

## 9. The Media

Parents and family educate the young at home; teachers and peers educate them at school and in the social arena; but the media follow and influence them everywhere. The media, with their all-powerful presence, pose a great challenge today. They penetrate or sneak in to every sector and impose their dominant influence (positive or negative) on people. The vicinity of the media is not easy to be defined. Their presence is felt everywhere, where you can find human beings. Everyone – adult and children, old and young – is confronted by the media everywhere and every time. Often we do know what we do with the media; but the major question is: Do we really know what the media do with us? It becomes very dangerous when we do not know what the media do with us.

The point is: the media can socialize us; the media can inform us; but I am very slow to believe that the media can educate us. If the goal of education is to develop in the human person a formidable character – an actualized personality, then it is questionable if the media, with all their dominant negative influences and sometimes with economic and selfish goals, are really in the position to educate the human person. I take the courage to say that the media cannot educate the child unless he is educated over the positive use of the media. That means, only the educative use of the media can educate the child.

From birth, every little child sees himself confronted with specific responsibilities from the media, which he must overcome in his process of socialization. Actually, from the pre-school age, children require the media-socialization which enables them learn effectively later at the school age and beyond. He is either misled or manipulated unless he has the chance of being educated over the positive use of the media. This is what makes the media a great pedagogical challenge in our time. The media have become indispensable for the human being, but must be seen as a tool to be used positively for education. It seems to be ever-present. Even when one is alone or goes on the way, he is accompanied by his media gadgets. This supposed omnipresence of the media probably lies in the nature of humanity with its massive communicative tendencies.

### *9.1 The Media as an indispensable part of human life*

Communication is part of the nature of living beings. For humanity, above all others, communication enjoys a very high relevance and polarity. It has become a key thread in the fabric of life. It shapes humanity mentally, socially, emotionally and otherwise. Openness to communication is a sign of transparency, a sign of liveliness, and a sign of pro-social orientation. And from the points of view of philosophical as well as theological anthropology, communication belongs to the

main components of human life.<sup>1</sup> Communication contributes to the development and maintaining of human individuality, and at the same time, forms and sustains the society as a community of living beings. It could be called the “nervous system” of the human social, cultural, religious and political life, as well as the economic body of human community. Communication is not possible today without the media. Also, just as communication is central to any human culture, so are the tools of human communication; and today the media enjoy prominence. Modern human cultures are becoming highly technological. And since the media are essential to humanity, their tools are developing in high tempo in order to be commensurate with the highly technological modern cultures.

With the complexity of modern societies, communication may not be easy or even possible without the different channels of the mass media through which larger participants are reached and coordinated. Through the media, it is possible to communicate without any personal contact – which sometimes can pose the risk of the im-/or de-personalization of human relationships. This danger notwithstanding, the roles and importance of the radio, television, newspapers, magazines, books, movies, videos, musical records in CDs, DVDs, MP3 players, mobile phones, the computer and the many innovations in the internet world, E-Mails, E-Books, Skype, Face-book, U-Tube, SMS, and the almighty www (World Wide Web), Google, etc, in bringing the entire world together with information cannot be underestimated. In the contemporary world, any attempt to sidetrack the media, is an attempt to cut off oneself from the flow of life in one’s local as well as global society.

Anthropologically, the media are the medium of communication between the human beings and their environments. The media, so developed as they are today, did not fall from the moon. The human being, being a social animal, has been and has remained communicative as far as history can tell. Humanity has always invented symbols of communication. Klaus Boeckmann<sup>2</sup> traces the developmental jump in the history of the media from the acts of genetic programming, to object imitations, and further to the discovery of writings: letters and words, drawings and prints, up to the stage of the mass media. Signs and symbols make it possible for the human being to construct a symbolic representation of the world around him, building up worldviews from his impressions about his environment. With the exchange of experience in symbols and language systems, humanity preserves its culture, communicates and hands it over to future generations. The modern media, though more technologically advanced, have not more in their function than to enhance the communicative tendencies which have always existed in the nature of humanity.

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<sup>1</sup> Confer BRANTL, J., „Gefangen im virtuellen Netz? Selbst-Mitteilung im Internet und moralische Kompetenz“, in: *Trierer Theologische Zeitschrift*, Trier, 3/2009, 228-246.

<sup>2</sup> BOECKMANN, K., *Unser Weltbild aus Zeichen. Zur Theorie der Kommunikationsmedien*, Wien, 1994, 16f.

The social media are an extension of the human identity. They are either an extension of the real life of the human being – in his worldview, thoughts and deeds; or an expression of the idealized identity of the human being. That is to say, the media communicates humanity in its concrete experiences or in its idealized forms of existence. They are an extended communication of the “is” and the “ought” of humanness, in its entire positive and negative ramifications. In this regard, Marshall McLuhan developed his median-theory and suggested through his slogan, “*The medium is the message*”<sup>3</sup> that the scientific object of research is/should not be the transmitted content of the media, but rather the “medium” itself. He believed that what makes a lasting impression on the society is not the transmitted content of the medium, but rather the characteristics of the medium itself. He illustrated his argument with an electric light bulb. He stated that: “an electric light bulb, alone with its presence, created an environment.”<sup>4</sup> He explained that an electric light bulb has no content in the form of the content of a newspaper; but it is a medium which creates social effect, which would not have been possible without it. The bulb is in itself empty, but out of the darkness of hidden things, it creates room of clarity. It creates a clear environment out of darkness. In the same way, what imparts more influence on the society is not necessarily the content of the medium, rather the characteristic of the medium. The medium is an extension and an appeal to human senses (talking, hearing seeing, etc). And all aspects of media influence their consumers more in their characteristic forms.

Following the ideas of McLuhan, Dieter Spanhel sees the modern media therefore as the further developed techniques for the expansion of the natural human abilities and potentials towards perception, codification, saving and transmission of information, the handing down of experiences, discoveries, knowledge and worldviews. “Sie sind nichts anderes als weiterentwickelte Techniken zur Erweiterung der natürlichen menschlichen Fähigkeiten zur Wahrnehmung, Codierung, Übertragung und Speicherung von Information und zur Tradierung von Erfahrungen, Erkenntnissen und Weltdeutungen.”<sup>5</sup> This explains therefore the fact that from the beginning, the media belong to humanity; and that the development of media-techniques also belongs to human cultural development. The new trends in the electronic media are only fostering this development with diversified and wider possibilities arising from modern technologies.

