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Media Literacy in Peru: reflections and comparisons on a 10-year journey

Media Literacy in Peru: riflessioni e comparazioni su un viaggio di 10 anni

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Abstract. This paper compares the results of a media literacy test taken in 2009 and 2019 at three schools in Lima, Peru. To understand the study's results in this 10-year comparison, the context surrounding the study is examined, including Peru's approach to national standards and curriculum and the Center for Media Literacy's frameworks for media literacy. Although technology, especially social media, advanced dramatically during this 10-year period, students continued to demonstrate that they doubt the media. However, the paradigm that has prevailed in Peru has been to provide technology to schools instead of promoting media literacy in the curriculum or in teacher training, ignoring Latin American tradition of educommunication. After initial promising results for students' understanding Core Concepts of media literacy, later results in 2019 show that these Concepts were not retained, nor was teacher training reinforced. The combination of more teacher training and incorporating media literacy into the national curriculum can be powerful drivers for introducing media literacy into the education system of Peru. This article, based on survey results from three Lima-based private schools, contends its importance and urgency, over all in the context of global Covid-19, which has forced school lockdowns for almost two years, increasing Peruvian children's exposure and interaction with media.

Keywords: media education, media literacy, *educomunicación*, Core Concepts, Peru.

Riassunto. Il presente contributo confronta i risultati di un test di media literacy svolto nel 2009 e nel 2019 in tre scuole a Lima, in Perù. Per comprendere i risultati dello studio in questo confronto di 10 anni, viene esaminato il contesto che circonda lo studio, compreso l'approccio del Perù agli standard e al curriculum nazionali e le strutture del Center for Media Literacy per l'alfabetizzazione mediatica. Sebbene la tecnologia, in particolare i social media, sia progredita notevolmente durante questo periodo di 10 anni, gli studenti hanno continuato a dimostrare di dubitare dei media. Tuttavia, il paradigma che ha prevalso in Perù è stato quello di fornire tecnologia alle scuole invece di promuovere l'alfabetizzazione mediatica nel curriculum o nella formazione degli

insegnanti, ignorando la tradizione latinoamericana dell'*educación comunicativa*. Dopo i promettenti risultati iniziali relative alla comprensione da parte degli studenti dei concetti fondamentali della media literacy, i risultati successivi nel 2019 mostrano che questi concetti non sono stati mantenuti, né è stata rafforzata la formazione degli insegnanti. La combinazione di una maggiore formazione degli insegnanti e l'integrazione della media literacy nel curriculum nazionale possono costituire delle potenti leve per introdurre l'alfabetizzazione mediatica nel sistema educativo del Perù. Questo articolo, basato sui risultati di un'indagine di tre scuole private con sede a Lima, ne contesta l'importanza e l'urgenza, soprattutto nel contesto del Covid-19 globale, che ha costretto il blocco delle scuole per quasi due anni, aumentando l'esposizione e l'interazione dei bambini peruviani con i media.

Parole chiave: media education, media literacy, *educación comunicativa*, concetti fondamentali, Perù.

INTRODUCTION

As digital media technologies drive global culture, media literacy has emerged from the periphery of education and increasingly become recognized as an imperative for preparing citizens of all nations to be active, engaged and resilient (UNESCO, 2021). Latin America is no exception: for the past 30 years, Latin American governments have connected schools with digital technologies, and there are public education policies that validate ICT as a transversal core concept (Mateus, Andrada & Quiroz, 2019). However, much of this investment has prioritized buying devices over building skills (Mateus & Quiroz, 2021).

In addition to this, the COVID-19 pandemic confirmed important beliefs in Latin American countries, such as the lack of media infrastructure and the development of media literacy competences among teachers. In this sense, “the pandemic, and the subsequent total stop of in person activities in all education centers, has done nothing more than turn on a giant light that illuminates pre-existing social inequalities, among which the enormous levels of school segregation stand out” (Giroux, Rivera-Vargas & Passeron, 2020). Latin America is the region with the largest gaps in the world and the indicators achieved in this context warn of a complex scenario that includes the migration of more than 100,000 students from private education to the public system, the closure of at least 2,000 private educational centers and the possibility of thousands of students losing the year due to lack of access or support, as well as the decrease of no less than 15% of enrollment and significant signs of school dropout.

