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Integrating Media and Information Literacy in Indian Schools: Teachers' Insights on Challenges, Opportunities, and Key Competencies for Implementation

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Abstract

Media exerts a significant influence on society. Scholars, academicians, media professionals, and educators from around the world strongly support the inclusion of media education in school curricula. Although media and information literacy (MIL) education has been mentioned in the National Education Policy 2020, there remains a critical need for MIL competencies that align with the nuances of Indian education. Teachers play a vital role in understanding students' needs, concerns, and priorities and effectively addressing them through appropriate delivery methods. A trained teacher can make students more aware, vigilant, critical, and active while consuming media. Accordingly, this paper focuses on exploring teachers' perspectives, suggestions, and insights regarding essential competencies required for students to make them media and information literate citizens and the pathways through which MIL can be integrated into the existing school system. The study helps to identify the challenges and opportunities for implementing MIL in Indian schools. The result indicates that teachers prioritized key competencies based on students' needs. Teachers highlighted the significance of incorporating the key concepts like misinformation, digital privacy and safety, media consumption, and its influence on MIL content. The results will play a pivotal role in designing the curriculum within the Indian education system and providing pathways to nurture these competencies among the students.

Keywords: media and information literacy, school education, key competencies, challenges and opportunities, national education policy (2020), teachers' perspective.

1. Introduction

In the era of media overload and increased dependency on it, the importance of media and information literacy has flourished in every part of the world. MIL is described as "a set of competencies that empowers citizens to access, retrieve, understand, evaluate and use, create, as well as share information and media content in all formats, using various tools, in a critical, ethical and effective way, in order to participate and engage in personal, professional and societal activities" (Coles, 2023: 17). To impart MIL education, it is essential to identify the specific attributes that learners need to develop (BI India Bureau, 2019); thus, developing a media competence framework is crucial to answering the 'what' and making people media literate. There are a few media competency frameworks created for learners (e.g., Grizzle et al., 2021), which are very general. As India is a diverse country, there is a need for a comprehensive media competency framework specifically designed for school students in India. The authors conducted a systematic literature search, considering the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) guidelines in the Scopus database to develop the competency framework. After

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analyzing 51 research papers and 4 existing MIL frameworks, the experts framed, refined, and validated the competencies.

Along with addressing the 'what,' it is equally necessary to explore the 'how' part. Thus, this paper mainly focuses on teachers' opinions, views, suggestions, and experiences regarding the implementation of MIL education. Additionally, the study explores how the developed competencies align with the Indian educational context. To fulfil the objective, the authors conducted a survey based on an offline questionnaire and focus group discussions among Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) school teachers. After understanding the teachers' perspectives, the authors recommended how the Indian educational settings can be designed in terms of curriculum-making to provide opportunities for building these competencies and making students media literate.

Although teachers live in a mediated and digitized world, teachers lack professional competencies to teach media literacy in the classroom (Røkenes, Krumsvik, 2014). Teachers need to be media literate to make the young generation media literate (Simons et al., 2017). The present study aims to identify how teachers are trained and motivated to teach media literacy in the class in Indian settings. The paper tried to find out the perspectives, suggestions, opinions, and insights of teachers so that they can be trained well by addressing the challenges that exist and amplifying the opportunities that exist.

The National Educational Policy (2020) has mentioned MIL as an essential and critical life skill for students. Thus, teachers' perspectives and understandings have become all-important in successfully integrating these competencies into the diverse Indian education system. To fulfil the goal, the following research objectives have been framed:

A. To understand teachers' perspectives on the importance of media and information literacy for students in contemporary society.

B. To explore teachers' feedback on how MIL education can be effectively communicated to students.

C. To assess teachers' views regarding proposed competencies related to media and information literacy for students.

D. To identify the current obstacles and opportunities for the integration of media and information literacy in academic settings.

