

# NEW FRONTIERS IN GLOBAL MEDIA EDUCATION

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## ABSTRACT:

*New Frontiers in Global Media Education* highlights the birth, development, and growth of a dynamic educational program promoting global media literacy. The Salzburg Academy on Media and Global Change, a program born in summer 2007, annually gathers 50 students and a dozen of faculties for three weeks to create educational and multimedia products around media literacy, global citizenship, and freedom of expression. The Salzburg Academy, with more than 200 student and 30 faculty alumni from 25 countries, has created a curriculum that has been downloaded in more than 100 countries worldwide, and has enabled new forms of dialog across borders, across cultures, and across divides. This paper will show, in the context of other recent global media education initiatives, how the process of creating educational content also created a dynamic atmosphere for individual growth and transformation experienced by those who participated. Now in its fifth year, the Salzburg Academy stands to benefit the future information societies by offering resources to help maintain active and participatory journalists and citizens of the digital age.

## KEY WORDS:

global media literacy, civic engagement, curriculum, interdisciplinary learning

## Introduction: Global Media Literacy: No Longer an Option

Any conversation about globalization today must take into account the changing ways in which information is produced, transmitted, and received. New media technologies have allowed for wide and unfettered flow of information across borders, across cultures, and across platforms influencing how individuals, societies, and nations use information to inform, interact, and persuade (see Shirky, 2010; Carr, 2010; Weinberger, 2008; Benkler, 2007; Jenkins, 2006; Lievrouw & Livingstone, 2006; Livingstone, 2004; Roberts & Foehr, 2004). In response to this new global media environment, educators have increasingly felt the need to teach critical media skills to students at all levels – to help them better understand the information they encounter daily. Such education is often referred to as media literacy.

The field of media literacy, broadly defined as the ability to “access, evaluate, analyze, and produce media in all forms” (Aufderheide, 1993; Masterman, 1985), has made significant strides over the last few decades to help students understand the complex and multi-faceted roles and responsibilities of media in civil society.

While many media literacy initiatives seek to respond to the almost daily changes in the global media landscape and to address the roles media have come play in the globalized world, these initiatives do not always have the resources or infrastructure to incorporate global media literacy learning outcomes into their purview.

The Salzburg Academy on Media and Global Change, a three-week annual summer program that gathers 50 students and a dozen of faculties from over 15 countries across the world to explore media's role in civil society, applies traditional media literacy concepts—critical analysis, evaluation, comprehension and production skills—to global media and information systems. Students work together to develop educational content in the form of curriculum resources, case studies, multimedia productions, and portable lesson plans around global media literacy. Through an interdisciplinary and cross-border approach to teaching and learning, the Academy has developed a new framework for enabling dialog about media in both local and global contexts. The focus of this framework is to teach students not only to think critically about media and media messages, but also to understand the vital importance of a free press for building and supporting civil society.

The results of the Academy program enable individuals to be active and productive global citizens. In this sense, education enables engagement: global media literacy directs individuals to identify and understand the role of media in global society, and to defend and appreciate the necessity of free and diverse media systems for free and diverse global communities.

## Developing “Global” Media Literacy

While Media Literacy has been gaining strength as an academic discipline in Europe, Asia and the United States for the last several years, this is probably the first time that universities around the world have jointly built a media literacy curriculum. The course is entirely global and comparative in scope, and intended to create students who are both critical of media's manipulative influence and empowered to use media to effect positive change.”