1. FORMAL CURRICULUM CHARACTERISTICS IN PERU

Like many countries, Peru does not have a tradition of critical media education. On the contrary, the paradigm that has prevailed has been to provide technology

to schools, obtaining very limited results (Peru was one of the most enthusiastic participants of *One Laptop per Child* project acquiring almost 1 million laptops, but most of them are underused or stacked at school's warehouses). This paradigm of provision of technologies fails in two debatable premises: first, that ICTs (Information, Communication, Technology) are an end in itself and that their integration is intended to facilitate the teaching process; and second, that their integration into the school responds to an economic criterion of development of working capital, rather than to a political right to develop citizenship (Mateus & Quiroz, 2021).

At the curricular level, the presence of the media in schools is circumstantial. However, in 2017 the Ministry of Education approved a new National Curriculum (Ministry of Education, 2017). This standard is mandatory for education at all levels and affects both public and private schools, to introduce an approach based on competencies that aims to integrate and contextualize content depending on the situations of the day. Although the media competencies are not mentioned, many of these conceptual proposals are present in the Curriculum in a scattered way. In addition, there is a new transversal competence called “ICT Competence”, defined as the competence to develop in digital environments generated by ICT. The objective is that students acquire skills to be able to: (i) personalize virtual environments, (ii) manage information from the virtual environment, (iii) interact in virtual environments and (iv) create virtual objects in different formats (Mateus & Suárez-Guerrero, 2017).

Regardless, teachers cannot help students acquire skills unless they receive the professional development support they need. Certainly, one of the keys to the development of media education is the initial training of teachers. As stated in the presentation of the UNESCO *Media and Information Literacy Curriculum for Teachers*: “By educating students to learn how to use the media and information, teachers will first respond to their role as advocates for citizenship informed and rational, and secondly, they will respond to changes in their role as

educators, as teaching moves away from teacher-centered and more focused on learning” (UNESCO, 2011, p. 17).

Although much has been written on the subject, few countries have taken specific actions in teacher training and curriculum development. In most cases, lack of standardized curriculum at international and national level has meant that teacher training in media literacy is often a one-sided effort by educators who are passionate, rather than encouraged through public policy (Bulger & Davison, 2018). In other areas where governments have carried out formal initiatives, such as in Europe, efforts and resources have focused more on digital competence than on media literacy, so there is an unnecessary proliferation of different media literacy frameworks (Buckingham, 2018).

In Peru, currently there are nearly half a million serving teachers and 50,000 education students. 63% of Peruvian teachers have been trained in institutes and 36% in universities. According to a study carried out by the National Council of Education (2016), the three main areas for teacher training are “strategies and didactics of learning areas” (27.1%), “materials for teaching and the use of ICT” (18%) and the “psychology and culture of students” (14.3%). In many ways, the three areas are related to media education: first, because the media can be both a teaching tool and an object of study; second, because the media are part of everyone’s daily life and, therefore, third, the media’s undeniable impact on the psychology and culture of society. These reasons seem to be more than enough to consider media education as an urgent concern.

Unlike other concepts rooted in school tradition, such as mathematics or arts education, the conception of what media education is remains ambiguous. Much of the responsibility for this situation lies with local authorities and institutions, which have not viewed the media as a cultural experience, but rather as a repertoire of devices used only to facilitate and motivate the learning experience.

Recent studies clearly show that early learning teachers want media education to be part of their training and would like it to be addressed more specifically in the teacher training curriculum. Although lack of infrastructure must be considered, training media education teachers from the earliest stages should also be a priority. The reasons that future Peruvian teachers offer to include media education in schools are favorable, but they seem to be stuck in an instrumental approach (considering the media only as didactic aids), rather than as an object of study in itself (Mateus & Hernandez-Breña, 2019). As Jesús Martín Barbero (2009) said, technology is much more than just a few devices, it is applied to new

modes of perception and language, to new sensibilities and writings that must be considered in schools. There is a long way to go for media education to become part of the Peruvian educational agenda, but the first steps are beginning to be felt.

