



Highlighting the Core Values and Establishing a Media Literacy Content System With Chinese Characteristics

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Abstract

In the globalization and information age, national media literacy has become an important part of the comprehensive national literacy. Based on the analysis of current existing research on domestic media literacy, this paper proposes that we must break through the research status of imitating every step of the West. We should use the socialist core values as a guide to establish a media literacy content system with Chinese characteristic: Knowledge system, ability system and value system, especially under the view of socialist core values, to establish a media literacy value system with Chinese characteristics and research its communication. We must enhance national media literacy education to improve national media literacy through different categories, different levels and different phases and finally achieve the all-round improvement of national media literacy.

Key words: Media literacy; Media literacy education; Socialist core values

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INTRODUCTION

The so-called national media literacy refers to the national literacy to judge the value, significance and role of media

information and the effective use and dissemination of information (Li & Dong, 2011). In intensified globalization and the rapid development of information technology today, the national media literacy has become an important part of a comprehensive national literacy. To strengthen national media literacy education and improve national media literacy is important for enhancing national cultural soft power. If citizens have a high media literacy, we can distinguish between the various ideologies and values behind the mass media, discard the false and retain the true and discard the dross and select the essential so that we can uphold and promote healthy and progressive ideas and culture, resist and criticize negative decadent ideas and culture.

1. THE SHORTAGES OF EXISTING DOMESTIC RESEARCH

Research on media literacy and its education was originated in the United Kingdom. In 1929, London Board of Education published *Teachers' Recommendation Manual*. The book suggests that teachers conduct "special training to evaluate and resist vulgar movies" for students, which are considered the first illustration of using movies to conduct media literacy education (Heins & Cho, 2003). In 1933, two British scholars, Leavis and Thompson, published a book of literary criticism, *Culture and Environment: The Training of Critical Awareness*. In this book, they systematically elaborated problems of school introducing media literacy education and proposed a complete set of proposals for the first time (Bu, 1977).

From the current international and domestic research status, research on media literacy focuses on four aspects: the first one is descriptive study of media literacy, which primarily shows the current situation of certain group population's media literacy in a certain period of time and its rheology through content or textual analysis and audience surveys. The second one is explanatory research,

which uses communication and education methods to analyze the specific composition, characteristics and motivation of media literacy and the meaning of cultural education, especially the connotation, denotation and historical evolution of media literacy under the western horizon etc.. The third one is countermeasure research from the aspect of structure and function to explore the status, role and strategies of media literacy and its education in civic empowerment, media enlightenment and social development. The fourth one is the research of the practice of media literacy education to select a particular group, according to preset contents and methods, to conduct media literacy training or educational practice, with the content mainly about popular media knowledge and the media usage skill training.

Regarding the domestic studies, they are still inadequate:

Firstly they emphasize media literacy connotation and its education system and concern about the status and results of studies abroad, but they ignore media literacy system with Chinese characteristics, in particular the presenting and dynamic construction of its value system;

Secondly, they emphasize the upgrading of the skills to use media, but fail to grasp the core meaning of the value system of media literacy, and ignore starting from the guide of mainstream value to view the relationship between media literacy education and new media public opinion orientation and harmonious media environment;

Thirdly, they do not place the nation-state media literacy issues under the “globalization” context to view, nor they fully investigate the issues of the construction and dissemination of media literacy value system with Chinese characteristics from the perspective of socialist core values.

Therefore, while we need to focus on media literacy knowledge and skills system, we should proceed from our national conditions, start from the socialist core values, focus on media literacy value systems, and construct media literacy content system with Chinese characteristics combining with knowledge, skills and values.

2. WITH SOCIALIST CORE VALUES AS THE FOUNDATION, TO CONSTRUCT MEDIA LITERACY CONTENT SYSTEM WITH CHINESE CHARACTERISTICS

2.1 The Scope of Media Literacy Content System

To conduct media literacy education, it is necessary to have a clear understanding of the content of media literacy. Different countries, organizations and researchers have proposed their own views and opinions about it through defining media literacy or describing specific act standards of media literacy.

The Ministry of Education in Ontario Canada has pointed out in *Media Literacy Resource Guide* (Zhang, 2006): Media literacy aims to train students’ cognition and judgment of the nature of mass media, the commonly used techniques and tools of media as well as the effects generated by these skills and tools.

In the middle of 1990s, Dieter Buck, a German professor in the Department of Education at the University of Bielefeld and media educator, proposed “Bielefeld media literacy model” (Lu, 2007). This model contains contents of four aspects: media criticism ability, media knowledge, the ability to use the media, and media authoring capabilities.

In March 2006, in *Media Literacy Proposal* published on the website of British Film Institute, it proposes that (Lu, 2007), a person with a media literacy should: a) have a command of media technology and effective access to media information; b) be able to make an informed choice when facing many messages; c) understand the secrets of generated media messages and the purpose of dissemination; d) have their own analysis capabilities of media text; e) be able to make full use of the media; f) be able to identify and self-deny bad messages; g) attach importance to individual democratic rights and social responsibility.