- Dr. Jochen Fried,
- Director of Education Initiatives at the Salzburg Global Seminar

In Grünwald, Germany in 1982, UNESCO hosted a meeting of media education experts from 18 countries. Their aim was to draft a document that would recognize the need for media education worldwide. One of the recommendations in their document called for the need to “support and strengthen the actions undertaken or envisaged by UNESCO and which aim at encouraging international co-operation in media education” (UNESCO, 1982). In his report to UNESCO 20 years after Grünwald, David Buckingham (2001) wrote that:

*...media education has been the focus of increasing interest and activity in many countries. Many governments have published policy statements and curriculum documents in the field; and there have been several international conferences, at which delegates from a growing number of countries have been present. (p. 5).*

The development in international media education, however, has not been uniform and similar between the different countries. Lack of direction, competing ideologies and concepts, and pedagogical vagueness have restricted media literacy's growth as a legitimate educational concept across all education levels (Mihailidis, 2006). In his UNESCO report, Buckingham was also quick to note, “...the growth of international dialogue in the field has undoubtedly been of great value; but it is not always clear that everybody is talking about the same thing.” (p. 6). The diversity of growth in international media education reflects the different needs and desires of unique and specific information societies. Media education platforms need to teach with methods that match their cultures and communities. It is challenging, therefore, to find one approach to media education that will serve global societies and education platforms.

Recently, new information and communication technologies have presented new challenges to media education. Speaking at UNESCO's 2007 “Meeting on Media Education: Advances, Obstacles, and New Trends since Grünwald,” U.S. media scholar Kathryn Montgomery (2007) noted, “Today...we are immersed in a global digital media culture.” (p. 1). This global digital culture has influenced how media educators must evaluate their teaching. Stated Montgomery (2007):

*“The digital media create both opportunities and challenges. They offer an expanded set of possibilities for engaging young people, not only within the schools, but in a wide range of other settings and institutions – both online and off. But they also require us to seriously reconsider the roles and functions of media education” (p. 1).*

Today, media education programs stress the need to teach not only digital media skills, but also to teach about civic engagement and global awareness. To become “media literate” students are often taught about the dynamic flow of information across borders and across cultures in a converged media culture. Henry Jenkins, Provost's Professor of Communication, Journalism and Cinematic Arts at the University of Southern California, writes of this new information environment in his 2006 text *Convergence Culture*: “In an environment where access to all kinds of information is at our fingertips, understand how these shows work to influence politics and culture may be the next step in democratic decision making” (p. 226). In “our” new information environment, media education must address a new social dynamic—one that incorporates global viewpoints, cultures, and media systems.

The Salzburg Academy on Media and Global Change, with a network of over 200 students and 30 faculties from over 25 countries worldwide, has transformed global media education by creating a program that brings together faculties and students from all over the world, and charges them to build products that characterize media and citizenship as inherently global, and representative of the cross-cultural media environments now occupied by a majority of individuals globally.

## The Salzburg Academy on Media & Global Change

“There is no global issue, no political arena, no academic discipline in which the statement of problems and the framing of possible solutions are not influenced by media coverage.” *Professor Susan Moeller, Faculty Chair, Salzburg Academy.*

In 2007, fifty-two students from fourteen countries over five continents gathered at the Schloss Leopoldskron in Salzburg, Austria, for three weeks to create educational content around media, freedom of expression, democracy, and citizenship. The premise of the Salzburg Academy on Media and Global Change is that a truly global collaborative effort is a prerequisite to creating a truly global media literacy educational experience.

The primary outcome of the Salzburg Academy, in addition to the individual growth and transformation documented by those who participated, was a student-created and faculty-led curriculum on global media literacy. This curriculum reinforced critical inquiry and analytic skills with modules that emphasized the vital importance of free and independent media in building and supporting civil society. This approach to media education is based not on specific content, but rather the premise that a media literacy experience should be the application of content to specific learning outcomes (see Mihailidis, 2009).

