Learning through Prosuming:
Insights from Media Literacy Programmes in Asia

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Abstract

In today's new media landscape, consuming media content is only part of the equation. Media consumers also enjoy various avenues by which they can produce and share media content. This combination of consuming and producing has been termed 'prosuming'. Rather than being the preserve of the intellectual elite, virtually any media consumer can be a media producer too, given the relative affordability and accessibility of new ICTs and media platforms. Media production is satisfying because it allows individuals to flex their creative energies, and empowering, because it enables people to make their views heard. Focusing on media literacy programmes targeted at developing country youths, this paper analyses media literacy programmes which impart media production skills. Specifically, it looks at the Little Masters programme in China, the Cybermohalla programme in India and the Young Journalists Group (YOJO) in Vietnam. The paper finds that media literacy programmes which emphasise media production may have more significant long-term impact as they vest youths with the abilities to voice their concerns and raise public awareness about youth-related issues. The media literacy skills imparted are therefore imbued with the potential for social activism and democratisation. The experiences of the Little Masters, Cybermohalla and Yojo programmes also suggest a few strategies for heightened success - sensitivity to the social and cultural contexts of the participants, building up a sufficiently wide base of community support and leveraging on media convergence to increase their impact.

Introduction

While youths in developing countries may not always have access to the latest media or the most cutting-edge technologies, the provision of ICTs through public access channels have helped to narrow the digital divide in some parts of the world, e.g. Grameen Communications' Village Internet Program (Yunus, 1998) and the National Institute of Information Technology's Internet Kiosks in rural Cambodia for village children (United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, 2004). In order for youths in developed countries to make the most of available ICT infrastructure and hardware, programmes which vest these youths with the requisite skills are therefore required (Asthana, 2006; Kinkade & Macy, 2003; United Nations, 2003). To this end, many efforts have been made in various parts of the world and several innovative programmes have emerged. This paper seeks to assess the efficacy of some of these programmes, focusing specifically on ICT literacy programmes which emphasise media production skills, namely the Little Masters programme in China, the Cybermohalla programme in India and the Young Journalists (YOJO) Group in Vietnam. The paper will begin with a survey of the new media landscape, followed by an analysis of the multi-dimensional nature of media literacy. After laying these conceptual foundations, the paper examines the successes, failures and sustainability of the three media literacy programmes. The paper concludes with the

1

insights which can be derived from these three programmes' experiences, and the implications for other media literacy programmes.

The New Media Landscape

As society becomes increasingly mediatised, media channels proliferate and media content come from increasingly diverse sources, media consumers need to understand how to critically assess media content so that they can derive maximum benefit and minimise the chances of misinformation. In this regard, media literacy education is crucial in imparting skills that enable individuals to consume media in a discerning, analytical and perceptive manner. However, in today's new media landscape, consuming media content is only part of the equation. Media consumers also enjoy various avenues by which they can produce and share media content. This combination of consuming and producing has been termed 'prosuming'. Rather than being the preserve of the intellectual elite, virtually any media consumer can be a media producer too, given the relative affordability, accessibility and user-friendliness of new media devices and platforms. Media production can be extremely satisfying as it allows individuals to flex their creative energies. Producing media is also empowering because it enables people to make their own views heard, particularly if their opinions have been hitherto overlooked by mainstream media channels.

Media consumers today therefore enjoy the luxury of bricolage – the ability to manipulate objects in one's milieu to incorporate ideas – due to the multifarious affordances of new media (Shih, 1998; Turkle, 1995). The digitisation of new media content and the easy availability of DIY text, image, video and audio creation/editing software facilitate the practice of bricolage. Web 2.0 refers to the growing trend of websites containing content which is generated by users and is shared on a peer-to-peer basis. Avidly embraced by consumers around the world in both developed and developing countries, Web 2.0 is facilitated by file sharing services such as Flickr (for photographs), YouTube (for videos) and Gnutella (for music files and software) which are especially popular. This popularity is due in no small part to the fact that such sites vest the individual with greater semiotic democracy and considerable creative licence in the media content that they wish to put up. Consumers enjoy the freedom to incorporate existing media into their own creations, in the process subverting conventional media and infusing it with their own ideas and values.