Emphasizing the diversified importance of the media, Jane Stadler<sup>6</sup> argued that the media affect us in many ways: as a major socializing influence, a carrier

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<sup>3</sup> MCLUHAN, M., *The Medium is the Message: An Inventory of Effects* with Quentin Fiore, (1st Ed. produced by Jerome Agel), Random House, 1967.

<sup>4</sup> MCLUHAN, M., *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*; New York, 1964, 8.

<sup>5</sup> SPANHEL, D., *Handbuch Medienpädagogik*, (Bd.3 *Medienerziehung*), Stuttgart, 2006, 98.

<sup>6</sup> STADLER, J., “AIDS ADS: Make a Commercial, Make a Difference? Corporate Social Responsibility and the Media”, in: *Continuum: Journal of Media and Cultural Studies* 18:4, 2004.

of culture, a source of information, education and entertainment, an important factor in political communication and participatory democracy, and a communicator of ideological values and norms, attitudes and beliefs. The media also both represent and construct conceptions of what constitutes a successful and valued life, along with what is considered to be deficient, deviant, marginalized or undesirable. In all these ways, the media exert an influence on identity formation and associated issues which deal with stigma, self-esteem, social relations, economic and political positions. For instance, the way in which socio-economic status is framed in the entertainment and news media significantly influences how the audiences feel about social equity and how they treat those who are impoverished, homeless, unemployed, and the underprivileged people.

For a modern person – child, youth or adult – in every modern society, the media are powerful agents of socialization. “As an agent of socialization, the mass media provides current coverage of social events and happenings, highlights of social changes, news and public opinion on national issues, social fads, fashions and the like. The mass media offer role models (sports figures, historic personages, musical celebrities, authors, newscasters, politicians, academicians etc.) and portraits of lifestyles and tastes that people can copy. Through the mass media, children and adults alike learn about a wide variety of things which otherwise they might not have an experience of. Scenes and accounts of courtroom litigation, cowboy culture, organized crime, political conspiracy, graft in high government circles, drug running, warfare and military strategy, marital unfaithfulness, police detective wizardry, cultural heritage, party politics etc. are common portrayals in our media and these images influence our lives in very important ways. Specialized knowledge obtained from books enriches and informs our lives. Through media advertising, young people learn about their future roles as consumers of products offered in the market place, as well as the value which society places on such things as success, wealth, materialism, aesthetic beauty and so on. The mass media are especially influential as a vehicle for disseminating new ideals or trends in culture, especially, youth culture. Changing social norms and values are also very rapidly mirrored in the media for the general population or the relevant segment of it to adopt. The mass media are thus a very powerful agency of socialization. They are a rich source of influence on personality formation process.”<sup>7</sup>

Nowadays, one sounds almost uneducated if he shows little or no idea of the media, especially the computer and the internet. What chances has any young person of today, who grows up without any idea of the computer, in the work market – where over 80% of the jobs are accomplished with the computer? Such a person is often seen as socially inadequate and academically incompetent, and will definitely experience professional disadvantages. The media have come to stay, and are in themselves not bad. What we make out of them is the problem. In most West-

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<sup>7</sup> IGBO, E.M., *Basic Sociology*, Enugu, 2003, 136.

ern nations like Germany, for example, televisions, mobile phones and computer-plays have become the major recreational activities for children. Recently, according to the research of school-pedagogues in Hamburg,<sup>8</sup> children watch television on the average of 101 minutes daily. 83% of children within 6-13 years of age sit before the television for over nine hours daily – especially at the weekends. The danger of replacing their friends with the media-gadgets is high. According to the reports of the “*Kids- Verbraucher- Analyse*”, for 94% of Germany’s children, watching television is as important as their friends. As regards other things which can be as much important as their friends, 90% of children spoke out for music-hearing; 84% for cycling; 77% for watching videos; 76% for listening to radio; 70% for playing or watching football. Meanwhile, 48% of children between 6-17 years possess televisions in their own rooms; and 72% possess radio recorders.

As regards the use of the computer and internet, the “*Kids- Verbraucher- Analyse*” discovered that 80% of children daily sit on the average of 45 minutes on the PC-table. In this regard, Sabine Feierabend and Walter Klingler<sup>9</sup> made a more detailed analysis and presented the difference in the attitudes of the boys and girls with regard to the different uses of the computer and the internet. We see here that 65% of the boys use the computer for the computer-plays, as opposed to the 28% of the girls. On the other hand, when it comes to writing with the computer or doing school assignments, girls overtake the boys with good margins. The clear fact is that more girls learn with the computer, compared to the boys who would rather engage in playing computer games or listen to music. The result is that the girls show better competence in searching for information for school-learning, and sometimes come out better in school than the boys. However, the boys are good in some practical areas like computer-video-formatting and computer-programming as shown in the table below.

When it comes to the actual use of the internet, we also notice that the girls have the upper hand. In the analysis presented by the “*Medienpädagogischer Forschungsverbund Südwest*”<sup>10</sup>, apart from the writing of E-mails or internet chatting with peers, as well as searching for jobs-information, the boys stay behind the girls in all other aspects of the use of the internet as presented in the chart below.

The media accord the young people of today enough facilities to enhance their development in all directions. The omnipresence of the media is felt today in every household. Every family with children is bombarded with gadgets. The issue for our children of today is no longer having access to media products; the issue is rather the personal possession of the media products. The *Medienpädagogischer Forschungsverbund Südwest* further researched in 2003 how much of the

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<sup>8</sup> Reported by STRUCK, P., *Das Erziehungsbuch*, Darmstadt, 2005, 143-4.

<sup>9</sup> FEIERABEND, S./ KLINGLER, W., „Jugend, Information, (Multi-)Media“, in: *Media Perspektiven* 11/2000, 517-527.