PARTICIPATING INSTITUTION	COUNTRY
American University of Beirut	Lebanon
American University in Sharjah	United Arab Emirates
Bournemouth University	United Kingdom
Hofstra University	USA
Makerere University	Uganda
Polytechnic University of Namibia	Namibia
Pontificia Universidad Catolica	Argentina
Pontificia Universidad Catolica	Chile
Quaid-i-Azam Univeristy	Pakistan
Stellenbosch University	South Africa
Tsinghua University	China

Universidad Iberoamericana	Mexico
University of Maryland, College Park	USA
University of Miami	USA
University of St. Cyril & Methodius in Trnava	Slovakia
University of Texas, Austin	USA
Zayed University	United Arab Emirates

Table 1 - Salzburg Academy Institutional Partners (2007 – 2010)

As the Academy students were charged with creating products to be applied in different educational contexts around the world, they were asked to think about how media apply to different ideologies and customs, and how media function to define and represent cultures and identities. This ultimately led to a focus not on specific content, but rather on how content can be applied to media issues and values that exist in different contexts but on similar foundations worldwide. For example, all media systems must deal with issues of access, expression, ideology, power, government, and so on. The Academy approach to understanding media in international contexts led to an interdisciplinary, cross-cultural framework that can be explained in its stages from birth to present.

### 2007: A Structured Approach to Global Media Literacy

In 1985, British media scholar Len Masterman wrote that media education can empower citizens to be active, engaged, and play a significant role in democratic institutions:

*“Media education is an essential step in the long march towards a truly participatory democracy, and the democratization of our institutions. Widespread media literacy is essential if all citizens are to wield power, make rational decisions, become effective change-agents, and have an effective involvement with the media. It is in this much wider sense of education for democracy that media education can play the most significant role of all” (p. 13).<sup>1</sup>*

Masterman posited that students, if educated about media, would not only increase their ability to intelligently use media for personal gains, but also further strengthen their values and beliefs about democracy. In this way, the necessary conversations and discussions about political, social, economic, and cultural issues would be knowledgeable, diverse, and progressive. Masterman (1998) wrote, over a decade later: “It is our crucial role as media teachers to ensure the continued evolution of that critical public” (p. xi).

Building on Masterman’s ideas and other pioneers of media literacy, the Salzburg Academy in 2007 created an analysis framework for the global media literacy curriculum built around five concepts. Known as the “5 A’s” of global media literacy (see Table 2), this model seeks to produce individuals who are aware of the world and their own role as a world citizen, respect and value diversity, understand how the world works [socially, culturally, politically, economically, technologically, environmentally], participate in and contribute to the community at both a local and global level, are willing to act to make the world a more sustainable place, and who take responsibility for their actions. The 5A’s are also designed to not think of media education in terms of content or media silos (TV, radio, print, internet) but to reflect a more holistic and integrated approach to media realities that are converging and increasingly borderless.

ACCESS	to media
AWARENESS	of media’s power
ASSESSMENT	of how media cover international and supranational events and issues
APPRECIATION	for media’s role in creating civil societies
ACTION	to encourage better communication across cultural, social and political divides.

Table 2 – The 5A’s of Media Literacy

<sup>1</sup> From Global Trends in Media Education. (2006). Tony Lavendar, Birgitte Tufte, and Dafna Lemish, (Eds).

These five concepts together assist teachers in classrooms the world over to help their students become more engaged, tolerant and active media creators and consumers in information societies around the world.

### 2008-09: Curricular Products

Building on the work of the first year of the program, the Academy in years two and three created a series of case study-driven lesson plans, available online as web pages and downloadable PDF documents (see curriculum at [www.salzburg.umd.edu](http://www.salzburg.umd.edu)). In this time, over 50 lesson plans - ranging in topic, scope, and approach - were created by the Academy students.

The collaborative approach to creating lesson plans allowed student ownership of the educational content and caused greater interactivity in the building process. Students worked in diverse groups to collectively build, edit, and finalize each lesson plan, making sure the scope of each product was global and representative. Case Studies approached topics that range from the Madrid Bombings of 2005 and unrest in Tibet-China relations to natural disasters in the US (Katrina) and Asia (Tsunami), and pop culture programs (MTV, the Simpsons) that penetrate markets globally. The lesson plans use specific case studies to extrapolate to questions, based on the 5A’s framework that can be applied to different countries and communities across the world.

