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MEDIA CULTURE- A KEY TO SELF-EMPOWERMENT

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Abstract:

Selfawareness, vision, purpose, commitment and making a contribution are the keys to becoming a confident, empowered person. Empowerment means increasing strength. An important prerequisite for the empowerment of citizens is a concerted effort to improve media and information literacy – skills that help to strengthen the critical abilities and communicative skills that enable the individual to use media and communication both as tools and as a way of articulating processes of development and social change, improving everyday lives and empowering people to influence their own lives. Media and information literacy is needed for all citizens, but is of decisive importance to the younger generation – in both their role as citizens and their participation in society, and their learning, cultural expression and personal fulfilment.

“As soon as you trust yourself, you will know how to live.”

-Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

KEY WORDS-

SelfAwareness, Vision, Media, Culture, Self Empowerment.

INTRODUCTION-

Self-empowerment means developing the strength to take charge of your life. It means becoming the expert in what it means to be You – not just the victim or survivor, but the whole amazing person you have the ability to be. Simply put, self-empowerment is releasing yourself from any self-imposed limitations by aligning with your own inner power: self-(em)power(ment). When you're not aligned with your own inner power, your inner and outer well-being suffers. It's about letting go of external influences and creating a positive internal experience first, in order to create the positive external experience you desire. Your external experience is the product of your internal experience... not the other way around like many of us believe. It works from the inside out! Self-Empowerment includes encouraging, and developing the skills for, self-sufficiency, with a focus on eliminating the future need for charity or welfare in the individuals of the group.

EMPOWERMENT INCLUDES THE FOLLOWING:-

The ability to make decisions about personal/collective circumstances
The ability to access information and resources for decision-making
Ability to consider a range of options from which to choose (not just yes/no, either/or.)
Ability to exercise assertiveness in collective decision making
Having positive-thinking about the ability to make change
Ability to learn and access skills for improving personal/collective circumstance.

Involving in the growth process and changes that is never ending and self-initiated
Increasing one's positive self-image and overcoming stigma
Increasing one's ability in discreet thinking to sort out right and wrong.

ROLE OF MEDIA

Increasingly, media are shaping the meanings and practices of their daily lives based on the information they receive through print media, radio, television, and the Internet. As we all know, young people are among the most significant consumers of new technologies and delivery formats. Moreover, young people today can and do gain access to media aimed at adults via cable TV, video, or the Internet much more readily than their parents did as children. As a matter of fact, young people themselves point out that media can unlock gateways to social mobility, economic improvement, prosperity and creativity. As radio, television, film, and the Internet increasingly reach young people around the world, these media take on power to initiate social change by acting as a motivating and mobilizing force. Today, many young people take advantage of opportunities presented by media to participate actively in democracy. Online discussion forums act as a neutral ground where they can connect with others, exchange ideas and work together for change. These forums test their opinions, introduce new ones, and expand their ideological horizons, increasing the potential of young people as facilitators in the free exchange of diverse information and knowledge.

Information literacy is the skill to use information and communication technologies and their applications to access and create information. It extends from knowing how to use computers and access information to critical reflection on the nature of information itself, its technical infrastructure and its social, cultural and philosophical context and impact. It empowers people to seek, evaluate, use and create information effectively to achieve their personal, social, and educational goals.

Media can be powerful and cost-effective communications channel for imparting knowledge to young people and socializing them to particular aspirations, values and attitudes. Though wide disparities in access exists between rich and poor, males and females, and urban and rural youth, smart and strategic use of different media can overcome barriers to reaching most marginalized populations. However media comes in many different forms, such as; internet, TV, radio, and books, all of these media have affected the way students learn. Around the world students are being globally connected with one another via internet. Media is such a massive part of our lives and it is everywhere we turn.

The combination of increased democratization, use of communication technologies, rapid liberalization of media, and the emergence of more dynamic civil societies – all within the context of globalization is leading to new opportunities and challenges for using communication to empower people living in poverty. At the same time new challenges are also being posed for media, and its ability to serve the poor.

Vast amounts of information are there for the taking. A wealth of knowledge that we just would never have had access to, previously. It all lies at our fingertips, and it's empowering. Media can be manipulated and we can unite and connect more freely with each other. We can be up to date on current issues in the push of a button and work towards arming ourselves with facts and new ideas and advocating change. This is sure to change our self-efficacy for the better.

Mass media's efforts to position citizens as media consumers, using incredibly effective technologies to imprint a limited version of reality on the minds of citizens, appears to be in opposition to the vision that the Internet is a self-empowerment and self-publishing medium which allows citizens to become proactive producers able to have a profound impact on the world. This is a war against promoting ignorance.

Television and film reflects what is happening in society, and vice versa. It works both ways. Nowadays Television (TV) is giving lot of importance in empowering women by telecasting good programmes to empower them in the areas of social, cultural, economical, educational, legal, decision making, health, technological, equal rights, freedom of expression, gender sensitization, etc. Television will certainly make the rural poor enhance their awareness on various social issues and economic problems leading to their greater participation in development schemes. Awareness enhancement will also assist the rural poor in securing a new outlook and sensitivity on their own problems without which empowerment of rural poor can not be achieved.

As our media changes, so does society. The same rules that we build for ourselves are always being broken. We have breakthroughs. The world is ever-changing and new and wonderful things are discovered all the time. We no longer feel as though we always need to subscribe to what has been expected of us. Thanks to popular psychology and self-help we now more readily challenge the way in which we think and act. New ways in which we can build on our self efficacy and confidence are suggested to us day by day if we look in the right places. On the whole, it feels more possible to make changes to our lives. There is not so

much of a stigma applied to mental health issues. Well known TV and music personalities speak openly about issues such as depression, addictions and compulsions.