<sup>10</sup> Medienpädagogischer Forschungsverbund Südwest: *Jugend, Information, Multimedia (JIM)*, Baden-Baden, 2003.

## Tätigkeiten am Computer

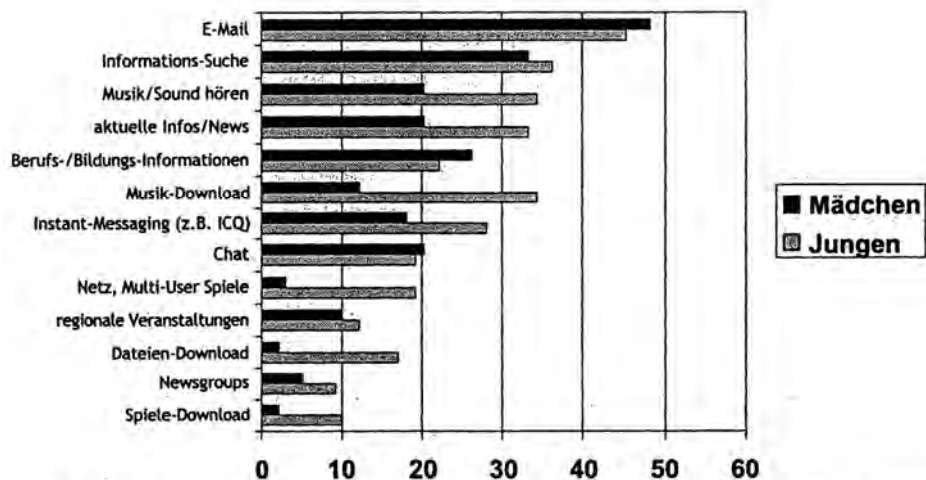
»täglich bis mehrmals pro Woche«; Basis: Computernutzer

	gesamt (n=969)	Mädchen (n= 442)	Jungen (n=526)
Spielen von Computerspielen	48	28	65
Texte schreiben	42	49	36
Arbeiten für die Schule	36	39	33
Internet	35	32	38
Musik hören	33	26	40
PC-Lexikon	18	17	19
Malen, Zeichnen, Grafiken erstellen	16	17	15
Lernsoftware	15	16	14
Bild-Videobearbeitung	12	8	15
Programmieren	10	6	12

aus: Feierabend/Klingler 2000, S. 521

Angaben in Prozent

## Auswahl Internet-Aktivitäten 2003 täglich/mehrmals pro Woche



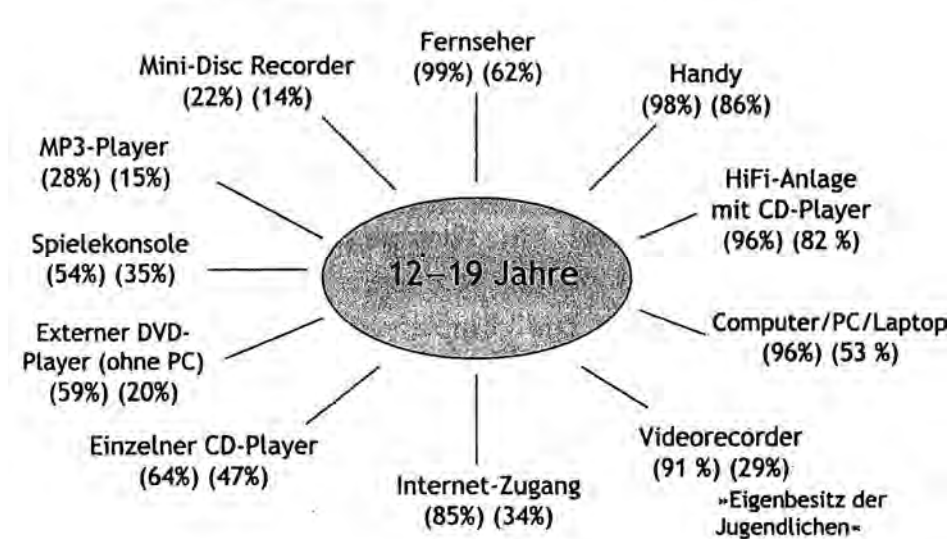
aus: JIM 2003, Angaben in Prozent

Basis: Internet-Nutzer, n=1.017



media products are accessible to our young people (between the ages of 12-19 years), and what percentage of them is personally owned by the children themselves. They came out with this result:

### Medienwelt Jugendlicher 2003 Verfügbarkeit im Haushalt / Eigenbesitz (Auswahl)



aus: JIM 2003; Basis: alle Befragten, n=1.209

With 99% availability of television, 98% of mobile phone, 96% of computer, 85% with internet connections, and about 55% in the average of these belong to the young people themselves, there is no need for further evidence required to prove that the media are at home in such a society. Even children at the primary school age (between 7-11 years) go about with personal mobile phones which have several multimedia functions. Although this enables the parents to reach their children on phone wherever they are, it is more of a distraction when a child, in the midst of others, is solely busy with his mobile phone or blocks his ears with the MP3-player instead of enjoying the company of other children.

As a result of the multimedia-networks in the internet, the young people of today are more connected with one another all over the world, sometimes more than the adults. We take an example from the case of the Face-Book or the SMS. At this level of communication, the young people operate on special realms of shared information; develop their own special codes of communication and forms of language which may totally look strange to an outsider. Consequential to this situation, young people are now sometimes foreign to the adults. They think and associate differently; they have different perceptions of reality; and re-

act differently to situations, seeing many things differently as the adults do. In fact, the young people see the adults as not belonging to their world, and as such cannot understand them. In the words of Peter Struck, “Junge Menschen sind den Erwachsenen dadurch irgendwie fremd geworden; sie assoziieren anders, haben andere Wahrnehmungseigenschaften, zeigen andere Reaktionsmuster, empfinden vieles anders...”<sup>11</sup>

The computer-children have another culture of making or looking at mistakes. While adults are very much afraid of making mistakes and always tending towards punishing mistakes, young people on the other hand see mistakes as a chance to go back and begin again. They see a mistake as a reasonable element for advancement; a way of trial and error – aimed at reaching the goal. They are often open to the new ideas offered in the internet, and thereby challenge excessively the “conservative” ways of life proposed by the adults. The media equip the young with international information and modern ways of living. And it would be wrong to deny them this necessary advantage. The media are or have become an indispensable part of human daily life. The challenge facing those educating the young is not to prevent the use, rather to curb the abuses and direct their enthusiasm towards a responsible use of the media.

