

Exploring Educational Policies of Pakistan for Media Information Literacy

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ABSTRACT

Aim of the Study: The rapid evolution of new media technologies worldwide has presented challenges for policymakers, regulators, and educators who must adapt to emerging media in all disciplines. In response, states have developed policies to keep pace with the needs and requirements of the younger generation. National Education Policies of Pakistan had been formulated keeping in view the decade ahead needs and requirements of the young generation. Curriculums are designed keeping in view the aims and objectives of National Education Policy and implemented across country through four Provincial text and curriculum boards of Pakistan. However, despite the careful design of these policies, many parents lack trust in the curriculum taught at public schools in Pakistan. The purpose of this study is to explore the extent to which media and information literacy (MIL) has been incorporated into the National Education Policies of Pakistan.

Methodology: A qualitative approach was utilized to conduct this research, specifically employing descriptive Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to analyze the content of the National Educational Policies.

Findings: Previous literature has shown that MIL was not mentioned in education policies before 1999. Using Critical Discourse Analysis, of the Educational Policies of 1999, 2009 and 2017 the study revealed that MIL is not well-articulated in the National Education Policies of Pakistan. While some aspects of information literacy have been included, the overall policies are insufficient with respect to MIL. To address this gap, there is a need for updating the National Education Policies with the latest discussions of MIL and UNESCO standards.

Conclusion: It is crucial to ensure that the younger generation is equipped with the necessary skills to navigate and critically evaluate the vast amounts of information available through new media technologies. Therefore, policymakers, regulators, and educators must work together to develop policies that promote MIL and integrate it effectively into the curriculum of public schools in Pakistan.

Keywords: National Education Policy, Media Information Literacy, Curriculum and Syllabus, Public Schools.

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Introduction

Context and Issues

With the invention of new and emerging media in the wake of web 2.0 the concepts of how we consume, interpret, and make meanings of media has changed drastically Van Dijck, (2013). Consumers are not mere passive passerby's rather the new media had empowered them with tools and skills to actively participate in the ever-changing media landscape Diffley, Kearns, Bennett, and Kawalek, (2011). The big hit on the canvas of social media not more than a decade ago are obsolete from the World Wide Web. Yahoo was once king of the Internet worth 125 billion was sold out for 5 billion in 2016 as per Forbes reports (Solomon, 2016). Such emerging media not only provides opportunities but challenges as well, and the biggest challenge of the time is how to control the Internet, when all strategies seem inadequate and all plans looks like not catching up with the ever-changing media landscape. During these times it is very crucial to equip the youth with technological advancements to be able to access, understand interpret and make meanings beyond cognitive learnings involving "emotional response, enjoyment, and cultural appreciations". All such debates are very crucial for completely grasping the concept of Media Information Literacy Chen, (1997 & 2009).

Introduction to National Education Policies in Pakistan

Nine National Educational Policies have been formulated so far in Pakistani since 1947 till 2017. As far as the policies' documentation is concerned, they had been designed in a meticulous fashion with very few criticism notes Azam (as cited in Hanif, 2018), however it always lacked administrative and political consistencies during the implementation phases. The purpose in this research was only thrash out the two most recent policies i.e., National Education Policy of 2009-2015 and National Education Policy of 2017-2025. In this research only the policies texts related to the specific direction of the media literacy or the allied terms were analyzed, interpreted, and contextualized through discourse analysis.