· Our own sense of self-identity is something that is always being challenged and worked upon, because we know that it can be changed. Talk shows and radio phone-ins encourage people to speak more openly about issues that would previously have been seen as taboo and appear to give us an idea of light at the end of the tunnel.

ROLE OF TEACHERS

The development of self-empowerment by teachers which maintain good relationships with their community will result in the strong possibility that they will have fewer development problems. Teacher plays many roles in the life of the students and the very best word that can describe the teachers is the provider of knowledge. The teachers are treated as the second parents of the children or for the students. They are the bridge for the future of the students and if one student is afraid to cross on her bridge, teacher will surely guide or escort the student for safety. The teachers are very same person that will recognize the strengths or weakness of her students and encouraging them enhance their knowledge and skills.

Through the appropriate use of communication tool, the relationship of the students and teachers, the establishment of self empowerment is possible and can be successful in the long run. The teachers should enforce other strategies to encourage the students in building their own self confidence and as well as minimizing the barriers of their communication. The teachers act as mediators, of learning, interpreters and designers of learning programmes and material, leaders, administrators and managers, scholars, researchers and lifelong learners, assessors and learning phase specialists.

ISSUES FOR EDUCATORS AND EDUCATIONAL POLICY-MAKERS:

· As teachers, administrators, and policymakers consider the role of new media and participatory practices in the school environment, they need to find ways to address the multiple challenges. Challenges include finding ways to work with the decentralization of knowledge inherent in online spaces; developing policies with respect to filtering software that protects learners and schools without limiting students' access to sites that enable participation; and considering the role of assessment in classrooms that embrace participatory practices.

· Learning should not take place in a separate phase and in a separate place, but should be integrated into people's lives allowing them to construct solutions to their own problems. As they experience breakdowns in doing so, they should be able to learn on demand by gaining access to directly relevant information. The direct usefulness of new knowledge for actual problem situations greatly improves the motivation to learn the new material because the time and effort invested in learning are immediately worthwhile for the task at hand — not merely for some putative long-term gain. In order to create active contributor mindsets serving as the foundation of participatory cultures, learning cannot be restricted to finding knowledge that is "out there". Rather than serving as the "reproductive organ of a consumer society" educational institutions must cultivate the development of a active contributor mindset by creating habits, tools and skills that help people become empowered and willing to actively contribute to the design of their lives and communities. Beyond supporting contributions from individual designers, educational institutions need to build a culture and mindset of sharing, supported by effective technologies and sustained by personal motivation to occasionally work for the benefit of groups and communities. This includes finding ways for people to see work done for the benefits of others being "on-task", rather than as extra work for which there is no recognition and no reward.

· Critical pedagogy: Critical pedagogy seeks to relate formal education in the schools to its application in the larger society. This objective is achieved by encouraging learners to ask questions about how the knowledge they acquired through formal instruction impacts their personal development in real-life contexts within society. Critical pedagogy places more value on experiential and cooperative learning over the traditional competitive approach. Ultimately, the goal of critical pedagogy is to provide learners with life-long skills for self-empowerment and active participation in decision-making processes on issues that affect their lives.

· Environment: Environment is probably the most important factor that shapes our personality and beliefs, the people we have around us, our friends, our teachers, our family and anyone else affect how we shape our values and personality. If the environment of a child is negative full of fights and insults, the child will acquire low self esteem. As we grow up we acquire our cultural values from our parents and school, some of those values are good but some are negative and can affect our beliefs. Another thing that parents need to be aware of and affect our values and beliefs, is the media. The media is more than ever playing an

important role in shaping our kids cultural identification, how they look, how they dress, what they eat, what is good, what is bad, who is cool, who is not, etc. Parents need to teach their children the real values, don't let your children see TV in excess they should be doing outside activities that require creativity. However, is not just children, but teenagers and adults are changing their cultural beliefs due to media messages and shows. For example the media shows you their perfect woman model as a thin person, this is the reason many teenagers feel insecure about their self body image.

· Potential in education: Social and participatory media allow for—and, indeed, call for—a shift in how we approach teaching and learning in the classroom. The increased availability of the Internet in classrooms allows for greater access to information. For example, it is no longer necessary for relevant knowledge to be contained in some combination of the teacher and textbooks; today, knowledge can be more de-centralized and made available for all learners to access. The teacher, then, can help facilitate efficient and effective means of accessing, interpreting, and making use of that knowledge.

· Transparency problem: Increased facility with technology does not necessarily lead to increased ability to interpret how technology exerts its own pressure on us. Indeed, with increased access to information, the ability to interpret the viability of that information becomes increasingly difficult. It is crucial, then, to find ways to help young learners develop tactics for engaging critically with the tools and resources they use.

Media is such a massive part of our lives and it is everywhere we turn. How could it not affect our lives in terms of education? Before we can dive into all the benefits of media to education it is important that the educators of students and students themselves become what is called “media literate”. This is the ability to decipher the hidden messages in mass media. Teacher education needs media literacy as an essential tool and topic in the new millennium. Let's face it, media has changed the world. Media such as internet, is constantly growing and changing, thus educators must stay with the times and keep up by using these tools for their students. With the help of new media power teachers would be more able to offer students information from around the world at an even faster and easier rate.

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