## 9.2 *Associated Dangers*

Now that the media have almost become indispensable in our lives, they must however not be seen as the solace of the young. Although the media contribute immensely to socializing the young, the traditional roles of parents and teachers in educating our young people should not be thrown overboard. It is dangerous to hand this responsibility over to the media. The media cannot replace the humanness in child’s up-bringing. The human nearness, love and care which secure the emotional stability of the child during his development cannot be afforded by the media. Children must be helped to achieve more of their self-actualization through the natural human up-bringing they receive from home and schools. Educational and developmental foundations must be solidified at home and in the school before the media come in. Unfortunately, when the family and schools are deficient in stabilizing the authenticity of the child’s personality – by giving him a positive feeling of self-worth which he requires as a person, then there is the danger that the child seeks solace in the media-world. Every human being needs attention. When the young people lack the human attention they need from the human world, they find alternatives in the media world. And here, in the media world, they are exposed to many dangers and are vulnerable to abuses.

No one should underrate what the media do with us humans, and more especially with our children. The media are a giant in the manipulation industry.

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<sup>11</sup> STRUCK, P., *Das Erziehungsbuch*, Darmstadt, 2005, 144.



Young people can easily fall prey to political manipulations, ideological manipulations, religious manipulations, economic or commercial manipulations, etc. Economically, for example, most of what the media offer today is just in accordance with the demands of the market. And the young people are very much defenceless in this regard, since they are always open to new things. The media manipulate the young to sell their goods. The commercial systems thrive with the rate at which the young people consume the media channels.<sup>12</sup> When the different channels of the media compete for commercial advantages, the young people always remain the target. The reason is obvious. The young people are open, often show curiosity and inquisitiveness, are easily delighted, sometimes gullible, can get very enthusiastic about things; these make them prey to manipulations, and the media capitalizes on that. Also the young people have more time, use the media worrylessly, and can also animate their peers, colleagues and parents to do so. The media see this as a chance and therefore offer multiple possibilities – in content, hard and software – for getting across to the wishes and needs of the young people. This accounts for the bombastic and aggressive advertisement of products in the media. These advertisements first of all arouse and then channel the interests of the young people to the desired market-directions.

The media have the capability of creating new values for their consumers, and therefore must be checked. Since the past five decades, economic criteria have increasingly come to dominate decisions about the messages and means of communication; until today nearly every element of what was once thought of as “public discourse” has been commercialized. At the same time, most of what is seen on television, in books, newspapers, magazines and movies is controlled by a handful of media conglomerates. Local owners of media outlets find it expensive to rely on locally produced material. Much of the syndicated material for television, radio and newspapers is distressingly similar. “Media influence the way we look at everything. Subtle and not-so-subtle messages with symbols, sounds and metaphor push our society towards a market-driven, violence-prone, self-centered lifestyle that challenges our Christian values.”<sup>13</sup> Therefore, families, schools, religious bodies, and the society as a whole have the responsibility to educate people to understand media symbols, images and language from the accepted value perspectives. The modern society cannot simply fold its hands and continue to support strictly market-structured media, which reinforce a limited worldview and provide enormous profit to a privileged few. Such Media propagandas can only produce the habit of consume among the younger generations. There must be a fight towards a genuine free flow of communication which can

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<sup>12</sup> Confer BARSCH, A./ERLINGER, H.D., *Medienpädagogik; Eine Einführung*, Stuttgart, 2002.

<sup>13</sup> National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA, *The churches' Role in Media Education and Communication Advocacy: (A Policy Statement Approved by the General Board)*, 16 November 1995.

enhance and broaden public discourse of values. Such discourse can help to determine which values the media may transmit.

On this note, Dieter Spanhel observed: “Die Omnipräsenz der Medien und Informations- und Kommunikationstechniken zusammen mit den Medienverbundsystemen verwandeln die alltägliche Lebenswelt der Heranwachsenden immer mehr in eine Medienwelt. Dazu gehören auch neue Medienorte außerhalb der Familie damit auch außerhalb der elterlicher Kontrollmaßnahmen: Kino, Diskothek, Kaufhäuser, CD-Läden, Videotheken, Spielhallen, Buchladen, Büchereien, Jugendzentrum. Wichtig für den Zusammenhalt der gleichaltrigen Gruppen, die sich an solchen Orten treffen, sind die neuen Kommunikationsmöglichkeiten.”<sup>14</sup> The omnipresence of the information and communication techniques, as well as the organized systems of the media is gradually transforming the daily lives of the young people to a media-world. Worthy of mention are the new media locations outside the family, and as such, outside the control of the parents such as: Cinema, Movie Theater, disco halls, department stores, CD-kiosks, Video halls, play halls, book-kiosks, libraries and youth centers. The new possibilities of communication are very important here in order to keep the young people and their peers who meet at these places together. And the media systems, in order to remain attractive to the young people, offer dangerous plays, action and violent films, sex oriented activities, which they believe can appeal to the interests of the young. The danger here lies more in the absence of any parent or guardian or required authorities to sensor and control the extent of the media-consume. This situation needs public discourse.

Trying to assess the depth of the problems of uncontrolled media-consumption in Germany, for example, the *Medienpädagogischen Forschungsverbundes Südwest*<sup>15</sup> found out, following the details of their research, that almost 50% of children between 13 – 15 years have personal televisions in their rooms. The number increases to 70% when one includes the youth of 16-17 years. Getting down to the very little children, it was discovered that the fourth of every child above six years belong to the group of those having television in their rooms. The problem is that, through this omnipresence of television, and its accessibility to children at will, there is an increase in television consumption up to three and half hours daily, and possibly up to five hours at the weekends. This calculation reveals that such children spend in a year more time with the television than they invest on learning in school. This is a dangerous development. When children have televisions in their rooms, neither the parents nor the teachers have the least idea what types of films or programs the children are watching. Christian Pfeiffer<sup>16</sup> is of the opinion that this situation endangers all the more the boys, since they are prone in their free time to

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<sup>14</sup> SPANHEL, D., *Handbuch Medienpädagogik*, (Bd.3 *Medienerziehung*), Stuttgart, 2006, 109.