2. EDUCOMUNICACIÓN TRADITION AND THE FIVE CORE CONCEPTS OF MEDIA LITERACY

Latin America has long contributed to the media literacy field since the 1960’s. Liberation pedagogy – originating with Brazilian educator Paulo Freire (1970) – and the concept of *educomunicación*, a word that combines education and communication, has contributed to the thinking behind media literacy for decades. “Freire criticized the vertical and authoritarian sense of the education system, proposing the construction of a dialog enriched by the students’ experiences and their way of viewing the world” (Mateus & Quiroz, 2017, p. 155). Thus, “*educomunicación* assumes that education and communication are interrelated, part of a transformational and liberatory process that is dialogical, critical, relational, collaborative, and participatory” (Lombana, 2021).

As this concept of literacy has taken hold – a concept that incorporates contextual understanding of media messages as well as the reading and writing of a text, whether digital or print, video, or audio – youth are challenged to interrogate the media on a deeper level to make meaning in their every-day lives. No longer is it enough to “read” and “write” in the traditional sense, but instead, to filter through the plethora of information available, it is essential to understand the deeper nature of media and information, and how media work as a global symbolic system.

In the United States, the Center for Media Literacy (CML) has developed a framework based on two evidence-based frameworks. On one hand, Freire’s Empowerment Spiral of Awareness, Analysis, Reflection and Action, and on the other, Questions/TIPS (Q/TIPS), comprised of 5 Core Concepts and Key Questions for both consumers and producers of media. Among the ideas behind the Core Concepts are understanding authorship and the provenance of information; to be aware of the techniques that are used to attract attention and influence thinking; to know that other people in different locations or with different backgrounds will undoubtedly interpret a message differently – or be targeted in a different way that may be more appealing to them; to detect the bias that is always present in media, because it is impossible for all points of view to be adequately represented; and to accept that media is always

created for a purpose, either for profit or for power and influence (Jolls & Wilson, 2014).

Specifically, these evidence-based (Fingar & Jolls, 2013) Concepts and Questions for deconstruction of media messages are:

- 1) *Authorship*: All media messages are constructed. Who created this message?
- 2) *Techniques/Format*: Media messages are constructed using a creative language with its own rules. What creative techniques are used to attract my attention?
- 3) *Audience*: Different people experience the same media message differently. How might different people understand this message differently?
- 4) *Content/Framing*: Media have embedded values and points of view. What values, lifestyles and points of view are represented in or omitted from this message?
- 5) *Purpose*: Most media messages are organized to gain profit and/or power. Why is this message being sent?

These Concepts and Questions apply to any media, anytime, anywhere – whether the media is textbooks, news, social media, videos, websites, or games – the possibilities are limitless in a media-driven world, online and offline. It takes practice over time for students to learn these Concepts and Questions – to develop a heuristic or habits of mind when engaging with media.

Furthermore, students need to understand that media messages involve a context as well as the content itself, so that students can determine whether they will take action in using a media message, or not. This decision-making process is represented through an evidence-based model called the Empowerment Spiral of Awareness, Analysis, Reflection and Action (UNESCO, 2020).

The Empowerment Spiral helps answer the questions: “So what?”, “Why should I care about this message?”, “Should I care at all?”. The overwhelming number of messages that each individual processes each day call for many such decisions, but in consciously applying these steps, it is possible to make a more informed decision (Fingar & Jolls, 2020). Through learning media literacy, students gain confidence through practice over time, acquiring a heuristic that can be used on a lifelong basis.

The combination of the Core Concepts of media literacy, resting on a process of inquiry, along with the Empowerment Spiral provides a systematic way to deconstruct, construct and make decisions while navigating the media, online or offline. The University of California-Los Angeles (UCLA) evaluated CML’s two pedagogical frameworks in a longitudinal study, and found that these frameworks were effective in positively affecting middle school students’ knowledge, attitudes and behaviors (Fingar & Jolls, 2013, 2020).

