Challenges Of Media Education Among Theological Students

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Abstract: We live in an age of media revolution. Media became a major tool for socialization, without media we cannot move. The impact of media is such that one cannot live without media. Though media contain a host of positive aspects in it at the same time it also indirectly affect our personal time, interpersonal communication, social living, purchase, religious life and the like. In this milieu knowing about the media is an inevitable factor for effective living in the society. In theological seminaries the emphasis is more on religious formation but they really ignore the impact of media on students. This article examines the need for media education among theological students and present challenges.

Keywords: Media, Media impact, culture, Religion, Media education, Theological Students.

I. INTRODUCTION

Today media is looked at as the information bank, became a source of knowledge and pool of communication. As Marshall McLuhan mentions information explosion made the world into a global village. In the language of Manual castle we are living in a network society. Since every individual depends on some kind of media for the latest news and updates, it is the best way to bring awareness in the society. In this media thronged environment we have an awesome responsibility to educate the younger generation. Envisaging the forthcoming dangers Len Masterman notes the protection of children and young people from media influence in the same way one would protect people from a disease. In this case, Is our Y generation aware about the pros and corns of media? Are they prepared to face the challenges ahead? How many of them are media literate? These questions demand a vivid and a profound answer from a media educator.

Theological students are not aloof from the society; they cannot escape from the influence of the media. Since they are directly involved in community transformation and social up-liftment they too need a clear picture about the impact of media. Thus media education is the need of the hour among theological students. This article analyzes the definition of media education, its importance and challenges among theological students.

II. MEDIA EDUCATION

David Buckingham (2003) a well known media educationalist defines media education is the process of teaching and learning about the media. It frames a vivid picture about media education in contrast to educational media. Kevel J Kumar(1991) a pioneer proponent of media education in India asserts that media education is a process of critical reflection on media, to raise the awareness of the language, techniques and impact of the media, to analyze the personal and social values they promote or believe, to participate in the mainstream media in a discerning and responsible way. This definition gives a clarion call towards the understanding of the function of media in the society and urges the viewers to differentiate the distinction between the reel and reality in the media.

Due to the advancement in technological field the term literacy directly refers to computer literacy in a global village or in a network society. But a critical question need to be posed in this milieu to foster awareness among youth is that how many of them are media literate. A Catholic media expert Fr.Jacob Srampical (1997) goes further and notes that media education is a deeper concept. Briefly, it is a process of education to become aware of the ways the various media influence our thinking, affect our value system and change our society that we in turn become critical and discerning

receivers of media messages, and become able to respond to media creations and manipulations in a creative way that will help the education and development of our society.

One must agree with Len Masterman (1985) that media Education is a life-long process within which many agencies, institutions, and individuals will have important roles to play. Thus media education is the process of transforming an individual from a mere user of media to a media producer and participant- media literate.

III. IMPORTANCE OF MEDIA EDUCATION

The images and sounds people see and hear on the media are constructed realities. They are realities produced by people for specific purposes of perception. They are not real objects that exist in time and space, but carefully crafted constructions of reality. Media educationalist Elizabeth Thoman (2004) asserts that media education provides a guideline for living, working and citizenship in the 21st century and creates a framework so that people can 'access, analyze, evaluate, communicate and create messages.

All media are businesses with commercial interests. Though consumers often think of them as free entertainment, television, cinema and other media are not without cost. Advertisers use their audience time to insist and beg people into buying their products J.Roberts in his research report on media literacy notes that these analytical skills are the cornerstone of informed inquiry and are essential for full citizenship in a democratic society and a global economy. Although these media literacy skills are vital on a global scale, it is especially necessary in developing countries where an active citizenry can further promote a democracy and monitor issues such as corruption or propaganda (Roberts 2010).

Media makers construct reality by infusing media with messages about whom and what is important. In different programs only particular group or political entities are highlighted others are treated with content and prejudice. Besides, it is not merely the ideologies of a certain class and dominant culture or consumerism that get tactfully transfused by the media. In a larger context the media today are closely linked with the worlds of politics, social changes and public opinion. The reality is that media education is more urgent today than ever before. Media illiteracy is potentially as damaging and poisonous to the human spirit as contaminated water and food is to our physical well-being (Potter 2004).

Each medium has its own grammar and syntax. Each medium codifies reality in its own unique way. Media production and programming involve technology, mechanics and machinery complicated kinds. There is a great variety of techniques in any media production, especially film and TV productions. Techniques are not used for their own sake. They are used to make statements, observations and value judgments about human beings and human relationships. Camera angles, music, special effects, splashy lay outs, color or choreography are the common techniques used in the media to get the attention of the viewers.