E. To analyse teachers' insights to suggest strategic implementation of media and information literacy in the context.

2. Materials and methods

The present study explored teachers' perspectives, recommendations, and opinions to delineate strategies for integrating MIL education into educational settings. A survey questionnaire was disseminated among 62 teachers, and focus group discussions were held with 18 teachers, divided into three groups of 6, from CBSE-affiliated schools in the Jhunjhunu district of Rajasthan, in more than 10 visits. The rationale for selecting CBSE schools stems from their status as the first ones to integrate and experience any recommendations from the central government. A structured questionnaire was distributed among four schools: Kendriya Vidyalaya, Churu, Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalaya, Kajra, Birla Balika Vidyapeeth, Pilani, and Smt. Janki Devi Mandelia School, Pilani. The survey and focus group discussions were conducted through physical visits to schools, where participants completed forms in person at the respective locations. As almost all CBSE schools follow a unified national educational model, the selection of any CBSE school from the population pool will not affect the responses. The surveys were analysed using Microsoft Excel. The focus group discussions were recorded, transcribed manually, and analysed through inductive analysis.

3. Discussion

Media plays a key role in this process while providing individuals with symbols and narratives that they use to construct their own and others' identities and understand their place in society. Media literacy can address these challenges by equipping individuals with the skills to critically analyze messages and identify biases in media portrayals of climate change, sustainability, international political climate, and many more. It enables consumers to become active participants by fostering an aware, resilient, and participatory society (Gáliková Tolnaiová, Gálik, 2020; Mateus, 2021). Thus, researchers, media experts, and practitioners worldwide have argued that media literacy education needs to start from the basic foundational level of education, as children

form concepts like culture, environment, race, ethnicity, gender, appearance, etc., from an early age. As individuals are constantly exposed to misleading content online, the ability to critically understand, analyze, and evaluate media messages is essential to make consumers responsible, critical, and creative citizens (Hartai, 2013; Tran-Duong, 2023, Xiao et al., 2021). The components of media literacy differ in every country depending on media usage, the exact socio-technological dysfunction, the role media play in the problems, and the communication culture (Livingstone, 2018; Schmoll, 2021). How media literacy can help a country completely depends on that country's spectrum of problems. Researchers argue that the state of media education is linked to the historical and sociocultural conditions of each nation (Fedorov, 2014). Research also indicates that the media panorama, the infrastructure, and the legal frameworks are related to how media literacy is discussed, integrated, and taught (Kajimoto et al., 2020). These studies imply the need and urgency for media literacy integration in formal education (Mateus, 2021). However, there is a need for proper and stringent ways to include it in the curriculum that address the need for media education. Various approaches of media literacy education, such as the preventive approach, the critical approach, the civic engagement approach, and the functional approach, have been outlined by scholars (Hobbs, 1998; Potter, 2010) to practice and include MIL.

A. Fedorov, A. Levitskaya and E. Camarero identified that the lack of teacher training is one of the obstacles to the implementation of media literacy education (Fedorov et al., 2016). Researchers mentioned that teachers must be trained (Cunliffe-Jones et al., 2021; Fedorov, 2014; Salameh, Abuhasirah, 2025) and know how to engage the students to think critically, identify persuasive elements in information, and mindfully consume and produce media content (Meehan et al., 2015). Teachers must understand the importance of media literacy and be trained to engage with students and share knowledge among them (Rojas-Estrada et al., 2025). Trained teachers, willing students, and the spread of media literacy in the classroom are instrumental in addressing the challenges of education in the 21st century.

4. Results

Demographic details of participants

Among the 62 teachers, the majority of respondents (54.8 %) were female, and the rest were male (45.1 %). 18 teachers from Kendriya Vidyalaya, Churu, 16 teachers from Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalaya, Kajra, 10 teachers from Birla Shishu Vihar, Pilani, and 18 teachers from Smt Janki Devi Mandelia School, Pilani, participated and responded.

Societal need for media and information literacy according to teachers

Table 1 illustrates respondents' perspectives, indicating that MIL is predominantly valued for enhancing students' awareness of online safety and privacy, followed by teaching them ethical media devices usage (79.5 %), safeguarding against negative media influence (79.5 %), discerning between fake news and real news (79.5 %), utilizing digital sources (70.5 %).