The collective creation of these case studies stands to enhance the quality and diversity of the curriculum as a living document. And because the products live online and welcome user feedback, the portable lesson plans are open to change and improvements throughout their lifespan.

The lesson plans all include an introductory case study, a set of classroom and homework exercises, and discussion questions modeled along the 5 A’s. The plans also list additional resources and credits. The consistent lesson plan format provides a familiar structure for teachers and students, and the separation of the lesson plan into parts gives educators an easy way to select those elements of the lesson plans that are of greatest value to them in their classroom. A teacher interested in a specific topic can search for case studies, exercises, questions, or resources on that topic to include in their teaching. Alternatively, teachers have the ability to use an entire lesson plan as a multi-dimensional classroom project.

### 2010 – Forward: Diversifying the Academy Model

In 2010, the Academy set out to diversify its media education platform. With the curriculum now in use in over 100 countries, the lesson plan approach was expanded to include six over-arching themes: two theoretical agenda setting and framing; two related to new media technologies: social media, and civic participation and two focused on topic of international concern: covering conflict and freedom of expression. Each of these thematic modules provides an overview to the content area, and offers a downloadable lesson plans, videos, exercises, on-line social maps, and resources. These six modules together represent topics that are global in scope but local in context and application. They can be taught across cultures and borders, and they each provide room for critical inquiry, theoretical exploration, and practical application: founding principals of the Academy model.

Using these six new module categories, the Academy model will continue to expand its mission and scope beyond 2010, building year-round collaborations with its partner universities. These new collaborations will consist of global comparative research on media habits of youth through a robust survey created and implemented by the Academy partner institutions, expanding educational offerings to include student exchanges between universities, training sessions for journalists in emerging democracies conducted on-site using the curriculum and products built at the Academy, and networks of journalism education institutions to help facilitate collaborative and globally-integrated program management perspectives to build stronger journalism and media education programs that consider the global impact of information flow in the context of growing information societies in the developing and developed worlds.

In the 21st century, the centrality of information and mobile media technologies to civil society is no longer debatable. The rise of cell phones, access to the worldwide web, and online activism demands educational responses that help citizens and media practitioners better navigate this hypermedia age. The Salzburg Academy is signature efforts to help universities around the world teach their students to be more active, vibrant, diverse, and tolerant populations.

## Conclusion:

# New Frontiers in Global Media Education

*"Like the first Salzburg Summer School in 1947 whose participants came literally from the opposing sides of World War II, today's Academy became a place where students from very different cultures could talk about shared goals, respect each other's differences, find common solutions, and take responsibility for forging a better world." Stephen Salyer, President and CEO, Salzburg Global Seminar*

The Salzburg Academy on Media and Global Change is a visionary effort to transform media education. The Academy teaches global citizenship in a way that no other program does because it brings citizens together in a way that no other does. If understanding media is a prerequisite for civic engagement in an information world, then media education programs must do more to help prepare citizens for lives of active participation through mediated platforms. This not only includes how to critically analyze and compose media messages, but also how to empower civic voice, how to be tolerant of media cultures in other parts of the world, how to use media for better cross-cultural dialogue and less stereotyping, and so on.

Recent studies have shown that higher levels of knowledge can lead to greater instances of socially desirable outcomes, such as tolerance, civic participation, and assimilation of information (Jerit et al., 2008). In an information age, the onus of knowledge around how media defines values, cultures, and issues in international context is paramount for the future of civic society as we know it.

The Salzburg Academy has been a success because it has "reconceptualized" traditional notions of media literacy. It has built upon earlier notions of teaching and learning about media to build new dynamic platforms for civic growth. Through a collaborative, ground-up approach to teaching and learning about global media, the Academy has created not only dynamic education products, but also a core group of future media practitioners that have gained invaluable insight into how media systems define cultures and identities in foreign nations. This involves thinking beyond borders, and beyond specific media, to understand the unique ways media define civil society across the globe.

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