According to Freccero (2001) media education play an important role in helping students understanding the ways in which media texts become popular and the role of the media industry in shaping popularity. Those who do not understand how the media work, how they construct meaning, how the evidence they present can be weighed and evaluated are, in contemporary cultures, considerably disadvantaged and disempowered.

David Considine (2002) describes "While young people have more access to the internet and other media than any generation in history, they do not necessarily possess the ethics, the intellectual skills, or the predisposition to critically analyze and evaluate their relationship with these technologies or the information they encounter. Good hand/eye co-ordination and the ability to multitask are not substitutes for critical thinking"

One must not ignore the fact that media is controlling some of our decisions. We use media for hours on end and within that media we are being told what to think is important, instead of having an objective point of view and deciding ourselves what we feel is important thus the media can control what exactly it is that we contemplate.

IV. CHALLENGES OF MEDIA EDUCATION

As we scan through theological students, they use media without having the ability to read the texts and meanings embedded within the texts. Many of the students often do not understand how a camera produces spectacular actions. The students often remain illiterate and do not recognize the fact that media construct realities with particular perspectives and ideologies. There are also few challenges we must consider

A. LESS AWARENESS

It is identified the fact that today most of the seminary professors are much interested in faith based training of the students. Most of the students who are from the rural area are not aware of the media education programs. They assume that what media tells is truth and to follow the guidance of media is the best way of living. Many young lives are spoiled due to lack of awareness about the real nature of media and not knowing how to use the media rather than used by the media. We must bring awareness among the youth about media education thus enable them to handle the media wisely.

B. LESS FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

As per the researcher's understanding 90% of the media education programs or seminars organized in schools, colleges and public sphere are project based. Very often it is chaired by NGO's. When there is no proper fund to carry on the programs often the agency gives up. In this respect Church and other social wings should extend the helping hand towards the flow of finance for this noble task.

C. LESS RESOURCES

The concept of media education came home many years back still it is in an infancy stage in our nation. Here and there few programs are organized by the Catholic Church to bring awareness. To teach media we need to systematically

document media texts. It seems there is no proper library which maintains the literature regards to media education. Moreover books on media education do not cater to the different level. There is a need of graded textbooks on media education. There is paucity for audio-visual training materials as well (Arul& Suresh 2009)

Media education should be included in the theological curriculum. So a curriculum should be developed for that purpose. Media education should be taught like any other subject in the seminary. There is also a great need of preparing and preserving media education books in vernacular language.

D. LESS MEDIA EDUCATORS

Lack of media educators training is identified as one of the main shortcomings of the program. This situation can be changed only if the seminary leadership take initiative to take up the subject and provides both a component of media education as part of the training of all future faculties as well as a more advanced unit to those students who wish to deepen their studies in the area.

E. LESS FOLLOW-UP

Media education courses are conducted as a one-time program. It is observed that SIGNIS organizes in regional vice once a year or once in two years. Apart from the evaluation conducted at the end of the program there is no constant follow-up. Also, the program is not graded; so a student will undergo more or less the same program in every course. Since there is no systematic follow-up, the student cannot sustain interest in aspects taught in media education.

F. LESS EMPHASIS

Most of the theological seminaries give more emphasis on religious outlook in their curriculum .But media education is treated as rare guest. Though initiatives are taken the participation of lay people is only a handful. Theological seminaries depend on the secular professionals for their media work, in this respect the necessity of training students who are in the same field will be an asset to the seminary and also for the future. Those who are experts in the media are not given enough room to grow only they are used when need arises.

G. LESS CO-OPERATIONS

The debate is not media is secular or spiritual but in order to develop the society we need to go and work in hand with the secular professionals. It is learned that most of the media professionals in the church has no connection with the media professionals outside the church. It is also observed that media professionals within the church are not tuned, due to denominational barriers. It has to be removed and the vital necessity of mutual cooperation is need of the hour.

V. CONCLUSION

Media awareness recognizes the presence of the media around us and realizes that media have definite role to play in society. We must understand that media education is deeper concept and should be given a proper place in theological curriculum. It is a process of education to become aware of the ways in various ways media influence our thinking, affect our value system and change our society. So, in media education the force has to be on how media affect various issues in society. Theological seminaries must consider it seriously and give the right way of social and spiritual development by stressing media education in Church related institutions.

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