transformed into hubs of creativity and exploration where digital literacy, seamlessly integrated into the curriculum and extracurricular activities, prepares students for challenges and opportunities of the ever-evolving digital economy.

Beyond the classroom, digital literacy is catalyzing economic growth. Tech start-ups, e-commerce ventures, freelance business and digital skills training centres are reshaping the country’s economic landscape. Armed with digital skills, the youth are trapping into global markets and fostering a culture of innovation and entrepreneurship.

Therefore, in the age of digital transformation, Kenya’s youth are not mere observers, but architects of change. By embracing digital literacy, Kenya can unlock the boundless potential of its youth. Kenya is laying in the foundation for a brighter future when we shall reach media literacy age!

FINDINGS / IMPACT OF MEDIA LITERACY

Despite lack of a standardized media literacy curriculum and understudy the world-over, study has shown that the value of teaching people of all ages media literacy skills, evidence suggest that media literacy education can help adolescent become sensitive to prejudice and learn to appreciate diversity e.g. ethnic stereotypes in Kenya as well.

The study has shown that media literacy interventions reduce body dissatisfaction that can be the result of the consumption of media messages. Further, investigation has shown that for instance, adolescent girls were shown intervention video images of ultra-thin models. While a control group reported lower body satisfaction and body esteem after viewing the images of the models, the group that viewed the intervention first didn't experience negative effects.

Similarly, the study showed college women (who were at high risk for eating disorders) reported less body dissatisfaction, a lower desire to be thin, and reduced internalization of societal beauty standards after participating in a media literacy intervention. The research concluded that media literacy training could help prevent eating disorders in high-risk individuals. So, it influenced people to identify "fake news" and make more informed decisions.

INFORMATION AND MEDIA LITERACY IN THE AGE OF AI

For decades, continuing technological progress has been transforming how we live, work or learn. However, the concepts of information and media literacy and digitalization of information. The increasing influence of Artificial Intelligence (AI) on how individuals locate, evaluate, and create content has significant implications for what it means to be information and media literate.

The emergence of ChatGPT has brought on a frenzy of educational research and media attention (Tiernan, P. 2023. 1), much of which is focused on the impact tools such as ChatGPT may have on academic assessment, academic integrity, and teaching and learning more generally. It is important to consider the many practical ways in which AI is impacting how our students and wider society access, evaluate, and consume information and media.

AI also plays a significant role in influencing how users filter through information and select what is relevant to them. This is particularly relevant in digital marketing, e-commerce, digital content provision, and social media. Using AI to detect patterns in individuals' online behavior, digital marketers can deliver highly targeted and personalized ads that are tailored to anticipated wants and needs. Companies such as Amazon use AI to learn what individuals like and what they are likely to purchase using information to recommend contents through emails, on-site recommendations, and other notification mechanisms.

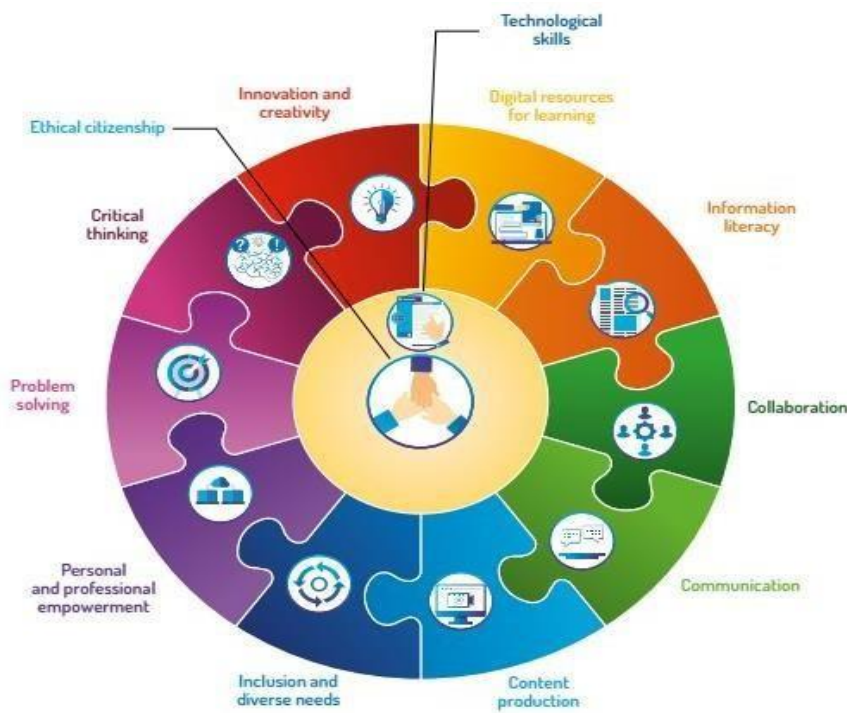
However, the area of AI with perhaps the most revolutionary potential is the ability to generate content. In fact, in the recent years, users can receive natural, human-like responses to questions and searches and engage in two way conversations with chat client such as ChatGPT, Google Bard, among others. AI diffusion models has powered sophisticated image generation tools, such as Mid-journey, which can create full-scale AI-generated images from simple text – draws lines between computer and human-created art and imagery.