Effectively utilizing these two frameworks in a classroom calls for teacher training, since this student-centered approach requires a different style of teaching, with the teacher becoming more of a “guide on the side” than a “sage on the stage.”

For professional development, CML typically uses a train-the-trainer approach, by teaching teachers to understand media literacy concepts, and then, applying those concepts/frameworks through a process of inquiry that helps both teachers and students to explore a subject or problem, rather than the “banking approach” of transmitting content through spoon-feeding information or answers. This allows teachers and students to use fresh and relevant content for learning, rather than oft-outdated textbooks.

3. NEW COMPETENCES AND WAYS OF BRIDGING PEDAGOGIES

CML’s approach to media literacy, utilizing evidence-based frameworks, is a “short cut” that incorporates the underlying conceptual understanding needed to navigate the media world and to explore how the media operate as a global symbolic system. But though the CML frameworks are useful for mobile learning and for guiding pedagogical decisions, more research and development work in formal education settings needs to be done to identify competencies, provide professional development, implement media literacy programs, and evaluate pedagogical approaches. Such research and development work are now being done throughout the world.

One proposal calls for six dimensions through which to measure competencies, including languages (visual, textual, aural), technology, interaction processes, production and dissemination processes, ideology and values, and the aesthetic dimensions. These competency dimensions are structured around the traditional ideas of production of media messages by oneself and one’s relationship/interaction with outside messages (Ferrés & Piscitelli, 2012).

It is a major challenge to build in these competencies into educational standards, curriculum and assessments, and overall evaluations of student performance. Yet these are the requirements for formal learning today.

While such development work is being done, CML’s evidence-based methodology helps improve student knowledge, attitudes and behaviors when reinforced and integrated into existing curriculum. Basically, teachers connected the formal curriculum with the Five Core Concepts/Key Questions in lessons that use a process of inquiry to explore a particular subject, whether that sub-

ject is in language arts, science, health, or social studies. This gives a teacher maximum flexibility in ensuring that lessons are fresh and relevant to students, but teachers need to be highly trained in using frameworks so that they can easily relate the subject matter to the appropriate Concepts and Questions while guiding the students.

4. METHODS AND MATERIALS

In early 2009, Medios Claros, a Civil Association that emerged in Lima in 2008 to publicize, disseminate and promote Media Literacy in Peru, sponsored CML to conduct a two-day teacher training in Lima for 100 teachers at four private schools, all based in Lima (with 25 teachers from each school): América del Callao School; Newton College; Villa Cáritas School (Catholic School -Women); and Colegio San Pedro (Catholic School - Men).

The two-day training was aimed at the following goals:

1. To acquaint teachers with the “basics” of media literacy, including the CML Five Core Concepts and Five Key Questions.
2. To provide teachers with an understanding of the role of construction in media literacy, and how media literacy skills encompass both deconstruction and construction/production of media.
3. To acquaint teachers with a basic methodology for teaching media literacy, including strategies for teaching close analysis using the CML frameworks.
4. To encourage teachers to practice their skills by giving each teacher an opportunity to lead their fellow teachers in a “class” exercise, that emphasized close analysis.
5. To give teachers some time to connect media literacy frameworks with their own curricula, by integrating media literacy concepts into units of instruction. CML provided Individual coaching for this portion of the training.
6. To coach teachers as needed after the training sessions, through email, to answer questions about experiences and resources.
7. To provide teachers with CML reference materials that gave teachers some handy and practical ways to use media literacy in their classrooms.

Subsequent to the teacher training, each school administered a questionnaire for all students, grades 2-11. This self-report instrument was designed and validated by the Center of Media Literacy in 2008. It is based on 28 multiple-choice items. The purposes of this post-test was reported as (i) to provide a school-wide

evaluation of media literacy learning and baseline for future evaluation, (ii) to see whether students improved their understanding of the Five Core Concepts of Media Literacy, (iii) to determine whether students understood how to apply the Five Key Questions of Media Literacy; and (iv) to see whether students understood the importance of individual decision-making and their social responsibility.