Citizen journalism is another fascinating trend in media consumption. Where conventional news channels fail to cover newsworthy events, or conventional media coverage may reflect institutional biases, media consumers can restore the balance by posting their own reports of such events. Blogs, vlogs and podcasts have been avidly used by citizen journalists to share their views. The ability of individuals to publish and broadcast with very few resources expands the space for public discussion, thereby eroding the dominance of established media institutions. Consumers today therefore have access to a wider range of perspectives, and the ability to share their own perspectives with others.

The Multi-Dimensionality Of Media Literacy

In its purest form, the term 'literacy' refers to the possession of knowledge and skills and the ability to use them advantageously to cope in society (Martin, 2006). Importantly, such knowledge and skills need to adapt to the changing demands of

society (McMillan & Morrison, 2006; Street, 1994). In this regard, our definition of media literacy must therefore take into account the challenges and possibilities posed by today's highly mediatised environment. In this digital age, a wide range of terms and various forms of literacies have been proposed to capture the expanse of knowledge and skills which people require to navigate their way through media, ICTs and the information which they convey. These terms include technological literacy (Bundy, 2004; International Technology Education Association, 1996; International Societies for Technology in Education, 1998), computer literacy (American National Research Council Committee on Information Technology Literacy, 1999; Brouwer, 1997; Williams, 2003;), information literacy (Association of College and Research Libraries, 2000; Doyle, 1992; Town, 2000), media literacy (Alliance for Media Literate America, 2005; Aufderheide, 1993; Livingstone, 2004), visual literacy (International Visual Literacy Association, 2006; Kress, 2003), e-literacy (Kope, 2006; Martin, 2000), digital literacy (Eshet, 2002; Martin, 2006; Søby, 2003), multiliteracies (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000; Kellner, 2002; Leu, Kinzer, Coiro & Cammack, 2004) and new literacies (Kellner, 2002; Lankshear & Knobel, 2003).

Amongst all the identified literacies above, three literacies have gained broader recognition – media, ICT and information literacy (Markauskite, 2006). For the purposes of this paper, we will use the term 'media literacy', defined as 'the ability to access, analyze, evaluate and create messages in a variety of forms (Aufderheide, 1993). Despite being somewhat dated, this pithy definition captures the range of skills which today's media prosumer requires to both *consume* and *produce* media.

On the one hand, media consumption requires a wide range of skills which go beyond knowing how to read, turn on a television or use a search engine. We need skills which enable us to comprehend and evaluate the media messages which we receive. To do so effectively, media consumers need to possess both functional media literacy – knowing how to access media – and critical media literacy – being able to understand, evaluate and critique media messages (Buckingham, 2005). The latter requires the possession of the knowledge structures of media literacy which comprise an understanding of media effects, media content, media industries, the real world, and the self (Potter, 2005). The media literate individual is someone who has these structures - an awareness of the effects which media can have on individuals, a realisation of why some content types are excluded while others are intensively amplified, an appreciation for who controls media content and how the political economy of the media industry is reflective of and influenced by geopolitical trends, and a sensitivity to one's own conscious and subconscious responses to media messages. This is certainly a wide range of sometimes esoteric knowledge that no average media consumer, or even media scholar, would have a complete grasp of! And yet, because of the growing importance of media in our everyday lives, there is a heightened need for the average media consumer to have such knowledge.

On the other hand, media production involves creating and disseminating content, for which an individual would need to the skills to access and use ICTs, and the ability to generate original content or to adapt third party content. But the sheer production and dissemination of information must also be informed by an understanding of the personal, societal and social impact of such a venture.

Consumers who produce media content must be mindful that they do so without compromising on their own safety, infringing their privacy and incurring liability. In particular, consumers who share their media content via the Internet should be made to realise that the Internet is a public and far-reaching communications channel which can amplify the impact of their views. They should also be aware that along with such powers come responsibilities, principally, managing the expectations and reactions of a larger and more diverse audience.