Suggestions on how MIL education should be communicated

Table 2 shows that the majority of respondents suggested arranging workshops and seminars (11 %). 8 % of the respondents highlighted the discussion of contemporary issues in the classes, and 6 % of the respondents wrote about the need for teacher training. Besides, the use of hands-on experiential classes (4 %) and the need for integration of MIL as a subject (4 %) were also highlighted by teachers.

Table 1. Societal Needs for Media and Information Literacy

<i>Societal Needs for Media and Information Literacy</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
To distinct between fake news and real news	77.30 %
To be aware of online safety and privacy	84.10 %
To be aware of how search engines work (for understanding how media content is tailored to the target audience)	77.3 %
To use media devices (e.g., computers, tablets, television, etc.) properly and ethically	79.5 %
To use digital sources (e.g., websites, blogs, video games, software)	70.5 %
To safeguard against negative media influence (e.g., influence on purchasing behavior, undesired effects such as addiction or hate)	79.5 %
To create responsible media content (e.g., set up a blog, create a video document)	63.6 %

Table 2. Suggestions on how media and information literacy education should be communicated

<i>Pathways to Foster Media and Information Literacy</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Students' training program through workshops and seminars	11 %
Discussing contemporary issues and news stories	8 %
Teachers' training	6 %
Using multimedia applications	5 %
Real-time experimental education activities	4 %
Introducing it as a subject and making some chapters to teach it	4 %
Commencement of skill-oriented course	2 %
Involving media professionals	2 %
Library Professionals	2 %
Textbook, lecture, and speech	2 %

Opinions on the Media and Information Literacy Competencies

Through an extensive literature review, the competencies needed for a media-literate student have been framed. The findings reflect teachers' perspectives on the significance of each identified competency item. The large majority of the participants identified all the competencies as important (Table 3). Teachers identified the following competencies as being of utmost importance: To understand the importance of media content in the creation of media content (83.3 %), understand the importance of media outlets in the society (83.3 %), able to use media and media devices (83.3 %), able to search content (61.1 %), able to access media content (61.1 %), protect our online safety and privacy (61.1 %), be mindful of what one shares online and its consequences (50 %).

Table 3. Opinions on Framed Competencies

<i>Competencies</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
To understand the importance of media in the creation of content	83.3 %
To understand the importance of media outlets in society	83.3 %
To be able to use media and media devices (e.g., computers, tablets, television, etc.) in our everyday lives	83.3 %
To be able to search content in media after knowing how media functions	61.1 %
To be able to access media content	61.1 %
To analyze critically (who made the content, what the intention behind it is, distinguish between fake and real news, cross-check, etc.)	33.3 %
To restructure or organize that information	44.4 %
To be able to use the information in our lives in a proper and ethical manner	55.5 %
To create responsible media content (e.g., set up a blog, create a video document)	33.3 %
To be mindful of what one shares online and its consequences	50.0 %
To monitor how we are behaving in real life after watching/ seeing/ hearing media news	22.2 %
To apply all the media skills in decision-making in real life (Such as in decisions in health, buying, eating, etc.) and future professions	38.8 %
To practice certain rights in society (Such as in making decisions about whom to vote, etc.), practice our freedom of speech and expression properly, and bring change in your society	44.4 %
To apply all the media skills in real-life decision-making (Such as health, buying, eating, etc.)	38.8 %
To protect our online safety and privacy	61.1 %
To protect our devices	16.6 %
To understand how to behave on the internet (Such as how to set passwords, what to disclose, and what not to, etc.)	38.8 %
To update ourselves with the media, as the media updates every time	16.6 %

The teachers shared their experiences, highlighting the greater significance of certain competencies over others.

Specifically, participants expressed that the competences '*To be able to search content in media after knowing how media functions*' and '*To be able to access media content*' hold paramount importance. Participants emphasised that a student should possess this competency in the current context. Teachers' statements in this regard are given below:

We teach students cyber security through workshops and talks. Besides that, students need to learn what to search, how to search, how to access the right information, and not to get dissuaded by something irrelevant and meaningful.

In the class, we call the digital media big boss. Whatever you search online, someone is constantly monitoring your activity. So, be cautious about your online searches.