<sup>15</sup> Reported in: *Die Zeit*, Nr. 39, 18.9.2003.

<sup>16</sup> PFEIFFER, C., “Bunt Flimmert das Verderben”, in: *Die Zeit*, Nr. 39, 2003, 12.

watch action films with forceful, violent and brutal contents; or involved in computer-plays delivering lessons of aggression. He estimates that one-fifth of the boys between 12-17 years in such situations are simply exposed, without control, to the irresistible manipulations of the media.

In addition, the official German television stations – ARD/ZDF, in their analysis of the free time activities of children, estimated that children in the very early ages of 6-9 years spend about 93 minutes of their 150 minutes free time with the media. By the 10-13 years, the time increases to 113 minutes. This confirms that more youth give more time to the media than other free activities. However, another research attributes this increase not to the TV alone, rather to the new media technology of the computer and internet.<sup>17</sup> And the young people love to try adventures in this new horizon of the internet. Here, in spite of the advantages, the young people are all the more exposed to all sorts of unprecedented dangers of abuse, manipulation and other negative influences.

The situation is not different in America. “Remarkably, 32 percent of children in the United States under the age of 7 have their own television, and 53 percent of all children ages 12 to 18 have their own sets; ...young people in the United States spend an average of 5.5 hours per day with some form of media, mostly television. Little wonder that the American academy of Pediatrics has urged parents not to allow children under two years old to watch television. Parents should also avoid using any kind of media as an electronic baby-sitter, and should try to create an “electronic media-free” environment in their children’s rooms.”<sup>18</sup> The media, as part of the popular culture of today, determine the norms which form the culture of the young people. When the media propagate programmes with negative contents, the children are then preprogrammed to imbibe the negative actions and behaviours.

In Africa, Nigeria for example, the boom of the home-video industry has made a lot of societal exposure with sometimes positive but most often negative influences on the young. In its films and video productions, the Nollywood often tries to present in a preservative way the cultural heritage of the people. This is good. But in its explications of the ills of the society – ancient and modern – the very rich people who got their wealth through bloody and foul means, though presented as dubious and devilish, but are often presented as intelligent, clever and eminent citizens, so that the young people may ignorantly tend towards emulating them to get rich by all means – to be also prominent, influential and decision-makers in the society. In such cases, children need critical directional assistance. As it is, there are no censorious controls over the moral and value contents of these productions. All importance is on the commercial viabil-

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<sup>17</sup> FEIERABEND, S./ KLINGLER, W., „Was Kinder sehen: Eine Analyse der Fernsehnutzung von Drei- bis 13-Jährigen 2001“, in: *Media Perspektiven*, Nr. 5, 2002, 221-31.

<sup>18</sup> SCHAEFER, R.T., *Sociology*, New York, 2005, 95.

ity of their productions. Our young people must be protected from the negative manipulative influence of the media.

As a socializing force and a source of information and entertainment, according to Jane Stadler<sup>19</sup>, the media have the potential to be an agent for social change or a tool to maintain hegemonic power structures. The ideal of the role of the media in supporting positive social change is somewhat compromised by the transnational, oligopolistic character of the media industry. The deregulation and privatization of the media has created a situation in which the media industry itself now requires a watchdog. The economic freedom of the press is clearly essential if it is to be an effective agent of political communication, however, the market forces often lead to the concentration of ownership and control in the hands of an elite group, with a corresponding loss of diversity in the range of views expressed in the media. This necessitates the creation of laws and regulatory bodies to monitor and prevent the formation of monopolies, and to support independent media, which must have the responsibility of transmitting acceptable societal values. The nature of patterns of media ownership and control partly determine the impact that the media have on society, but the content of media texts is also important and requires control.

Moreover, the ideological influence of the media on identity formation, especially on the perpetuation of stereotypes that support patriarchal, racist or classist ideologies, has been well documented in academic literature. Media images and stories contribute to how individuals develop understandings of self and other, and they describe the social world in ways that invite the media recipient to recognize her or his own position within it. The influence of the media on identity formation is exerted in several ways. It encompasses the way the media functions to naturalize the dominant ideology and to define what counts as 'normal', 'central' and 'valuable', and it includes the processes of cognitive scripting and role modeling which can occur as the audience observe, identify with, and in some cases imitate what they see in the media. In this way the media influence perceptions of the importance of different economic groups and other aspects of identity such as age, ability, nationality, gender, ethnicity and religion. Basically, the media should be an agent of unity and not division; agent for enrichment and not exploitation.

Politically, because of the influence that the media can have on society, it is important to question the nature of the media content available both locally and globally. The United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) established the New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO) in 1978 to address media imperialism and the asymmetric flow of media, and to minimize the communication gap between the developed and developing countries by creating a more balanced global media flows. The ethos

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<sup>19</sup> STADLER, J., "AIDS ADS: Make a Commercial, Make a Difference? Corporate Social Responsibility and the Media", in: *Continuum: Journal of Media and Cultural Studies* 18:4, 2004.

driving NWICO suggested that rather than viewing media technologies and media messages as commodities, and as ways of marketing commodities, information and communication should be seen as shared resources with social value. The impact of the media on perceptions of nationalism and cultural identity, particularly as a result of asymmetric flows of information, was another problem NWICO sought to address. Lack of self-representation by marginalized groups and members of developing nations on the world stage was, and is considered to be problematic as foreign coverage is often minimal, biased, and negative. This false presentation can destroy the self-image of a people. Self-representation and a shared code of media ethics are, therefore, desirable.<sup>20</sup>

Internationally, it is not fair and just for the western media to feed their populace only with images and pictures of “War and Violence”, “Hunger and Poverty”, “Aids and Malaria”, “Corruption and Criminality”, in the politically less-privileged countries of the world. Giving true and correct information is in order and is a necessary duty of the media. But when they turn to propaganda, just to hang a tag of bad names on the other in order to pursue some ulterior motives or gain political advantages, then there is a question mark.