Media literacy for the prosumer is therefore multi-dimensional, encompassing an extensive variety of skills and knowledge structures which are neither easy to impart nor to acquire.

The Media and Youths in Developing Countries

'Disadvantaged groups' amongst and within countries, especially young people, actively seek Internet access whenever possible in public terminals (Boase, Chen, Wellman, & Prijatelj, 2002; Cole, 2000). In countries where Internet and computer use is low, the Internet is commonly accessed through Internet cafes (Gigli, 2004; Hong & Huang, 2005; Mutula & Sairose, 2004; Wahid, Furuholt, & Kristiansen, 2006), 'cyber kiosks' (Sreekumar, 2007; Yunus, 1998) and telecenters in public places such as libraries, health clinics, community centers and schools (Cole, 2000; Harris, Bala, Songan, Lien & Trang, 2001; Rogers & Shukla, 2001). Studies have found that youths in developing countries access the Internet mainly for *recreational* and *instrumental* purposes such as communicating (chat rooms and emails); downloading (computer games, music and software); and obtaining information (about education, entertainment, sports and politics) (Gigli, 2004; Hong & Huang, 2005; Mutula & Sairose, 2004; Wahid, et. al., 2006). More significantly their Internet use is seen as a "cultural medium to the wider world, opening paths for new impulses" (Lægran, 2002, p. 157), where new social spaces, cultural meanings, and cyber-relations are created (Lægran & Stewart, 2003). However, finding information in the World Wide Web which is relevant to their lives has been problematic (Wahid, et. al., 2006). Such difficulties are however alleviated when youths make use of online platforms to produce and disseminate information that meaningfully express their views on issues affecting them and their communities alike (Asthana, 2006; Gigli; 2001). These participatory movements at the grassroots level have been found to drive the development of Internet usage and literacy amongst youths in developing countries in this information age, thus narrowing the digital divide (Asthana, 2006; Facer & Furlong, 2001; Hill, 2003).

Beyond the Internet, developing country youths also access and consume 'more traditional' media such as print and broadcast media. Print publications in strongest demand amongst young people are those that appeal to their specialized interests such as comic books and popular specialized magazines on fashion, sports, education and entertainment. However, in poorer countries, few youth-oriented publications exist and the few which are available often have limited circulation or are too expensive for most youth to afford (Gigli, 2001). The improved quantity and quality of information available from television and radio worldwide has also contributed to the decline in the usage of print publications among youths and established television and radio as the most accessed forms of media respectively (Gigli, 2001). Where access to television is limited, tuning in to the radio has become

a major source of diverse information and entertainment for youths interested in political and social life (Gigli, 2001; Kinkade & Macy, 2003). Radio networks and programs in rural and underdeveloped nations, such as educational radio networks and 'farm radio forums' are found to be attractive tools for empowerment by affording the exchange of experiences and ideas, as well as participation in group problem solving in areas such as health, employment opportunities and education (Bray, 2001; Grace & Kenny, 2003; Karlyn, 2001; Nwaerondu & Thomson, 1987). Overall, in this information age, youths worldwide are increasingly exposed to information from a multitude of media platforms. How youths cope with the information and engage the media raises the pertinence of literacy; the aptitude to critically acquire and adapt information and communication to their social-cultural milieu (Livingstone, 2008).

Case Study 1: Little Masters (China)

Background

Written, edited and produced by 20,000 children under the age of 15, with an estimated readership of two million children and adults, Little Masters is arguably one of China's most influential publications. Priced at an affordable US$.37 (Kinkade & Macy, 2003), the magazine's appeal lies in its focus on topics relevant to children's lives and the smorgasbord of colourful cartoons, drawings, and games in every issue. For adults, the magazine helps them to appreciate children's opinions on a range of issues including academic pressures and communication problems at home.