Participants discussed that the competence '*To protect our online safety, privacy*' is important for students. Teachers opined on this matter that:

Nowadays, you cannot keep this generation away from the media. Every day, they face much exposure to the media. It is important to make them aware of what to use, what not to use, and how to use, as one can easily face cyber fraud. So, we should make them aware.

For the safety of children, MIL is very important. Because on social media, we do not think before posting photos or information about kids. Maybe it will be dangerous for the kids in the future, too.

They should be aware of most privacy matters. They do not know what is safe for them. They only click on the 'yes' option without understanding the consequences. They should know about this.

They should learn about AI and its function in the media. They should be aware of deep fakes.

Participants also expressed that the competence '*To understand the importance of media content in the creation of media content*' is important for students. Teachers' statements in this regard are given below:

Media and information literacy can provide more knowledge and update them. They feel more confident. The media is very beneficial for teaching. Whenever we give some topics, they elaborate on the topic, taking the help of the media. Sometimes, they get more points and explanations online than from books.

They are very much into using media. So, making them media literate will be easy and beneficial.

Participants also shared that the competence '*To be able to use media and media devices*' is important for students. Supporting this matter, teachers opined that:

I think, through the media, we should go for holistic development. Because teachers may sometimes not be able to deliver their lecture properly in class, students may understand the topic very well through media devices. Basically, schools should focus on smart classes and create awareness among parents.

The teachers argued that the competence '*To be mindful of what one shares online and its consequences*' is important for students. They explained that:

Students must know what they are posting and its consequences. The government should take the initiative to educate students. They are at a very tender age, so they get easily influenced by whatever is posted in the media. So, they have to be taught in school at a small level.

The Existing Challenges and Opportunities in Implementing MIL in Indian Schools

During focus group discussions, teachers were asked about the challenges and opportunities they may face in implementing MIL in Indian schools. They explained that although schools are equipped with resources such as internet facilities, projectors, computers, and printers, they have yet to fully evolve into smart classrooms. According to teachers, alongside these existing resources, certain challenges persist, such as MIL is mostly treated as a vocational course for senior students. Additionally, students sometimes fail to understand the importance of a subject and often tend to focus on subjects that are relevant to their job prospects. It implies a need to integrate MIL as a compulsory subject across all levels of education. Following the implementation of NEP 2020, although broad guidelines have been issued, there is limited specific instruction from governing bodies. As a result, the responsibility of integration largely falls on individual teachers' willingness and competence. The implementation process must also address existing issues such as syllabus

overload, lack of teacher training, and awareness among parents. The results are graphically presented in [Figure 1](#).