Unfortunately, most of the affected nations and groups have no financial means to defend themselves and make their voices heard. Poverty is a known problem in most developing nations. Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) naturally help to facilitate political participation and social change. However, the costs of establishing such communication infrastructure to support the ‘information super-highway’ are prohibitive for such poorer nations; and it is difficult to justify when there are other pressing economic and political priorities and social welfare competing for scarce funds. Such projects can only make the developing world a more substantial target for marketing and for the dispersion of Western ideologies. The ability to communicate is a basic human right but is unfortunately denied to some according to their ability to gain access to modern technology. Obviously, without basic telecommunications services, groups are not able to fully participate in the global economy, participate meaningfully in political discourse, or even socially interact within the so-called global village. In this regard, global solidarity of help and assistance is called for. But on the whole, the young must be assisted in the task of distinguishing genuine information from media propaganda.

There are many other areas of concrete abuse and danger in the media world, especially in the internet. Young people innocently put their pictures in the face book and very often land in the pages of pornographic viewers. People give in their personal data in the internet to enable them buy items on-line, these are often sold by the business organizations among themselves, and used for advertisements or other commercial interests without the permission of the people involved. People write E-mails and hope for discretion and privacy, but their pass-

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<sup>20</sup> STADLER, J., *Ibid*, 2004.

words are often hacked and their information tapped for fraud. Internet mobbing is not seldom among the youths. Moreover, the fact that the young learn criminality, brutality, aggressiveness and violence through computer-games is not a rare story. Young people often log in, download and use from the internet very dangerous films, ideological programmes, instigative or fanatical information, and many corrupt articles which are not meant for them. The list of the dangers has no end; but the fear of that cannot and should not scare us away from benefitting from the many advantages of the media. We only need to educate ourselves and especially our young ones on how to go about the media business responsibly.

### 9.3 Educating the Young towards a responsible use of the Media

It is naïve to keep trumpeting only the dangers of the media, thereby losing sight of their advantages. Every useful thing can be dangerous if not applied in the reasonable sense. Misuse is a problem, not of the object, rather of the subject using the object. Most of what we refer to as the dangers of the media are problems relating to the flaws in educating the young people about the use of the media. Abuse does not nullify use – *Abusus non tollit usum*. The young do not consume the media only to entertain themselves, or to learn something absurd. I believe! If they are well instructed, they can actively use the media to enrich their daily lives with the new experiences they gather from them. They can learn how to express their feelings, learn how to go about with their inner conflicts or fears; they can acquire values and discover models that can help them reorient their lives; they can achieve better ways of thinking, behaving and judging issues. With the experiences they gather from the media, they can confirm or disconfirm their existing ways of life, comparing the media-heroes with themselves, and thereby setting new and positive goals for themselves.<sup>21</sup>

In the social arena, children can use the media to expose themselves, to acquire better recognition in their groups, learn to be independent, also learning avenues of solving their problems and conflicts with their parents, or (in some cases) how to set themselves free from their tyrannies.<sup>22</sup> Young people are proud to parade themselves as people well-informed. They discuss freely and happily about the contents of the media. With the proper use of the media, every child, as well as adult, can always bring the conflict between the self and the outside world to a balance. Showing competence in the use of the media is like a personal construction and an active reorganization of one's life between the internal schemes and external actions. Xaver Büeler<sup>23</sup> sees such a reorganizational compe-

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<sup>21</sup> ROGGE, J.U., *Kinder können Fernsehen: Vom sinnvollen Umgang mit dem Medium*, Reinbek, 1990.

<sup>22</sup> BACHMAIR, B., *TV-Kids*, Ravensburg, 1993.

<sup>23</sup> BÜELER, X., *System Erziehung: Ein bio-psycho-soziales Modell*, Stuttgart, 1994, 175.



tence as an exchange of distinctions and innovation, as well as the integration and stabilization of the internal human structures with the demands of the media. Children need direction in the application of media-content in order to achieve this balance and stability.

We are living in a media saturated world. The human being invented the media following the inclination to communicate inherent in the human nature. We spend more of our discretionary time with the media than with anything else. The media are woven so thoroughly into the social, political and economic fabrics, such that they have become indispensable for marketing goods, services and ideas, as well as organizing the society. We create and have surrounded ourselves with the media problematic, and are all part of the problems we think the media have. We can therefore be part of the solution by affording the young a re-orientation. If we are to make and influence choices that better represent the values for which we stand, then we must greatly expand our understanding of the utilization of the media. Everybody must have to learn to be media literate. One must have an idea of the use of the media before one can differentiate the rightful from the abusive uses.

The human being must master and control the media; otherwise, the media will control the humans. Paula Bleckmann advocates for a media-maturity, and suggested ways in which our children can learn how to go about the media with self determination.<sup>24</sup> She observes that starting very early in life with media-consume can only lead to media-dependence and addiction, and not to media-maturity. Bleckmann acknowledges the indispensability of the media as we asserted above, but opined that children can only achieve media-maturity with the help of media-literate parents. Children require media-education which is “*nachhaltig und nicht nachhinkend*” – sustainable and not lagging behind; and this will make them fit for the future. Children must be equipped by experts, people who know about the media and the future, so as to develop in them the strength of media-productivity and the ability to build bridges towards connecting the educational gaps. In short, children must be educated into media-competence.