Founder and President, Zhu Jieshi started Little Masters with modest government support in 1983 (Kinkade & Macy, 2003). He was then teaching at the Children's Palace in Shanghai, a place where children engage in productive leisure activities. Zhu felt that a newspaper would allow young people to maximise their creativity and expressiveness. The name "Little Masters" was chosen to reflect Zhu's goal that participants learn to express themselves, take on new challenges, and become "masters" of their lives, with opportunities to explore and develop their gifts. With many Chinese school children experiencing overly protective parents at home, and strict authoritarianism at school, Zhu sought to create opportunities for children to grow and express themselves on their own terms.

Media Knowledge and Skills

In starting Little Masters, Zhu's goal was not to train future journalists but to create an avenue for young people to pursue their interests and develop their skills, especially "soft" skills such as self confidence, teamwork, communication and goal-achievement (Kinkade & Macy, 2003). At each stage of the development of Little Masters, Zhu involved youths as far as he could. This approach continues today where student reporters generate their own story ideas, conduct interviews, write and edit, while senior students and adults oversee layout and logistics such as production, distribution and transportation. The only area where adults are solely responsible is fundraising and the management of day-to-day operations.

Students are recruited to the Little Masters programme after they have passed an interview and written test. Once accepted, these amateur reporters can choose to specialise in particular areas and are put through an editing programme where they learn to interview, write, edit and layout the newspaper. Specialised training in writing, drawing, cartoon making, calligraphy, graphic design and photojournalism

supplements the main editing programme. The stories which these student reporters have produced cover a broad spectrum of youth issues, ranging from the advantages and disadvantages of children surfing the Internet to the government's educational reform measures to reduce Chinese students' heavy workload. Student reporters have also had the privilege of meeting and interviewing international luminaries including former U.S. President Bill Clinton, Britain's Queen Elizabeth, UN Secretary General Kofi Annan, and Chinese President Jiang Zemin. Little Masters participants have also initiated group projects where they mobilise youths behind societal causes such as greening the environment and the protection of marine life.

Zhu reckons that by taking the students out of the classrooms and giving them the opportunity to exercise their communication skills, creative energies and entrepreneurial flair, these students develop initiative, independence, confidence and self-belief. Alumni of the Little Masters programme attest to how life-changing their stints as student reporters were, transforming them from shy and diffident individuals into sociable and assertive people. Zhu firmly believes, based on anecdotal evidence, that one of the program's more significant impacts has been a perceptible shift in adult conceptions of children's capabilities and consequently, heightened respect for children. Little Masters has also shed light on issues concerning Chinese youths from the perspectives of youths themselves, in contrast to mainstream media which adopt the position of parents and other authority figures. Indeed, adults have been known to peruse Little Masters to obtain a better understanding of Chinese youths.

Sustainability and growth
While Little Masters began life as a newspaper, it has since evolved into a magazine and migrated to other channels such as radio, television the Internet. Launched in 2001 with support from the International Youth Foundation/Nokia Make a Connection program, the site was designed and is maintained by young people under adult supervision. Website features include an online version of the magazine, a chat room, a Little Masters Forum, and a "Green Mission" section devoted to environmental issues. Various strategies help to sustain reader interest, e.g. online readers are encouraged to submit stories electronically, rate stories on the site and exchange their opinions with other readers. Originally, Little Masters was mainly supported by the government but has successfully diversified its income stream through revenue from magazine sales and paid advertising by businesses targeting the children's market.

Criticisms and weaknesses
That Little Masters allows targeted advertising at children is some cause for concern given that children can be susceptible to advertising (Gunter, Oates & Blade, 2005). However, it should be noted that Little Masters has a policy of restricting the amount of advertising on its various media platforms and companies are prohibited from employing hard-sell tactics. Instead, companies sponsor competitions or events which are strong in educational content. In order to ensure its continued success, extra effort must therefore be made to balance the commercial and non-profit driven aspects of Little Masters.

Case Study 2: Cybermohalla (India)
Background

The Cybermohalla initiative began in 2001 as a result of the collaboration between the Sarai project of the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies and Akur, an NGO from Delhi involving young people living in slums and working class neighbourhoods in Delhi. Cybermohalla now has a network of about 75 coordinators engaging full time with a very complex weave of activities, public forums and events.