As information and technology spreads with rapid pace all over the world, digitally advanced media have influenced our living. Advanced media technology has changed the way information is produced and disseminated (Gialamas, 2013). Viewing media can be influential and provide guidance. These mediums can be digital technology, television, films, and other mediums as well that assist youngsters to understand the world. Hobbs (1998) is of the view that youth can make better sense of these mediums when they got to use them to expand their concepts and develop advanced intellectual skills. To critically analyze the mediums knowledgeable thinking is required. Media literacy of digital media is taken as a proficient factor for perceiving media texts. The importance of mediums, including traditional and new media in the lives of youngsters raised the issue of their message perceiving and actions caused by it and whether there is any guidance to direct their literacy practices (Boske, 2011, Ferrari, 2013 & Gainer, 2010). Media, according to the Oxford definition, is a form of mass communication. This includes letters, television, radio, newspapers, laptop computers, desktop computers, Blurays, CDs, DVDs, tablets, smartphones, internets, movies, news, paintings, songs, documentaries, podcasts (Warschauer, 2001). Erudition proliferates the endorsement of social networking sites, for instance Facebook, which over recent past had added enormously to its popularity, principally within young generation (Kate, KuhlmanIvan, Sea, Nestor, & Duran, 2014). According to research nearly 45 million people in Pakistan are social media users with Facebook being the topmost app used. Social media has revolutionized people's lives. Considering the importance of media in the society, people have used it since to promote/demote certain idea or project Kuhlman, Geiss, Vargas, & Lopez-Duran, (2015).

The requirements of digital media users are changing day by day; digital Media is a new source of information. It all turns on how a person is engrossed and occupied with the new source of technologies Shirky, (2011). Media literacy is the new scale to understand the grasp upon New Media. Research has a long discussion about media literacy and its need. With globalization, access to the world of news and stories is just a few seconds ahead. Due to the accessibility to the networking system, information is just one click away from users Mayer, & Chandler, (2001). By the time Media literacy is becoming more

popular among researchers, a social media user is a storyteller, a guard, an accumulator, or even an editor at the same time. But due to the variant sources of information on social media have burdensome for the user to avail verified information. It has been observed that users of new media are well informed. Especially the youth as Media users play a vital role in Media literacy objectives Maksl, Ashley, & Craft, (2015) Vraga, & Tully, (2016). Most of the people are unable to learn from the outer world due to many psychological issues and other physical barriers. At this moment media becomes a great source for them to learn new things. Students can get a deep insight of their learning modules from different media sources. It is a house of knowledge for all those who want to learn. Media itself creates an ability among the students of media sciences to develop new media tools and add to the existing research (Eristi & Erdem, 2017)

Extensive research has been conducted in the field of media literacy among youth. Research was conducted on children which concluded that children lack media literacy skills, specifically with context to digital media literacy as they lack basic skills regarding the use of information from search engines, browsers, and the internet (Livingstone, 2004, 2011). On the other hand, Buckingham, Banaji, Carr, Cranmer, & Willett, (2005) suggest that school-going children possess internet proficiency; however, they lack a critical thinking approach regarding media literacy. Therefore, they use media out of school or out of formal education context and remain unable to link the internet and formal education healthily.

With the advancement in new technology, the media has evolved enormously. Media has always been used for spreading information and latest updates to the people. With the passage of time and evolution in societies, advancement in media tools became a necessity Dede, (1996). The capability of media to spread any news in enormous quantity of the people in a very short period cannot be ignored. Media has this magnificent capability to infiltrate information into the minds of people. Considering the importance of media in society, people have used it to promote/demote certain idea or project Rufo, & Atchison, (2011). We live in an interesting time of 'deception' where the individuals, groups and even countries have been 'engaged' in disseminating information which seems to be an unending war of narratives – and most of the youth is the target as they have got certain power to reshape a society and its fabric. Pakistan is the fifth largest young country in the world. According to United Nations Population Fund Report, around 63 per cent population (more than half) of the country comprises youth ages between 15 and 33 years (Hafeez & Fasih, 2018).

