Chapter 3
Pedagogical Approaches to Media Literacy Education in the United States

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this chapter is to glimpse the current status and pedagogical approaches of the media literacy education in the Unites States. This chapter was intended to provide the foundational and delineated information about the media literacy education so that it can be a helpful reference to understanding and developing media literacy in K-12 educators' curricular. This chapter starts with discussion about the growth of media literacy in the contexts of American education such as how it is included in state curriculum frameworks as well as research. Then this chapter moves to introduce the types of pedagogical approaches of media literacy generally implemented in K-12 environments. The pedagogical approaches were categorized by the tenets of "Core Principles of Media Literacy in the United States" outlined by National Association of Media Literacy Education (NAMLE) (2007). Finally, this chapter discusses five core concepts of media literacy and the list of guidelines that are requisites for the development of the media literacy education materials based on the foundational concepts.

INTRODUCTION

Today's society is bombarded with messages in different forms of media. Although young people are increasingly able to use these new forms of communication with ease, they do not necessarily have the ability to fully analyze and evaluate media messages (Beach & Baker, 2011); that is to say that they are not necessarily media literate. Media literacy is necessary to help people understand the information presented to them and make informed decisions. However, despite decades of work to include media literacy education in academic learning (Hobbs & Jensen, 2009), media literacy and media literacy education have not be fully explored or understood in the field of education.

To address the need of more exploration of media literacy education, this chapter discusses the current status and pedagogical approaches of the media literacy education in the Unites States.

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Media literacy has been defined generally as "the ability to access, analyze, evaluate, and communicate messages in a wide variety of forms" (Auftheheide & Firestone, 1993). Definitions, however, evolve over time and a more robust definition is now needed to place media literacy in the context of its importance for the education of students in a 21st century media culture. This chapter adopts the expanded version of definition of media literacy:

Media literacy is a 21st century approach to education. It provides a framework to access, analyze, evaluate, create and participate with messages in a variety of forms — from print to video to the Internet. Media literacy builds an understanding of the role of media in society as well as the essential skills of inquiry and self-expression necessary for citizens of a democracy (Center for Media Literacy, 2011).

GROWTH OF MEDIA LITERACY IN AMERICAN EDUCATION

As the sphere of the definition and the importance of media literacy expanded, media literacy education also has been changed in its nature as well as its identity in education. The "transformative" (Hobbs, 2011) nature of media literacy education has been recognized by a mix of scholars, social advocacy groups, governments, and intergovernmental organizations (Martinsson, 2009), and has even been identified as a "basic entitlement of every citizen, in every country of the world" by the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (1999). Not surprisingly, then, media literacy educational programs and research have both grown significantly (Hobbs, 2005, 2011; Potter, 2010). At this level, there has been measurable growth of media literacy-related coursework that is either addressed in unique classes, or incorporated into existing classes of an academic or vocational nature (Daunic, 2011; Hobbs, 2004; National Center for Education Statistics, 2010). Further, formalized standards have been adopted. After the National Communication Association (1998) developed media literacy standards for K-12 educators in the late 1990s, standards for K-12 media education have been adopted in all 50 states (Heins & Cho, 2003; Yates, 2004).

Historically, approaches to media literacy arise from three main purposes (or philosophies) that shape practice of media literacy education (Hobbs 1998; Considine & Haley 1999). The first purpose of media literacy practice is to inoculate youth with a cognitive defense against the media in order to protect them from potentially harmful media messages and effects. The protectionist purpose often places the teacher in a role of ultimate power to interpret and deconstruct messages for students (Buckingham, 1998). Critics of this approach argue that media messages are presented as dangerous, manipulative, or base and students are chastised

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