The Cybermohalla (Cyber-Neighbourhood) is an experimental project which aims to offer underprivileged young men and women access to emerging technologies. Youths access the digital media for the Cybermohalla programme at any of three locality labs located across the city of Delhi – LNJP (an informal settlement in Central Delhi), Dakshinpuri (a Resettlement Colony in South Delhi) and in Savda-Ghevra (a resettlement colony at the far northern edge of Delhi). The locality labs provide access to computers which contain free software for the youths to create media content. The programme's objectives are to create the following: (i) Generative contexts: self-evolving contexts by creating and gathering multiple narratives of their lives, (ii) Minor practices: practices in creating media performed in solitude or with a few collaborators, (iii) Commoning: combining a variety of resources from different people to produce interlinked realities, and (iv) Public dialogue: geared towards expanding the public domain of ideas and discussion ("Welcome to Cybermohalla", 2001). So far, the programme has attracted both male and female participants who are mostly dropouts aged between 15 and 25.

Media knowledge and skills

One of the aims of the program was to "demystify" ICTs and to provide a context for young participants from these impoverished neighbourhoods to express their creative ideas and to exert their interpretative energies (Singh, Regi & Goswami, 2006, p. 27). Youths work with multimedia tools such as animation, booklets, broadsheets, HTML, typed and formatted texts, sound scapes, photo stories, written words, audio and visual juxtapositions and narratives and storyboards. Using these tools, youths develop their perspectives on alleys, corners, 'mohallas' and localities. These physical locales which the youths are familiar with serve as metaphors for 'publicness' (Asthana, 2006, p. 48). In these 'public spaces' youths not only undertake creative and collaborative activities, but also engage in the democratic process of commenting on the social and moral topics that impact their lives.

Sustainability and growth

The programme thus serves the useful purpose of opening up "spaces for dialogue" amongst youths and provides them with a forum for collective participation which these alienated and disenfranchised youths would not otherwise enjoy (Asthana, 2006: p. 46). This horizontal learning structure fosters debate and cooperation amongst participants, thus overcoming the deficiencies of older and less egalitarian models of learning and education. Consequently, the youths are also bound together in their experimentation and play. Vertical collaborations and partnerships with more powerful persons and organizations which are linked to Sarai, Cybermohalla's parent organisation, help to sustain the Cybermohalla programme. Collaborators include the Alternative Law Forum in Bangalore, UNESCO's Digi Arts, the Institute of Network Cultures in Amsterdam and the Delhi Film Archive ("Collaborators", 2001).

The Cybermohalla is still highly active now with participants producing media outcomes. This continuous production of new bodies of knowledge drives further collaborations and promotes improvisations which are derived from human energies rather than physical infrastructure. This model of sustainability is based on Cybermohalla's primary emphasis on raising cultural competencies amongst its participants, sparked by providing simple access to ICTs and emerging technologies. Hence, this novel approach to inculcating media literacy produces more sustainable learning outcomes which differ from those of traditional literacy programmes which have emphasised access to infrastructure. Specifically, the Cybermohalla programme's key innovation is allowing participants to create learning outcomes which they themselves find germane to their lives (Asthana, 2006; Singh, et. al, 2006). Participants are therefore more self-motivated as the skills they acquire have direct relevance to their lives and life-goals.

Criticisms and weaknesses

A key criticism of the Cybermohalla programme centres on the fact that the 'spaces' are 'delicately sustained' by insulating the 'sensitive networks and aspirations' between the participants and the coordinators (Lovink, 2006). People from the development and NGO sectors who wanted to visit the Cybermohallas were supposedly denied because it was argued that they would not understand the 'creative intellectual energy' of the space, and would instead disrupt it. And of the entire Sarai populace, only five per cent or less would have visited the mohalla labs (Lovink, 2006). These overly protective actions have raised criticisms from the research and NGO communities as well as from the broader Sarai members. Critics began to question the rationale behind guarding youth participants from the settlements and questioned Cybermohalla's democratizing objectives since these protective actions had the opposite effect of promoting insecurities. Another criticism pertained to limiting the dialogue participation to only the mohalla youths. This led to criticisms about the meaningfulness of dialogue where interlocutors are contained within a circle rather than regarded as part of the broader society.