Technology is said to be a continuously growing information process that includes software and hardware equipment. We use era to carry out various responsibilities in each day lives, in quick; we are able consider it as processes and approaches to make man's life easy. It takes generations to simply complete the complex processes undertaken by human beings and to put those functions into small technical gadgets. Technology is also a utility of science used to resolve issues. But it's far important to recognize that era and science are one-of-a-kind subjects which painting together to accomplish unique tasks or solve problems. The application of technology normally consequences in merchandise. If technology is properly carried out, its blessings human beings, but the contrary is real, if used for malicious motives (Linder, Ramey & Zambak, 2013)

As we know, Facebook is the first social networking website. It was first invented in 2004 and made for youngsters. Adults use social media for their time pass. Mostly sending requests and making their connection with the people from inside and outside of the country and a state. Uploading photos giving likes commenting in the comment section sharing of the pictures fascinate the young generation a lot. But as the time passed, Facebook continuously expanded and transformed itself by allowing its users to develop strong and interlinked social networks connecting thousands of people across the globe. Among these individuals, university students are a prominent portion of the demographics that are actively indulged in using Facebook (Bedassa, 2014).

In modern times social media has become systematically organized into our societies. An integral part of social media is that it is accessible to every corner of the globe. Now the student sitting in the rural area of

Africa can have unlimited access to the lectures of the advanced universities and professor's world widely. Keeping in mind these splendid potentials, the state/authorities are making their best to utilize social media to achieve their objectives (Hobbs 2009 & Herman, 2000). Although media literacy has received a lot of attention, little research has been conducted on the degrees of media literacy and reported competence that young pupils have upon enrolling in a professional media educational program. In addition, in comparison to the East, the West does more media literacy research. Active Online surfers, according to Adiarsi, Stellarosa, & Silaban, (2015) are individuals who use the Internet for over 5 hours in one day and largely utilized it for social networking sites and online chatting. Their critical perspectives about media material are influenced by the informant's own interests. This research compares the length of time spent on the Internet and the frequency with which university students utilize the Internet (Cheung, Luo, Sia, & Chen, 2009).

Media has played an enormous role in almost every field of life. Especially in the modern era, advanced technology has made it more of a daily necessity. Consequently, traditional media has adopted advanced techniques and means to spread the message world widely. Media has the capacity to mold or make masses perception about any related issue. According to Neom Chomsky, the media is used to frame any incident to achieve the objectives of the state (Meeus, Van Ouytsel, & Driesen, 2014).

Given the importance of media and its role in society, governmental and non-governmental organizations use media as a tool to provide and spread the essential information to achieve their objectives.

Jimenez, Clark, Kennedy, Nisle, Engle, Matyasic, & Anyon, (2021) discussed in their research about the scholarship on Youth online media literacy programs directed on how grownups employ constraint to provide young people agency in decision-making situations. Researchers took up the Blum-Ross challenge to learn more about how adult negotiation processes interacted with critical media literacy, youth voice, and youth empowerment.

Media Literacy and Media Literacy Education

Media literacy is defined as the practice in which people access, evaluate and generate media content. Media literacy is not only the literacy of a particular-medium notes Potter, (2010). the US National Association for Media Literacy Education explains that the media literacy is the capacity to “access, analyze, evaluate, create and act” employing all types of media and communication. Media Literacy Education is relatively a different trajectory from within the greater scope of media literacy. Media literacy education is projected to create awareness of media and communication effects and influences and in addition it supports the idea of consuming and creating media contents notes Hobbs, (2011). Media literacy is taught in different ways in different parts of the world for example in United States and in some European countries including Pakistan as well it is a part of the curriculum, however extra-curricular activities are strived to strengthen, support, and enhance the media literacy skills among youth through various initiative.

Rationale of the Study

A growing importance of Media Information Literacy is linked with civic engagements, participatory citizenry and other process of socialization and social capital notes Jeong, Cho, and Hwang, (2012). In this digital world it is far important to not only ascertain MIL depths and breadths but also to determine what assessment tools will be required for the future generation to come for considering them at par of the international standardized as a frame of reference of UNESCO guidelines for high school children. the study is limited only to the extent of exploration and this portion is provided in suggestions for future research and delimited to the extent as discussed above.