Ten years later, in 2019, the same instrument was taken again in three of the four schools in Lima that took part in the 2009 study to analyse the impact of teacher training in student’s responses and to compare the results during a 10 year period. Despite the effectiveness of this teacher training, this data will contribute to the sparse research available on implementing media literacy programs and being able to compare results over time – both from a pedagogical standpoint and also from a youth perspective¹.

Although CML’s Core Concepts and Key Questions apply to any form of media, the students and teachers alike undoubtedly needed practice in applying the Concepts and Questions to social media and the technology enhancements available through smart phones. With social media, individuals went from primarily being receivers of messages – such as on accessing websites – to being producers of media, who could comment or forward media messages with their own opinions or emoji’s attached. About this, we must remember that technological changes cannot be separated from the cultural transformations of the use of the medium, whether the latter are a consequence of the former or vice versa (Cabero & Llorente, 2008).

This means that additional biases can be easily introduced to a message, and in some cases, the “likes” or “dislikes” are comments unto themselves. The entire context of media has changed in a few short years, making the participatory culture first identified by Henry Jenkins (Jenkins et al., 2004) a reality. For the first time, production in classrooms is available at the touch of a finger on a smartphone – a far cry from the slumberous equipment required before.

Indeed, in response to these significant changes inside the classroom and without, in 2009 the CML introduced its “Five Key Questions for Construction,” told from the point of view of Producers of media messages: (*Authorship*) What am I authoring? (*Format*) Does my message reflect understanding in format, creativity and technology? (*Audience*) Is my message engaging and

¹ A similar inquiry can be found in Gutierrez et al. (2017), who propose an instrument that aims at evaluating media literacy among students from three aspects: the cognitive, the technological and the socio-emotional.

compelling for my target audience?, (*Framing/Content*) Have I clearly and consistently framed values, lifestyles and points of view in my content?, and (*Purpose*) Have I communicated my purpose effectively?

The participants in both studies (2009-2019) were students from grades 2-11 of three schools (7-17 years of age) typically aged invited to be part of it with the permission of their parents or tutors. All participants were duly informed and completed a self-administered questionnaire. Because of the time span between surveys, only one class – the eldest class – from each school participated in both surveys; otherwise, new participants from the concurrent grades took part in the second survey, while survey results from the first survey were used based on the responses of different students. Although the surveys do not yield comparisons between identical individuals, they do provide a snapshot of knowledge and views of students from the same class groupings in the same four schools. No other demographics were collected for individual students. In 2009, the total sample was 280 participants, and in 2019, the number was 202 (Table 1).

The test results were conducted through descriptive analysis using IBM® SPSS Statistics software (version 24).

5. RESULTS

Regardless of the technological and pedagogical advances made in the interim, some specific themes emerged regarding youth media literacy from examining the post-survey results between 2009 - 2019, and some questions yielded significant changes in responses through the years.

In general, young people doubt the messages of the media. The percentage of students who consider that the media only offer them partial information is similar at both times (83.6% in 2009 and 86.1% ten years later). We can observe two slight differences in favor of the suspicion of the students in 2019: on the one hand, 2.5% of them believed in 2009 that the media said “only the truth”, while ten years later this figure dropped to 0.5%; on the other hand, the number of students who consider that newspapers, television and radio tell “only lies” went from 0.7% to 2.5% between 2009 and 2019 respectively (Table 2).

When it comes to publicity, the youth of 2019 seemed more susceptible to a sales pitch than their younger selves from 2009: in 2009, 98.2% of the students said that the main goal of an ad was to “sell,” whereas in 2019 only 89.6 percent answered in kind. This same susceptibility applied to a question on “Which is the

Table 1. Sample of participants.

School	Year	
	2009 (n=)	2019 (n=)
Villa Cáritas	108	56
San Pedro	93	58
América del Callao	79	88
Total sample	280	202

Table 2. Results to the question “What do newspapers, television and radio say?” (2009-2019).