Media Literacy Research Center in the School of Communication of Taiwan Chengchi University believes that (Zhang, 2006), media literacy means that the masses can interpret, speculate media and enjoy the media, and then use the media to send voices, to re-establish the media culture literacy of the community, and learn about the dissemination rights and responsibilities of citizens.

In 2006, a professor at Communication University of China Zhang Kai in his monograph *Introduction to Media Literacy* (Zhang, 2006) summarized three models of media literacy content system: ability model, knowledge model and understanding model.

As we can see from the above points of view, although there are differences of views, the content of media literacy can be divided into three categories: a) the category of basic knowledge, including media development history, classification and function of the media, the advantages and disadvantages of different media, media institutions and the operations and etc.; b) the category of skills, including the use of various media skills, using a variety of media to access to information, skills to make information and disseminate information; c) the category of value and morality, namely the identification, analysis and evaluation of the impact of media on individuals and society, the importance of individual spread rights and social responsibilities. In the three categories, “the category of skills” is universal and its research and education is the most mature; “the category of basic knowledge” is quite similar in addition to different national media management mechanisms; “the category of value and morality” is different from

the previous two categories. It needs specific research and implementation based on national circumstances and realities, and this is the weakest part in the domestic media literacy education research.

On this basis, leaning from the three-dimensional objective system of the new curriculum reform of basic education in China, we will define the content system of media literacy in three aspects: knowledge system, skill systems, and value system. These three are complementary and mutually independent, yet can be integrated into one.

2.2 Media Literacy Is the Product of Value Judgment and Ideological Orientation

Since the first day it has formed, media literacy and its education have been the product of value judgment and value orientation. The earliest proponents of media literacy and its education, British scholar Leavis and Thompson, believe that we should advocate for media education, oppose popular cultural values in media, and “prevent the impact and corrosion of errors in mass media, and pursue virtue and values in line with the traditional spirits.” (Buckingham & Song, 2000) Famous British media literacy education expert David Buckingham points out that, “media literacy education and specific cultural background and circumstances of the particular country or region are intrinsically linked...issues of ideology and cultural values will inevitably remain the core issues that media literacy education concerns.” (Buckingham, Zhang, & Lin, 2006)

Back in 1919, the Commercial Press in the document *Tax Exemption Request for Self-made Activity Videos* submitted to the Ministry of Agriculture and Commerce in the Northern Government discussed that, foreign films released in China are “frivolous, very harmful to people’s customs; they are played everywhere without restraint”; while films made in China were shipped abroad, “they tend to make fun of China’s social situations.” Therefore, the movies they shot would be “separately shipped to provincial capitals and commercial ports, choose to be on in order to resist foreign risqué goods and to support popular education; and on the other hand ship Chinese movies overseas to promote Chinese culture, diminish the contempt from foreigners, and touch inward feelings of oversea Chinese.”¹

From the perspective of the US, as the largest producer and exporter of media works, the United States is lagging behind other English-speaking countries in almost every aspect of media education - such as Australia, Canada and United Kingdom. Some researchers believe that the core reason is that fewer foreign media works enter into the United States and there is no sense of a threat from the United States, or to realize like other countries that “the development of media education” is of importance

and necessity (Kubey, 2004). Relatively speaking, the importing countries of media works (in addition to the United States, all other countries are facing this problem) maintain a high degree of sensitivity to foreign elements in works, fearing they will threaten the country’s basic values and cultural identity. Therefore, in order to maintain their core values and cultural integrity, some countries will develop a certain policy or policies for media education.

In our case, the fundamental purpose of full implementation of media literacy education is to safeguard the unity of the socialist core value, lead mainstream values, soften internal contradictions, digestion cultural invasion of Western developed countries (especially the digital aggression in the age of the Internet) and to promote the overall enhancement of cultural soft power.

2.3 To Construct the Value System Centered Media Literacy Content System With Chinese Characteristics

On the one hand, media literacy of citizens has become a core competency for a country in international competition in new media era, differences in national conditions have determined that countries need their own unique media literacy content and their value system becomes the only unique feature independent of media knowledge and media skills; on the other hand, digitization and globalization have changed the traditional culture and communication, diverse and rapid flow of value identity, complex and redundant media information is dissolving the overall dominant national core values while building the national media culture and values, and global expansion of capitalist culture and values has also caused obstruction for the construction and dissemination of the national value system.

Therefore, we must recognize the situation, firmly rely on the socialist core values, analyze the construction, communication and cognition of media literacy value system with Chinese characteristics, tap the cultural and political implications of media literacy value system, and by studying a variety of objects, analyze cognitive different value system of different groups. First, through the analysis of typical cases of national leaders, *Network News*, *People’s Daily*, *Xinhua Net*, we study “core values” under mainstream political horizon; the second is through the discussion of typical media events on well-known forums such as Tianya, Mop Community, Strong Nation Forum, Sina Forum, and Phoenix Forum to concern “grassroots value system” in netizens’ life horizon; the third is through research on government workers, media workers, university teachers, network celebrities and other opinion leaders to explore the “opinion leaders value system” under social elite horizon; fourth, through research on migrant workers, low-income groups we care “the underlying value system” under the vulnerable perspective; fifth, through negative cases at all levels

¹ See *Commercial Press’s Request of Tax Exemption for Self-made Activity Films*. Published in Commercial Press Newsletters in May 1919. Quoted from Cheng Jihua, *Chinese Film History (Vol 1)*. Beijing: China Film Press. March 1963.

of government, we analyze “negative value system” in harmonious society perspective. On the basis of multi-group analysis of both positive and negative cases, we shape “respect for life, people-oriented, equal exchange, patriotism and innovation centered” value system of media literacy, and with the center of this value system, we construct media literacy content system with Chinese characteristics.