Although media literacy has received a lot of attention, little research has been conducted on the degrees of media literacy and reported competence that young pupils have upon enrolling in a professional media educational program. In addition, in comparison to the East, the West does more media literacy research (Cheung, 2009). Active Online surfers, according to Adiarsi, Stellarosa, & Silaban, (2015) are individuals

who use the Internet for over 5 hours in one day and largely utilized it for social networking sites and online chatting. Their critical perspectives about media material are influenced by the informant's own interests. This research compares the length of time spent on the Internet and the frequency with which university students utilize the Internet.

There is a dire need for the time that not only our Educational Policies to be upgraded keeping in view the international practices but also of the ever changing and evolving media tools. There is also a need for the time to reevaluate the curriculum taught to our kids at higher secondary classes so that the gaps can be filled well on time lest its too late.

The purpose of this study was to examine all education policies of Pakistan with respect to Media Information Literacy and evaluate the Media Information Literacy curriculum taught to our youth at higher secondary classes and then evaluate their precedent knowledge to predict how much upgrading is required in our polices and curriculum with respect to Media Information Literacy.

Purpose Statement

Media information literacy is of paramount importance. While few scholars oppose that media literacy authorizes people to have information access (Fedorov, 2003). As technology is growing so fast that it has established new business created various new inventions. Moreover, as time is passing more and more modified forms of robots have been made. Researchers fear that there will be time when technology and advancement of science will replace human being. And at that time the rule will be of robots. As technology is serving humans in both negative and positive ways this depends on the person using the technology and for what purpose he or she is using it. The strong perception and personal position make individuals higher in media literacy Jeong, Cho, & Hwang, (2012).

Educational Policies in Pakistan have been formulated keeping in view the futuristic approaches of the leadership and vision and mission of the country. Many stake holders have been considering during the process of policy formulation. In recent times many aspects such as “critical thinking” “Media Literacy” and “Numeracy” have been introduced in the Educational Polices around the world and UNESCO have laid stress on Media and Information Literacy as a necessary component of education curriculum.

Objectives of the Study

The Objectives of the research were as follows.

1. To explore All National Education Policies of Pakistan with respect to Media Information Literacy.

The study has tried to explore all National Educational Policies of Pakistan only with respect to Media Information Literacy and similar concepts, however only last three i.e. NEP of 1999, 2009 and 2017 have such detailed discussions on the subject matter. Hence only these were discussed in this research work.

Theoretical Framework

From the perspective of Media Literacy (Hobbs, 2010, 2011; Kellner, & Share, 2007) provides different theoretical frameworks. Hobbs had identified three frames for categorization of media literacy first frames deals with “Author and Audiences the second frame deals with Media messages and meanings and third framework deals with representation and reality on the other hand Kellner provides a framework emphasizing four different approaches for completely understanding and synthesizing the media education in the following words; “the protectionist approach, media arts education, media literacy movement, and critical media literacy”.

Methodology

A qualitative approach was utilized to conduct this research, specifically employing descriptive Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to analyze the content of the Educational Policies.

1. With respect to National Education Policies of Pakistan all national education Policies starting from 1947 until 2020 were considered.
2. There was no sample in this part rather the entire population of the study was considered for evaluation of National Education Policies of Pakistan. Only the policies which have discussion of Media Information Literacy have been considered. Past all educational policies have been consulted for the discussions and debates of Media Information Literacy, only last three Educational Policies of Pakistan rudimentary and to some extent discussed the Media Literacy education in Pakistan. These three Educational Policies are.
 - a. National Education Policy 1998-2010
 - b. National Education Policy 2010
 - c. National Education Policy 2017-2020

Data Collection Tool

Coding Sheet as suggested in Content Analysis and Critical Discourse Analysis was used, the only keywords which were searched in the Education Policies were, “Media Literacy” “Information Literacy”, “Media information Literacy”, MIL, “Media.”

Literacy itself was not searched as there is a huge discussion on Literacy itself from adult literacy to literacy itself. These terms are different from Media Literacy and are alike keywords.