	Year	
	2009 (%)	2019 (%)
Only the truth	2,5	0,5
Only lies	0,7	2,5
Only a side of the information	83,6	86,1
Everything we need to know	13,2	9,9
Doesn't answer	0,0	1,0
(Basis: total of respondents)	280	202

best question to ask after seeing a commercial message that advertises a new lipstick?” In 2019, only 35.6% said the answer is to ask “Why was this message sent” compared to 65% in 2009 – and 55% in 2019 wanted to know “Where can I get this lipstick?” Additionally, in 2019, when asked “How important is it to wear whatever my friends are wearing,” 58.4% said “The most important thing,” whereas in 2009, 56.8% answered similarly.

On the other hand – perhaps through the influence of using social media to reach certain friends or groups – youth in 2019 seemed to have a more intuitive understanding of targeting audiences and brands. In answering the question: “It is important to consider who created the advertising message in order to: Find the bias,” 93.1% correctly identified “Find the bias” in 2019 vs. 82.5% in 2009.

Similarly, when responding to the question: “A target audience is the group of people for whom something is created,” 83.7% responded True in 2019, vs. 79.3% in 2009. Students in 2019 also had a slight edge in responding correctly to the question “Our point of view influences how we react to media messages,” with 92.1% responding “True” in 2019 vs. 88.6 in 2009.

The results are different when more specific criteria of media literacy are evaluated. Respondents were presented with a list of 5 basic concepts on this subject and asked to indicate the 3 that were correct. In 2009, 90% of respondents refused to believe that messages were

Table 3. Results to the question “Which is the best question to ask after seeing a commercial message that advertises a new lipstick?” (2009-2019).

	Year	
	2009 (%)	2019 (%)
Where can I get this lipstick?	25,7	55,0
When can I get this lipstick?	7,9	8,9
Why was this message sent?	65,0	35,6
Doesn't answer	1,4	0,5
(Basis: total of respondents)	280	202

Table 4. Results to the question “Why is it important to know who created this publicity message?” (2009-2019).

	Year	
	2009 (%)	2019 (%)
To know who to blame	13,6	5,9
Find the bias	82,5	93,1
Find out who made the music	3,6	1,0
Doesn't answer	0,4	0,0
(Basis: total of respondents)	280	202

Table 5. Results to the statement “Our point of view influences how we react to media messages” (2009-2019).

	Year	
	2009 (%)	2019 (%)
True	88,6	92,1
False	5,0	1,0
Not sure	6,4	5,9
Doesn't answer	0,0	1,0
(Basis: total respondents)	280	202

not constructed; this percentage was reduced to 84.2% in 2019. On the other hand, when asked if the messages were created using their own creative languages, 85.4% of those surveyed in 2009 answered affirmatively, compared to 80.7% ten years later.

Likewise, when faced with the statement “people experience the same message differently”, 84.3% said ‘yes’ in 2009, while 80.2% responded similarly in 2019. Regarding whether the media incorporates values and points of view, there was a considerable decrease between the years of the questionnaire: although 81.8% believed that they were in 2009, only 46% responded

Table 6. Results to asking respondents to indicate the key questions about media literacy (2009-2019).

	Year	
	2009 (%)	2019 (%)
Three correct	30,0	14,4
Incorrect answers	70,0	85,6
(Basis: total respondents)	280	202

in an analogous way in 2019. Finally, when asked if the messages are organized to improve health and safety, we found another revealing figure: the number of the sample that believes this to be so went from 17.1% to 44.1% between 2009 and 2019 respectively.

In summary, only 31.7% managed to identify the basic concepts to evaluate the content of a medium in 2019, compared to 66.1% in 2009.

In another part of the questionnaire, the respondents had to carry out a similar exercise, this time from a list of 6 questions on media literacy of which 3 were correct (as expressed in our Introduction). The results were mixed. On the one hand, 57.9% in 2009 thought it appropriate to ask who had created the message, a figure that dropped to 48.5% in 2019. Regarding the creative techniques used by the media, 82.1% thought it was a pertinent question in 2009, while the percentage only reaches 60.9% in 2019. The last of the correct options consisted of the question about the interpretations that different people have from the same message; given this, in 2009, 67.1% affirmed that it was something important, while only 55.9% answered the same ten years later.