Case Study 3: Young Journalists Group (Vietnam)

YOJO began with the support of UNICEF and Vietnamese National Radio in 1998. The driving force behind the organization's work was a then 13-year old teen girl named Lan Anh. Lan Anh's zeal to start YOJO was ignited when she realized that media portrayals of Vietnamese children's experiences were often inaccurate. Furthermore, the articles were all written by adults.

To counter these negative trends, YOJO's primary mission is to develop and inculcate children's rights via print-based and radio media. YOJO's child reporters are imbued with the ideals of children's rights to self-expression, education and equal participation. This democratic movement involving children is aligned with the broader guidelines promoted by the United Nations under UNICEF and UNESCO for children's rights worldwide (Asthana, 2006). Since then, YOJO has grown to over three hundred members from various parts of Vietnam and the programme emphasizes participation by children, for children (Kinkade & Macy, 2003).

Media knowledge and skills

At its inception, forty to fifty YOJO members first attended workshops sponsored by UNICEF, through which they received journalism training from adult professional journalists. This pilot group then visited other provinces in Hanoi and other rural areas to train and mentor other young members as journalists. YOJO's child journalists also go on excursions to gain practical and contextual knowledge of reporting in terms of gathering information through interactions with various contacts and sources. Since its establishment, YOJO has produced some 500 radio programs and published hundreds of articles in over twenty print media outlets. Its youth-led radio program with adult journalists as mentors is organized as the "Junior Reporters Club," where young reporters develop several media outlets to express their ideas. Writing and reporting skills courses have also been sponsored by Plan Haiti and the Panos Institute (Asthana, 2006; Kinkade, 2002).

YOJO produces "Children's aspirations", a radio program which broadcasts twice weekly ("Children's good friends" on Tuesday and "Children's Aspirations" on Thursday morning, at 7.30am) on the government radio station "Voice of Vietnam"; "Voices of the Youth", a monthly newsletter and published a book, also named "Children's aspirations", that contains children's writings on social themes such as pollution, gender equalities and issues of development. In addition to producing two weekly radio programs that touch the community, YOJO's monthly "Voices of Youth" newsletter is also sent to various government leaders, organizations and NGOs. YOJO also plays a key role in organizing live TV and radio forums between youths and decision makers, and also organizes the National Youth Conference which campaigns against discrimination and exploitation of girls, and the National Students Forum which touches on issues relating to the environment. From their involvement in these activities, children in this programme not only gain media knowledge and skills, but also develop critical knowledge about the production of media as well as the socio-cultural landscape of Vietnam. YOJO's children thus see themselves more as "youth activists" and "youth innovators" than as mere reporters (Kinkade & Macy, 2003, p. 66).

The children pick up media skills by performing a wide variety of media-making roles such as layout, design, graphics, reporting, editorial and advertising. These activities also inculcate in them a sense of ownership and responsibility which is central to the creation and dissemination of media content.

Sustainability and growth
YOJO's use of the radio medium is well-suited to Vietnamese lifestyles and therefore heightens the programme's sustainability. By focusing on radio, "the group recognizes that most rural Vietnamese do not own television sets, having far greater access to radios" (Kinkade & Macy, 2003, p. 65). Also, the fact that the majority of young people living in rural areas work in the fields in the morning increases the audience reach of YOJO's radio programs. Participation from listeners through phone calls to the radio stations further grow the audience base, thereby enhancing audience support and involvement.

The prominence of the program in Vietnamese society has also gained the recognition of the President of Vietnam and the Prime Minister. That YOJO was invited to present comments on the national conference on Vietnam's National Plan of

Action for Children (2001-2010) (Kinkade, 2002), is a testimony to the programme's credibility and success. YOJO has thus made discernible impact on the implementation of government initiatives concerning children's rights and solidified its position amongst Vietnamese youths as their spokeperson.