Data Collection

The data were collected and interpreted using the Critical Discourse Analysis. The three most recent educational policies have been considered in this study. From the National Educational Policies with a mentioning of Media Literacy and a group of keywords.

Data Analysis

From the first education policy to the most recent educational policies of 2020 much of the stress was laid for the compulsory education however that was also emphasized in Constitutions of Pakistan as well. In all the policies the emphasize was also put towards increasing the literacy rate in Pakistan with respect to international standards however the literacy rate remains slow paced in Pakistan.

Various Educational policies have been put forth with an emphasize on various directions, however not much of the emphasize was put towards increasing media literacy and numeracy. Consulting the education policies of 1970, 1979 not a single mentioning of the media literacy was articulated in the education policies of Pakistan.

There was no mentioning of media information literacy in the policy of 1999 however emphasize in general about enhancing the literacy level in the country and various steps for it were discussed.

In the Education Policy of 2009 during the aims and objectives the following point at No. 16 was mentioned (NEP, 2009 p. 18) “To eradicate illiteracy within the shortest possible time through universalizing of quality elementary education coupled with institutionalized adult literacy programmes”

In the same policy it was also discussed that the Department of Literacy is established in Punjab for enhancing Literacy and Non formal education” Policy Aims were discussed in NEP 2009, that literacy must be managed by one organization at federal level. Page 38 of the same NEP discussed that Literacy and Non-Formal learning to be given weightage among various levels of teaching. From point 99 to 104 all the discussions include enhancing the non-formal education. The policy exerted more emphasize that the literacy to be increased in the country. Finally, a target of increasing literacy by 86% in the year 2015 was set as a goal in the NEP 2009.

In the National Education Policy of 2017 (p. 94) first ever time the term Information Literacy was discussed in the appreciation of the functions the libraries can serve and how the policy measures be taken to increased media literacy. In the same section it was discussed that we had failed to understand and recognize the importance of non-formal education and general libraries for enhancing and promoting the “Information Literacy”. In the same policy it was also discussed that it is great challenge for us that we have not realized the importance of “Information Literacy” hence the point 8 of discussing the challenges states that “Non availability of information Literacy Material in the academic libraries”.

Point 14 while discussing the Sustainable Development Goals it was discussed that mass media must not only be mobilized for enhancement of information literacy but also educational development in the same lines must be our top priority. It was also suggested in the same policy that Basic Education Endowment Fund be established to finance literacy and NFBE.

Chapter 11 of the same policy has been dedicated for the Information and Communication Technologies (ICT). It was established that we cannot enhance education without the support of ICT technologies in every field. ICT must be made available in all disciplines for research, learning, teaching, and development. It was stressed that Pakistan being signatory of Guangdong Conference on Education 2015 we must integrate our education system with all available ICT’s.

Table 1: *Summary of the Policies on the Selected Sub-Themes*

Policy	Media Literacy	Information Literacy	Media Information Literacy (MIL)	Media
National Education Policy 1998-2010	Limited focus on media literacy, mostly centered around traditional media	Emphasizes the importance of information literacy	No specific mention of Media Information Literacy	Recognizes the role of media in education, but lacks specific strategies
National Education Policy 2010	Acknowledges the importance of media literacy	Recognizes the significance of information literacy	No specific mention of Media Information Literacy	Acknowledges the role of media in education
National Education Policy 2017-2020	Recognizes the importance of media literacy	Emphasizes the integration of information literacy across curricula	Highlights the need for Media Information Literacy in the digital age	Recognizes the role of media in education and promotes its use

Table 1 present the tabulated report of the identified themes i.e., Media Literacy, Information Literacy, Media Information Literacy (MIL) and Media in the National Education Policy 1998-2010, National Education Policy 2010, and National Education Policy 2020.