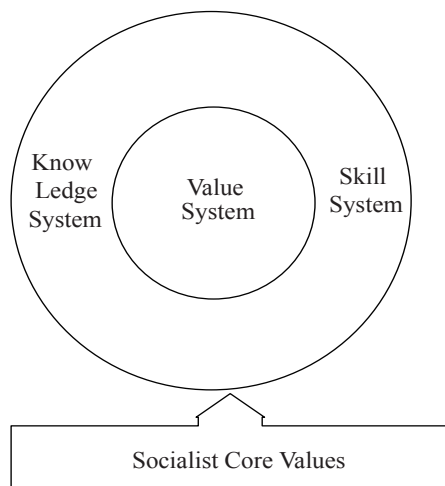


Figure 1
Media Literacy Content System With Chinese Characteristics

3. TO PROMOTE NATIONAL MEDIA LITERACY EDUCATION THROUGH DIFFERENT CATEGORIES, LEVELS AND PHASES

In this case, we need to promote national media literacy education through different categories, levels and phases. Through different categories, it means conducting education based on the characteristics of different groups, such as government staff, spokesman at departments at all levels, media professionals, educators, students, etc.; through different levels, it means conducting media literacy education depending on the level of persons in the same group; for example, students can be divided into college students, high school students, junior high school students and primary school students, etc.. We should conduct media literacy education according to the difference of people’s contact with the media, the impact of social and psychological characteristics at different levels. Through different phases, it means media literacy education is a process of gradual accumulation and development. We can conduct it on part of the group at some levels in some regions, and then gradually extend it.

3.1 To Pay Close Attention to Media Literacy Education of Party and Government Staff

Party and government staff with good media literacy, especially the spokesman of the party and the government

with media literacy is a crucial aspect to improve its political ability and social image. For party and government staff’s media literacy education, in terms of the content, it should focus on strengthening the education of value system of media literacy and the response capabilities to emergencies, lower their high figures, change the tradition style of “smooth dealing is the ability” and “no comment”, truly “respect for life, people-oriented and equal exchange”. In terms of the way, we can take the theoretical study and case studies combined, short-term training seminars combining with party schools and universities, online education and field-face-to-face education combined, hierarchical phased rotation of training for cadres to effectively enhance the media literacy of party and government staff.

3.2 To Strengthen Media Literacy Education of Students at All Levels

In school education level, we should gradually promote media literacy education curriculum, develop rational scientific educational content, prepare practical materials, and take steps to take sub-regional test measures to achieve classroom-based, daily and institutionalized media literacy education. In primary and secondary schools, we mainly cultivate adolescents’ awareness and habits of health use of media to accept and recognize the value system of media literacy under the socialist core values. In the field of higher education, we primarily cultivate talents with higher media literacy for the society. At the one hand, we should educate students to know how to use their media rights; on the other hand they must be clear and fulfill their responsibilities as citizens in the media-oriented society.

3.3 To Cultivate Public Opinion Leaders to Promote the Socialization of Media Literacy Education

The capability of national rational, independent judgment of information is one of the objectives of media literacy education. However, at this stage, because of the cohabitation of all kinds of information and varying national media literacy, many citizens still lack sufficient information judgment and discernment. We need to develop and organize a number of opinion leaders with good analysis ability, diligence writing and with strong speculative thinking to make rational, objective analysis of public hot events pertinent to help citizens to think, understand the connotation and denotation of various types of events and lead public opinions.

On the other hand, we should establish media literacy education case base and promote the socialization of media literacy education. We should collect, collate, interpret domestic and foreign, positive and negative public opinion hot cases and the media’s response to these cases; especially for media cases in which Western countries demonize China, we should carefully collate and interpret, closely surrounding “respect for life, people-

oriented, equal exchange, patriotism and innovation centered” media literacy value, with the approach of real cases plus rational thinking, to promote the upgrading of the national media literacy.

4. TO COMPREHENSIVELY IMPROVE NATIONAL MEDIA LITERACY

Currently, the country is deepening the reform and taking efforts to promote the development and prosperity of socialist culture, which provides an unprecedented historical opportunity for the development of national media literacy education. We must closely rely on the socialist core values, “respect for life, people-oriented, equal exchange, patriotism and innovation centered”, construct and improve media literacy content system with Chinese characteristics through different categories, levels and phases, vigorously promote media literacy education, comprehensively improve the national media literacy and enhance national cultural soft power.

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