Unlike 2009, where 30% managed to point out the questions without problems, in 2019 only 14.4% managed to identify them.

Overall, it was indeed encouraging to see that 89.1% of students in 2019 – an 18% overall increase over the 71.1% of students who responded in 2009 – said that “It is important to ask questions about what advertising tells us because asking questions helps us make better choices.” Since media literacy rests on a process of inquiry, this is a highly promising outcome of the students’ education.

6. CONCLUSIONS

Some important limitations must be taken into account in order to read the results of this comparison. Teachers only received one two-day training in 2009, and this training was not repeated. This means that there was not reinforcement of training through the

years from administrators, nor were new faculty receiving training. Furthermore, it means that teachers had no opportunity to deepen their own skills in both learning and teaching. Indeed, if teacher training at each of the four Lima schools was continued, significant improvements in student understanding could reasonably be expected. Survey results in this study bear out this contention, since understanding of the Core Concepts, particularly, was less in the 2019 survey than the 2009 study, which was held shortly after the albeit short teacher training. Consistency in teaching and learning, and in practice over time, are needed to help establish critical habits of mind that media literacy encourages.

Along with this consideration, there were significant technological shifts and subsequent usage shifts during the 10-year time span between the media literacy surveys (2009-2019). For example, some popular applications, such as Snapchat or TikTok or Instagram, were nonexistent in 2009. And the growth of some online services was exponential during this 10-year time period. According to Hootsuite (2020), social media use is now used by half the global population, and the mix of social media platforms used has changed dramatically through the years. But one statistic is constant: the number of hours of media usage per day per user is rising every year. For example, in 2008, users in the United States spent less than three hours per day using digital media; in 2018, that number increased to more than six hours per day, virtually doubling (Bono Internet Trends, 2019; Pew Research Center, 2020).

There is no doubt that this level of usage is influencing how people think, how they interact with each other, and how they participate with society at large. The youth who took part in our study in 2009 were not influenced by the media in the same ways as they were in 2019, not only because of age, but because of rapid technology development.

Today, students everywhere must be equipped with the skills of critical thinking to understand media messages, especially since smartphones are so ubiquitous. Mobile learning is needed to accompany mobile phones. Disinformation and misinformation abound, and with intense propaganda campaigns affecting elections and public health, it is more important than ever that every citizen be educated to function effectively in this new media environment. Students need to be taught to “read” and “write” the context as well as the content of media messages so that they can readily identify bias and understand the differences between opinions and facts, between fiction and non-fiction, while understanding the underlying motivations that propel media globally. This skill-building takes practice and experience,

and also exposure to high-quality information resources. Because most well-regarded, vetted publications are behind paywalls on the internet today, many disadvantaged students do not have access to a quality information ecosystem, and they subsequently lack the skills of discernment, which can be developed over time, to detect flawed information (Suárez-Álvarez, 2021).

Since the national curriculum for Peru does not call for media literacy education, this gap is reflected in the survey results. Once the initial Medios-Claros sponsored training was conducted in 2009, no further formal training was done, nor was any expected. However, students did demonstrate more understanding of audience reactions and perceptions due to their own media usage, and this understanding, intuitive though it is, shows itself in the students’ knowing that audiences are affected by messages. Since some results, particularly around the Core Concepts, were stronger after the initial training in 2009, it is easy to conclude that teachers formally taught the Concepts and that students therefore had a better understanding.

Before teachers can teach, they need training – and they need reinforcement for using what they have learned through professional development. The combination of more teacher training and incorporating media literacy into the national curriculum can be powerful drivers for introducing media literacy into the education system of Peru. There is a timely opportunity to recover the *educación* approach in contrast to utilitarian, functional and tool-oriented approaches to media education and placing the emphasis on dialogue, reciprocity, critical thinking, participation, and awareness instead (Lombana, 2021).

In the meanwhile, the global applicability of CML’s Five Core Concepts and Key Questions – for consumers, producers and participants in media systems regardless of geography – provide a ready pedagogical short-cut and heuristic for helping youth and adults interpret and share media messages today and tomorrow.

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