

Media Literacy as a Regulatory Function

An Israeli Perspective

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Definition of media literacy

Sonia Livingstone

**The ability to access, analyze and evaluate
communicative text**

the capability to produce content

- **Accessibility** - the influence of social context on the quality of television viewing and the level of learning one derives from it (digital gap).
- **Analysis** - the promoting of analytic skills for identifying symbolic meanings of communication texts.
- **Evaluation** - the ability to evaluate content and personally judge their quality and essence.
- **Content production** - parallel to the ability to write and not only read communications material.

2 Approaches to media literacy policy

Buckingham & Domaille



protect

Stresses the need to protect youngsters from offensive content

Focuses upon the ability to prevent young audiences' exposure to offensive content

American approach (and countries at early stage in the field)



promote

Wider definition of 'literacy'

Refers to the function of the media in creating and promoting individual and communal identities and critical citizenship

Britain and Scandinavia (Denmark and Sweden)

Media regulation and Media literacy

- Regulators in different countries are involved in media literacy tasks, often without the title.
- Protective approach - rating and classification of broadcasts.
- "promotion" approach to media literacy
 - networking and clearinghouse functions;
 - initiating and supporting research;
 - providing information to the public;
 - Often in relation to civil society organizations.

Non-European examples for regulators' activities

Japan

- On 1995 the Ministry of Post & Telecommunication (MPT) established the "Panel on Audience and Broadcasting in the Multi-channel Era". Members from the media and telecom industry; academia and civil society.
- During the 90's focus on the need to improve media literacy.
- In 1999 the MPT established a study group for media literacy, composed by representatives of the industry, academia, educators and civic organizations.
- Shifting from protective aspects of media literacy to promotion of democratic and civil values. This approach was adopted since then, shaping the activities in the area.

Non-European examples for regulators' activities

Canada

- Media literacy is being promoted in Canada since the 60's, by civil society and teachers.
- In 1994 Canadian Radio-Television and Telecommunication Commission (CRTC) and The National Film Board of Canada (NFB) established the Media Awareness Network (Mnet), online media education organization that gathers and supplies information for educators.

Non-European examples for regulators' activities

Australia

- ACMA's role includes ensuring that the community is well informed about communications matters and delivering effective consumer protection for consumers.
- Undertakes media literacy projects and awareness-raising initiatives about rights or safeguards.
- In 2007 ACMA commissioned an examination of existing research, policy and educational activity, which promotes and supports media literacy. Additional research on television advertising to children, with a focus on children's media literacy.

Non-European examples for regulators' activities

New Zealand

- Direct support from TVNZ for the national Association of Media Educators
- Development of teaching resources by NZ On Air and NZ film commission;
- Recently, the Broadcasting Standards Authority published a comprehensive assessment for media literacy policy in New Zealand.
- The BSA is actively involved in supporting and promoting media literacy initiatives. MediaScape - clearinghouse website that gathers information regarding media literacy.

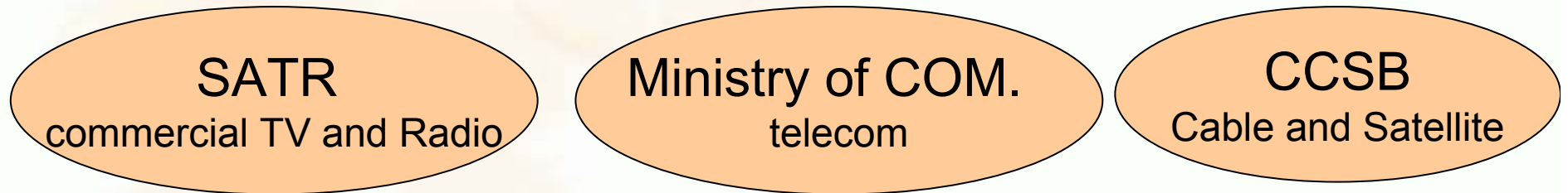
Regulation in a cultural context

- The approach to the role of regulation;
- The applicable tools of regulation;
- The relationship between regulators and political institutes;
- The relationship between regulators and the industry;
- The expectations of the public; etc...

All relate to the political culture and the social characteristics of each country

Israeli Case

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Regulation as a social and cultural mechanism to promote wide range of public interests

The authority's role is to maintain broadcasts and to supervise them. Inter-alia, it should operate towards:

- Promoting Israeli AV work;
- Fostering good citizenship and strengthening values of democracy and humanism;
- Maintain broadcasts aimed at educating the general public and specific groups

Israeli Case

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Functions detailed in the law:

- content regulation – genres quotas, local production quota, priority programming, news
- Public governance
- Unique functions: Authority's production, technical distribution

Past activities related to media literacy

- Rating and classification – connected to program code and creating watershed.
- Authority's production: community-doco, doc-kids.

media literacy as a regulatory function is not specifically mentioned in the law but can be drawn from it.

Integrating media literacy to media regulation

- Converged media environment changes the justifications, aims and mechanisms of traditional regulation
- Connection between the level of media literacy and the need for regulation
- Public responsibility remains at the core of regulation

Content regulation in a converged media environment

Conceptual Model

The predominance of content in public discourse

high ←————→ low

media literacy of target audience

low ←————→ high

User status

passive ←————→ active

Integrating Media Literacy with Media Regulation - Guiding Principles

- Withdrawing from traditional regulation without taking responsibility for the empowerment of the users and promotion of their skills may leave the user in a weakened state.
- The difficulty to regulate on the national level is valid also on the individual home level. What is the public interest?
- different levels of literacy among different audiences – We should focus on the weakest.
- Evaluating the need for existing regulation in light of changing ML level – research based.

Operative framework for media literacy

Creating professional network for interested parties

Monitoring media literacy level and supporting research

Initiating new Projects

Supporting existing Projects

Creating professional network for interested parties

The authority's website as a platform

- bulletin board;
- forum for deliberation and consultation between the relevant bodies;
- source for comparative information about media literacy activities and developments around the world;
- source for Media literacy bibliography and professional literature

Monitoring media literacy level and supporting research

- Initiating periodical research which will incorporate all elements of ML definition.
- Focusing on specific groups and the general public
- Establishing tools for effectiveness evaluation

Initiating and Supporting Projects

- Promoting media literacy through The authority's productions
- Establishing cooperation with ministry of Education and academia to develop teaching materials
- Promoting a course on ML and regulation as part of teachers' training.
- Offering support for existing projects.
- Initiating public campaigns related to ML

Thank you for your attention

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