When we talk about media-competence, we refer to the ability to use the media and its components and contents according to our needs and goals. We mean the ability to not letting the media master how to use us; rather, we master how to use the media for our own purposes. The media-competence embraces: (a) the ability to use the media components like books, newspapers/magazines, computer/internet, radio/video, television and all telecommunication gargets; (b) the ability to find orientation in the media-world – for example, being able to find the news channel one wants to wash amidst all other television pro-

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<sup>24</sup> BLECKMANN, P., *Medienmündig – Wie unsere Kinder selbstbestimmt mit dem Bildschirm umgehen lernen*, Stuttgart, 2012. See also, BLECKMANN, P., „Medienabhängigkeit – Präventionsansätze und Ausstiegsszenarien“, in: *Krisenbewältigung, Widerstandskräfte, soziale Bindungen im Kindes- und Jugendalter*, Stuttgart, 2011.

grammes; (c) the ability to communicate with one another through the media gadgets; (d) the ability to maintain a critical distance from the media-content – for example, being able to decipher the commercial or political interests behind the media presentations; (e) the ability to be personally active and creative in the media-world, for instance issuing personal publications in one’s school magazines, internet or other public channels.<sup>25</sup>

Dieter Baacke offered four dimensions of media-competence: 1) Media-critic (*Medienkritik*) – which should take cognizance of the analytical, problematical societal processes. Every human being should be in the position to use reflectively the analytical knowledge which the media present and apply them in his own actions. The ethical dimension here is to synchronize this analytical thinking with social responsibility. 2) Media-knowledge (*Medienkunde*) – this involves the know-how of the media systems, consisting of the classical informative dimension as well as the modern instrumental dimension, i.e. the ability to use the modern instruments and gadgets of communication. 3) Media-use (*Mediennutzung*) – the ability to be positively receptive of the programs, and also be able to use them for interactive communication. 4) Media-creation/shaping/organization (*Mediengestaltung*) – the ability to participate in the innovative changes and developments of the media systems; contributing ones quota in the creation of esthetic variations in the daily routines of communication.<sup>26</sup> In effect, Baacke expanded the idea of media-competence to transcend the individual or personal level to embrace the societal level.

Media education is indispensable in the society to help people: *Recognize* and understand the role of media in using metaphor and symbol, which shapes our understanding of who we are – individually and relationally; and also to *learn* how interactive communication can shape and influence the emerging social fabric of human life and society. We can only through education and media-competence demonstrate responsible use of technology. Media literate consumers will recognize the complexity and subtlety of issues. Unfortunately, poorly informed media consumers sometimes have created more problems than solutions – talk with bias and ignorance about issues they do not understand. Problems most often associated with the electronic media, such as gratuitous sex and violence, insufficient or inappropriate programming for children, a flood of sameness in entertainment programming, superficial news coverage of politics, inadequate attention to religion and its influence in society, and the trivialization of news and information, are problems of media illiteracy, and therefore require media-literate persons committed to making their perspectives relevant to these complex issues.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> [www.wikipedia.de](http://www.wikipedia.de), *Medienkompetenz*.

<sup>26</sup> BAACKE, D., *Medienpädagogik*, Tübingen, 1997; see also BAACKE, D., *Kommunikation und Kompetenz. Grundlegung einer Didaktik der Kommunikation und ihrer Medien*, München, 1973.

<sup>27</sup> National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA, *The churches' Role in Media Education and Communication Advocacy: (A Policy Statement Approved by the General Board)*, 16 November 1995.

Ignorance sometimes can lead to false decisions. We cannot just because some dangers are associated with the abuse of the media, forbid children or deny the young every access to media services. Some parents go to the extent of not allowing televisions in their houses just to protect their children from the negative influences of the TV-services. Such parents forget, as Peter Struck observed<sup>28</sup>, that children who grow up in television-free households are exposed to the danger of becoming dropouts or outsiders among their peers. They lack current information, and therefore cannot meaningfully participate in discussions during recreations in school; and this can lead in extreme cases to difficulties in interaction or communication deficiency. There is also the danger, by any little opportunity outside their homes, to compensate for their lacks by excessively abusing this chance to see the worst of things; or may grow with this needful anxiety to the point of spending more of their lives later, when they grow out of home, trying to enjoy the things they have missed at home.

In the real sense, children show interest only for those things they like. They watch, hear or listen to things which synchronize with their subjective interpretations. Often they try to act and imitate the scenario of what they have seen or heard in their plays. They may change the persons, content and interconnectivity of the story so massively to suit them, and from that, make up their own stories but imitate the actions of the heroes in the scene they cherish. In this way, they try to build up their own forms of acting, thinking and value systems. Here, the guide of the adult is very much required to prevent children from extolling false values, wrong actions and perverse thinking forms. Although in their plays, there is often no clear dichotomy between phantasy and reality, but through that, children learn the ability to integrate internal and external realities. The responsibility of the educator here is to help the child to achieve a reflective distance from his playful actions, and from there, build up the desired ones. Since children are always inspired through their plays, adults must encourage plays with enviable heroes teaching acceptable values.

Taking up this responsibility presupposes that the parent or teacher must first of all have an idea of what is happening in the media-world – from where the children derive more of their information. How can parents and children understand themselves when they live in two different media-worlds; or how can teachers help their pupils if they do not know their world-view, or operate on different wavelengths? The adults must keep themselves updated to be in the position to correct any form of misapplication of the media and their services on the parts of their children. The parents must be ready and willing to talk about the contents of the media (no matter what) with their children. Jürgen Barthelmes and Ekkehard Sander<sup>29</sup>, from their

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<sup>28</sup> STRUCK, P., *Das Erziehungsbuch*, Darmstadt, 2005.

<sup>29</sup> BARTHELMES, J., / SANDER, E., „Medien in Familie und Peer-Group: Vom Nutzen der Medien für 13- und 14jährige“, in: *Medien Erfahrung von Jugendlichen*, Bd. 1, München, 1997. 324.

study about the use of the media among the young, noted that the media and their contents offer numerous possibilities for discussions. It is to be noted that any discussion over the media is also a discussion over oneself, because most of the time, the media contain basically themes, situations, emotions and feelings that are purely personal. Therefore the media can be seen as a mediator between generations and genders. Through this discursive participation regarding media issues, parents and teachers have every chance to influence positively the developmental processes of their children.

Young people, most of the time, also wish to have the chance to exchange their media-experiences with their parents. Undertaking such media-activities together brings and unites families and peer-groups. From this, one can say that the media have an integrating character. Furthermore, bearing in mind that no topic is taboo in the media, the family and peer-group have through the media, the opportunity to discuss such sensitive themes like aids, drugs, criminality, sexuality, separation or divorce of the parents, which may have much delicate effects on the children if such issues are not well handled. One also has the chance to talk about family origins of the different parents and the relationship between the parents and children. Through sitting together before the TV, one may say that parents and children have come to know themselves more and more, knowing where they have common interests or disparity, as well as about the issues in the entire world. Through undertaking media-activities together, the feeling of togetherness can be strengthened, and parents can understand and appreciate their children all the more. Candidly, parents can only influence the depth and direction of what their children do with the media when they are involved.