Interestingly, sophisticated AI-powered image manipulation software is also swiftly becoming the norm, with popular programs such as Adobe Photoshop incorporating AI to allow users to automatically make changes and additions to their images using AI analysis and predictions. AI powered video creation tools are gaining traction – create full-fledged video based on a user uploaded script. AI reads the script and not only creates the voice-over audio from this but also creates the video file based on analysis of the script.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is the ability of machines to replicate human capabilities through "learning and automation." It is also defined as an area in computer science that develops machines with the ability to perform human-like tasks through automated decision making, learning, and recognition. It enables machines to act, comprehend, and sense like humans, and is made possible by training them with large data sets. Consequently, AI gives machines the ability to perceive their environment, reason, and in some instances take action in response to the environment and underlying circumstances (Akello J., et al 2022).

Therefore, based on the above, it is to this extent that IA has radically changed the way individuals access information, search for and filter information, and has changed the very nature of what information is – due to AI – generated content. Ever since the term digital literacy was introduced went online – digital literacy

frameworks paid a particular attention to engagement with AI as was published since 2018 – the year Open AI’s Generative Pre-trained Transformers (GTP) technology was launched. (See table 1)



Source: UNESCO digital literacy information website – A Global Framework of Reference on Digital Literacy Skills (UNESCO 2019).

Digital Competence Framework for Kenya? (Table 2)

Furthermore, AI presents significant challenges to information and media literacy as competencies. First, it is the issue of explainability within AI systems. It cannot be understood in a simple manner by humans. This issue represents difficulties, in adapting AI to domains where reasoning must be assured and transparent. In the context of digital literacy, AI cannot explain or confirm where it obtained data or why it chose to produce such an output within the context of information and media literacy, this poses issues for task such as information search and evaluation – AI systems may fail to recognize hallucinations or know that sources, veracity in order to validate information.



Source: Kenya National Library Service - KNLS

If recent developments in AI have taught us anything, it is that technology can change rapidly, and its implications can be felt right across the societal spectrum. While AI is the “hot topic”, it certainly will not be the last, and

while we are still busy trying to address the information and media literacy issues raised by AI, some other developments may take us by surprise – AI contain lack of consistency as to impact on information and media literacy. Arguably energy might be better spent adapting our approach to digital literacy frameworks so that they become more agile and responsive to technological and philosophical developments relating to information and media.

CONCLUSION

AI is an emerging and rapidly changing technology, however, there are many areas that warrant further research in the future – research of this nature would help with our understanding how policy translates into practice – AI on the various stages of information and media journey – accessing, evaluating, consumption to creating of digital information and media.

The study projects that human and automated journalism will become closely integrated in the future and recommends that newsrooms in Kenya prepare to embrace AI by laying the foundation for its adoption. Nevertheless, journalists and other media practitioners recognize AI use as technology advancements in producing and disseminating news while news gathering still depends still on traditional methods. But remain conversant with gaps in data mining and management expertise, programming, and proper integration of AI in journalism operations (Kioko, P.M., et al, 2022).

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