Discussion

National education policies of Pakistan play a significant role in shaping the future of the country by providing a framework for education until the Higher Education. The current education policies of Pakistan emphasize the importance of modernizing the education system, promoting critical thinking, and fostering creativity among students. Media Information Literacy (MIL) is an important aspect of modern education, especially in the digital age, where information is readily available at our fingertips. It is the

ability to access, evaluate, and analyze information critically, and to use it ethically and effectively (Hobbs et al., 2019).

MIL has gained increasing importance in Pakistan due to the proliferation of digital media and its impact on society. The Media and Information Literacy Curriculum for Teachers, developed by UNESCO, (2011) recognizes MIL as a distinct area of focus. It provides guidance on integrating MIL into educational practices and emphasizes the importance of critical analysis and evaluation of media content. The MILID Yearbook, (n.d.) (Media and Information Literacy and Intercultural Dialogue) is an annual publication that showcases research and best practices in MIL from around the world, providing evidence of its significance in education.

To integrate MIL into the education system, Pakistan needs to adopt a multidimensional approach that involves various stakeholders, including the government, media organizations, educators, and parents. The government needs to allocate sufficient resources to education, including media education, and promote collaborations between academia and media organizations. Educators should be trained in MIL and integrate it into the curriculum, while parents need to be educated on the importance of media literacy and how to educate their children about it.

Existing practices and efforts are not sufficient in address such issues which is long advised by UNESCO and being adopted by other developing countries and unfortunately yet to be adopted in Pakistan. It is essential for Pakistan to prioritize media education as a part of its national education policies to equip its youth with the skills and knowledge necessary to thrive in the digital age. By embracing MIL, Pakistan can build a more informed and critically literate society that can navigate the complexities of the modern media landscape effectively. ACRL, 2015 published the "Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education". This framework outlines the core concepts of information literacy, including the ability to access, evaluate, and ethically use information. It is widely accepted and referenced in educational institutions to promote information literacy.

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 by our neighboring country is a significant step towards modernizing their education system. It aims to create a holistic education system that will prepare students for the future by providing them with the necessary knowledge and skills.

In Pakistan if MIL guidelines are incorporated this will help our children to access, analyze, evaluate, and create media and information in a variety of forms. It is an essential skill in today's world, where we are constantly bombarded with information from various sources. One of the main challenges in implementing MIL in the education system is the lack of trained teachers. The Pakistan has not yet recognized this challenge even throughout Pakistan the media education at Intermediate level is altogether missing, however there are some subjects available for A Level student. Immediate steps should be taken, which include the development of teacher training programs and the inclusion of MIL in the curriculum for teacher education.

Educational policies should establish a continuing long-term assurance to media literacy, information literacy, and MIL education. These skills are essential in a rapidly changing media environment, and sustained efforts are required to address the challenges and opportunities they present.

Conclusion

Through a critical discourse analysis, we can conclude the following:

- **Media Literacy:** All three National policies recognize the importance of media literacy to some extent. The National Education Policy 1998-2010 and 2010 recognize its significance, while the National Education Policy 2017-2020 explicitly emphasizes its importance.
- **Information Literacy:** All National policies accept the importance of information literacy, with the National Education Policy 2017-2020 placing a particular emphasis on integrating it across various curricula.

- **Media Information Literacy (MIL):** The impression of Media Information Literacy is not explicitly stated in any of the national policies.
- **Media:** All national policies identify the role of media in education. However, the National Education Policy 1998-2010 lacks specific strategies, while the National Education Policy 2017-2020 highlights the need for Media Information Literacy in the digital age and promotes the use of media.

Recommendations

1. The study may extend in other Policies which are specifically designed for Media Information literacy as there is not much of the articulation about the Media Information Literacy in the National Education Policies of Pakistan. So, Integrate Media literacy education in National Educational Policies and procedures.
2. At the government level supervision is required for the adoption and implementation of MIL in curriculum and other educational activities.
3. Needs possible arrangement to equip the learners to learner and effectively use information in their professional and personal life.

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Conflict of Interest


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