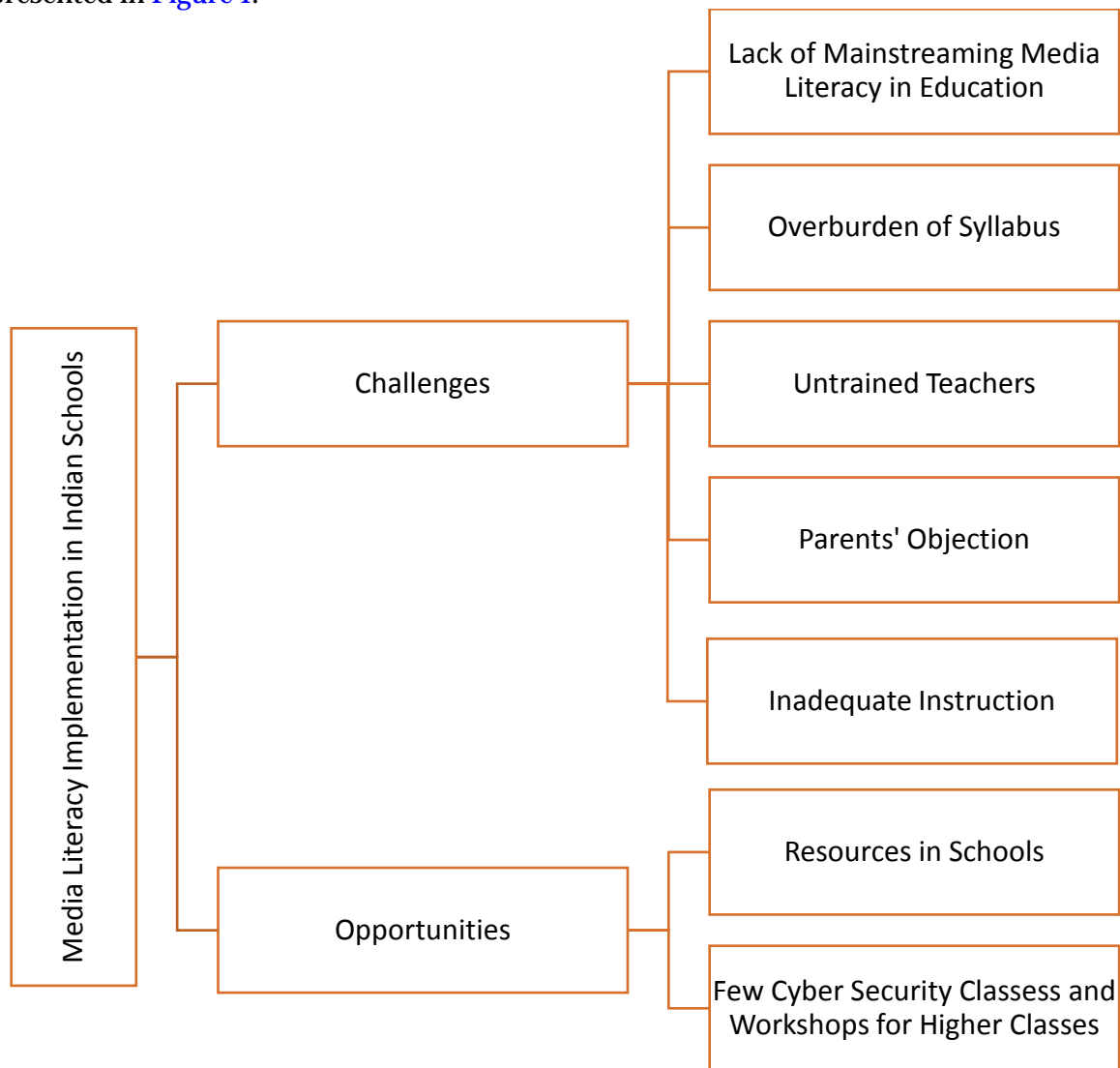


Fig. 1. Challenges and Opportunities in Implementing Media and Information Literacy Education in Indian Schools

Authors have outlined a set of key competencies a student must have to be media literate. It will empower them to be active participants by fostering an aware, resilient, and participative society ([Mateus, 2021](#)). These competencies were crafted for students with careful consideration of the current situation and the evolving nature of media. The components of MIL differ in every country depending on media usage, specific technological and social challenges, the influence of media on societal issues, and the nature of local communication norms ([Boro et al., 2024](#); [Cai et al, 2022](#)). Thus, it is essential to critically examine current practices, children's media usage patterns, challenges encountered during media consumption, and their impacts to contextualize the framework within the Indian setting. Depending on that, MIL education must be integrated using appropriate content, pedagogical approach, and outcomes-based assessment process, depending on the different contexts.

The findings explored the understanding of why these competencies are needed and how it can be implemented. Besides, this study will help policymakers, administrators, and media professionals to gain an overview of the content of courses in MIL teaching, the methods for adapting curricula for the education of students, the ways to evaluate students' performance objectively, and make policies. The perspectives of experienced teachers, who have a deep understanding of their students and their behavior, highlight the importance and relevance of the developed competencies within today's educational landscape. Their insights played a

crucial role in contextualizing the competencies to align with the needs of the Indian educational landscape. The consensus among teachers regarding the high importance of nearly all competencies developed by the authors indicates the potential value of implementing the developed competencies in teaching MIL.