A main sustainability model for YOJO is in getting funding to maintain its infrastructure and resources. The group funded its programmes through sponsorship from various bodies. Their radio programs are sponsored by "Radio Voice of Vietnam". The group's annual budget for the newsletters and the programming is covered by UNICEF for roughly $8,000 (Kinkade & Macy, 2003). This is argued however to be a highly risky model of sustainability because of the added challenge of obtaining funding for a non-profit organization that is headed by youths and maintained almost entirely by children.

Programme development and future plans
Since its inception, YOJO has sought to expand its work by getting more "excluded" youth groups to be involved in their upcoming projects. Their Junior Reporters Club which initially limited its recruitment to secondary and high school students has now widened its reach to include street children and children in suffering, spawning another junior reporting team in the "Voice of Vietnam" called the "Green Bees". On top of this, the operations of the junior reporters have found a place in the website of "Voice of Vietnam" (VOV), airing over the cultural and social affairs channel in VOV2. It has since become an inseparable part that enhances the diversity of the youth programs in the website. YOJO has also been linked to the Tuoi Tre Newspaper, one of the three biggest newspaper organizations in Vietnam, under the name of "Club of the Young Journalists" ("Hello Miss, I'm young reporter", June 2007).

Criticisms and weaknesses
YOJO however faces a number of challenges. The most significant problems are in the areas of editorial control, financial stability, age-ism, time management, organizational capacity and a concrete evaluation system (Kinkade & Macy, 2003). The central issue in these problems is the young ages of the journalists. Being students, the members face the arduous task of juggling their school work, working with adults who are doubtful about their skills and commitment and has also experienced high turnover rates of members, especially "senior" members, as they grew older.

The group has also faced problems in achieving financial stability. This has prompted key members to attend fundraising workshops in the hope of raising their own funds for the programme to help relieve the uncertainties of funding from sponsors. A problem of a smaller scale occurs in editorial control of group's media products. With more than three hundred children reporters producing articles at different times and wanting their reports broadcast, the editorial team faces the strenuous task of coordinating the reports and selecting the reports to be broadcast. There is certainly a need to re-organize YOJO's reporters groupings and control submissions.

Conclusion

The three case studies provide us with valuable lessons on how media literacy skills can be imparted to young people with potentially positive results. Some lessons on how such media literacy programmes should be implemented can be derived from the three cases presented here.

Clearly, the acquisition and transmission of media literacy skills can have significant effects beyond merely equipping people with the skills to consume and produce media content. Vested with these skills, the youths trained in these programmes became considerably more empowered in their ability to express themselves, raise societal awareness about issues which concerned them and also found themselves growing and developing as individuals. These cases therefore exemplify the exhortation that media literacy has to be looked at as more than just knowledge and skills but should be contextualised and regarded as a set of democratic processes (Livingstone, 2004). In this regard, media literacy programmes which focus on empowerment and democratic participation are arguably more sustainable than those which focus only on skills. Such programmes will be more appealing to participants and given the focus on nurturing the complete individual, participants are also more likely to be committed to the programme. Importantly, the media skills and technological devices which media literacy programmes seek to train students in must be sensitive to the social and cultural contexts of the participants. YOJO's strategy of focusing on radio journalism is an excellent case in point given that radio access is much more easily available than other types of media.

Another key way in which media literacy programmes can enhance their chances of success is to build up a sufficiently wide base of community support. As seen from the experience of the Cybermohalla, alienating particular sectors of a programme's immediate community can have potentially adverse impacts on the continuance of a programme. The experiences of YOJO and Little Masters also suggest to us that media literacy programmes which leverage on media convergence can significantly increase their impact. As Internet access grows even in developing countries, the ease of having media content disseminated across a range of media platforms is greater. Similarly, media literacy programmes have to also instil in their participants an appreciation for the challenges and opportunities posed by a converged media landscape. For all three cases, continued funding is clearly a challenge. The experience of Little Masters suggests that commercial models such as advertising can be explored. Or as the experience of YOJO and Cybermohalla suggest, funding from NGOs and relevant corporations may be solicited, albeit carefully managed.

Overall, the three cases present a rich palette of experiences of media literacy programmes in developing countries and how they can enhance their success, sustainability, impact and support from the community and participants.

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