Critical Media Literacy and Childrenin Turkey: Policies, Initiatives and Suggestions

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Abstract

RTÜK (Radio Television Authority in Turkey) began a media literacy program in cooperation with the Ministry of Education in 2004. This presentation traces the development of media literacy in parallel with the neo-right and conservative values in Turkey since 2004. I argue for the necessity of going beyond the protective mainstream approach of RTÜK and adopt a more critical approach, which is mainly derived from a critical pedagogy perspective. A critical media literacy program should take into account the production dimension with an analysis of media industries; locate the media texts in the daily life of students; and also look at consumption practices.

The approach argued here is important for developing the active participatory citizenry since it aims to develop the self-reflexive consciousness and ethics of citizens as active agents in social, cultural, political and economic spheres. It should lead us to question why we live as we do. In sum, such an approach will not serve to reinforce the already powerful hegemonic values (i.e. sexism, nationalism), but instead inform young people about power relations and encourage them to embrace values such as respecting and being sensitive to others. For this process, an understanding and practice of critical media literacy is vital since it helps to develop the consciousness of young citizens so that they can read media texts critically and be active in the production process.

In the presentation firstly the policy developments will be summarised. Secondly the experience gained through Media and Child Rights Syllabus (CRS) recently located in curriculum will be shared by demonstrating the positive developments and progressive changes in the ways journalism students deal with children rights during the in-class activities. Finally, suggestions for critical media literacy training will be shared.