To implement MIL in society, teachers must first be adequately trained and prepared for the hindrances (King, 2023) that may be faced in introducing a new topic to students. Researchers also highlighted the need for teachers' training (Cunliffe-Jones et al., 2021; Fedorov, 2014; Salameh, Abuhasirah, 2025). While filling the form, teachers were encouraged to provide suggestions on teaching MIL. Despite their familiarity with the subject matter, many were unfamiliar with the term "media and information literacy" or the appropriate teaching methodologies for students. This observation underscores the urgent need for enhanced teacher training and greater awareness of MIL education. According to them, discussing contemporary topics will be useful in the class for implementing MIL. Students must be taught through hands-on experiential learning using different devices and multimedia sources, supported by seminars and discussions. The government should organize workshops and training programmes at the school and college levels to educate Indian youth and students about MIL. Recently, many government bodies, such as NCERT, CIET, etc., have introduced small-scale MIL courses for media consumers.

Teachers emphasized certain competencies based on their experiences. They highlighted that these competencies must be given priority first considering the need of students: *making them understand the importance of media content, the importance of media outlets in the society, the ability to use media and media devices, the ability to search content, the ability to access media content, the ability to protect our online safety and privacy, the critical mindset to be mindful of what one shares online and its consequences.*

Thus, these competencies should be assigned as top priorities to address the current need. Present studies also supported the findings. Students are often unfamiliar with meta-search engines and encounter privacy and security issues when using the Internet (Fedorov et al., 2016). However, because most children are not taught to use media responsibly, many media messages influence them regarding health issues, addiction, and bad habits (Hartai, 2013). This result aligns with our findings that a critical mindset is necessary at present to consume media effectively. Media-literate children can overcome the biases created by media, craft their own stories, share their own perspectives, and mitigate the negative effects of content spread through media (Navarro Pérez, 2024). These days, problematic internet use among school students is becoming a major concern (Hobbs, 1998). Thus, they must be taught how to use and access the internet and media. As multiliteracies and multimodality in education are important in the present society (Hong, Hua, 2020; Jayachandran, 2018) and are also emphasized by the NEP 2020, students must know the importance of media and media content. While creating MIL content, it is important to highlight issues such as fake news, online safety and privacy, the mechanisms of searching and accessing information on the internet, the use of various media devices and sources, and the influence of media on consumers. Studies also supported this argument; India is identified as the country with the highest risk of disinformation and misinformation (Joseph et al., 2022). Over 60 % of the respondents reported that they came across fake news online (Kajimoto et al., 2020; Lauricella et al., 2015). Moreover, cybercrime is also increasing these days (Lauricella et al., 2015).

In addition, the authors suggest using Indian examples and resources to help students understand the problem of Indian society and relate to the issues. Moreover, appropriate assessment and evaluation of specific learning needs must be developed to assess MIL among students. Lastly, the implementation plan must account for the effective use of existing school resources and address the challenges that may arise during the integration of media and information literacy education, as mentioned by the teachers. Moreover, along with teachers, the support and collaboration from different education authorities, academia, and Civil Society Organizations are essential for the success of any initiative (Rojas-Estrada et al., 2024).

5. Conclusion

An implementation plan incorporating essential competencies and addressing region-specific challenges and opportunities is essential for achieving effective, outcome-based media and information literacy interventions. The paper extends its scope to connect the developed

competencies with the existing problem that the media plays in society. In this regard, teachers' opinions, views, and suggestions were collected as they knew the existing practices, students' problems, and the barriers and opportunities of the education system the most. Their responses guided us to connect the designed framework to the Indian education system, providing policymakers, administrators, and schools with guidance on essential pathways to improve their MIL skills. The result clearly indicates that each competency is meaningful and essential for students. Though certain competencies need to be introduced in early stages among students, realising their strengths in the contemporary digital society. The content, modules, and pedagogies should also be framed in a manner that caters to the solution to the problem of that particular place and context. The implementation plan must be designed considering the existing challenges and mitigation strategies. Lastly, the authors assert that adaptation strategies may vary considerably within a diverse nation like India, given its rich tapestry of social, cultural, political, economic, and geographical dynamics. The study underscores the importance of understanding the required preparatory steps before implementing the framework in any context. However, implementation may vary across regions based on school infrastructure, teacher awareness, student access to media, and usage patterns. The research sheds light on the pathways to implement this framework and suggests future research directions to develop more location-specific models to assess its efficacy.

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