The reason why the media play an outstanding role among the young is that they find themselves, their developmental processes, their problems, experiences, interests and aspirations reflected in the media. In another study, Barthelmes and Sander identified the media as an utmost companion for the young especially in their puberty and adolescent stage. The reasons are summarized as follows: "Die Jugendlichen finden in den Medien immer etwas 'für sich'. Jede Person sieht jeweils ihren 'eigenen Film', Konformität durch Medien ist ein Mythos. Über Medieninhalte reden = über sich reden. Die Medien bringen die Jugendlichen (jungen Erwachsenen) auf neue Themen. Die Medien fordern die Jugendlichen heraus, die eigene Sicht in Frage zu stellen. Medien fördern die Arbeit am Selbstbild. Die Medien dienen den Jugendlichen insgesamt als Spiegel für das selbst. Medieninhalte als symbolische Verarbeitung der Wirklichkeit."<sup>30</sup> The youths always find something for themselves in the media. Every person watches his 'own film', Conformity through the media is a myth. To talk about the content of the

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<sup>30</sup> BARTHELMES, J., /SANDER, E., „Erst die Freunde, dann die Medien; Medien als Begleiter in Pubertät und Adoleszenz“, in: *Medienerfahrung von Jugendlichen*, Bd. 2, München, 2001, 222.

media is to talk about oneself. The media introduce new themes to the youth. The media challenge the youth to question their very points of view. The media demand that one works on his self-image. Among the youths, the media act as a mirror for seeing themselves – a reflector. The contents of the media are symbolic portrayals of the reality.

The society must see it as an advantage to encourage the young people to develop a positive attitude towards the media. Through the media, children learn the art of internal regulation of their developmental processes; and by so doing can regulate themselves in accordance with the rules of the social system and values. The way about with the numerousness, variability and multi-functionality of the media offers the young people many opportunities to discover the boundaries of different social systems, and how much they can adapt to their rules and norms.<sup>31</sup> This, on the long run, helps in building up the identity of the young person within the frame-work of the society. Most of what the media offer are symbolically programmed to facilitate the individual identity and the social interaction of the members of the society. The society can gain more, if it invests in the media-education of the young. The use of the media can help strengthen and stabilize the personal ego of the young when he feels that he belongs to and is integrated in the mainstream of the society. This feeling can boost his productivity in the society. The young people are very creative and full of phantasy; and the society can tap these resources of the young very fast through the media.

The media have a tremendous potential for good, often underutilized. They add exciting new symbols to our culture. They provide chances for people to witness events as they happen. They have great democratic potential and can extend knowledge to all people, providing a global perspective. They provide diversion as well as entertainment, information and education. The media today reach virtually every member of the society with messages that reinforce a worldview that says technology can solve all problems. Also the media have been so woven into the economic fabric of most cultures that to question the underlying implications of the system appears destructive, perhaps, in some free cultures like the American and some European cultures, as even unpatriotic. In such a situation, every society and all sectors with societies must add their voice for a greater responsibility in the use of the media and their technology to solve our world's problems. The creativity of the young people can here be massively utilized. Above all, the media must be a producer and definer of a good culture. This is a challenge to media authorities and participants: actors, writers, directors, publishers, technicians, producers, executives, station managers, sponsors and viewers. Social, political and economic structures must be created which provide a framework in which individuals can act responsibly.

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<sup>31</sup> SPANHEL, D., *Handbuch Medienpädagogik*, (Bd.3 *Medienerziehung*), Stuttgart, 2006, 155.

The media play a major role in setting the agenda of what in society will be discussed or ignored. Therefore, we have a responsibility to learn how the media operate and to challenge that which we believe to be false. The young people need a concrete experience of how to get on with media instruments, which can help form their perceptions, ways of thinking, values and ways of life for an easy adaptation in the society. To achieve this goal, Dieter Spanhel suggests a media-didactic which should teach the young people how to use the media and that which the media offer as a constructive learning instrument, and as a foundation for building, reconstructing, saving and disseminating knowledge. This opens a new educational opportunity<sup>32</sup>, which in technical language is called media-socialization.

Media-socialization is a necessity for every child, in fact every person. It is advantageous to let the young person to abstract and deduce his decisions from his own experience through the interactions in the communication processes of the media. Through this, he can construct his own values and ways of action, and build up himself and his worldview. It then becomes clearer, as Dieter Baacke observed, that socializing the child in the media is a step towards building up in the young person a self orientation of his psyche.<sup>33</sup> Meanwhile, system theorists would suggest here that media-socialization must involve a process of equilibration which requires a balance between the actions of the individual and the content of what the media offers. Where this balance is lacking, the effects of the media-contact can be negative. Most parents are afraid of the content of media information, and the developing trends in the world of computer.<sup>34</sup> The fear is that the children may not withstand the bulk of information, or might be spoiled with the content. The solutions to this fear however, cannot be to prevent the young from having access to the media, rather educating them to a responsible use of the media and a critical evaluation of its contents. The young must be helped to identify with the trend, but at the same time form a critical distance to the bombardments of the media. Just like sex education, after a long period of agitation, was introduced into the educational programmes of many nations because the sex-trend could not subside among the young; so also do we expect the media-literacy to be introduced into the educational programmes of today, because the media-trend has come to stay. If nothing is done to let our children master the use of the media, then we will run the risk of letting the media master the use of our children, which on the long run would be catastrophic to the society of today and tomorrow.

This does not suggest however that media education should usurp prominence over the traditional education. To ensure that the young people do not relegate their

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<sup>32</sup> SPANHEL, D., „Neue Medien – neue Lernchancen. Ein integratives Konzept für die Medienerziehung“, in: *Lernchancen (Medien verstehen lernen)*, 2000, 5-14.

<sup>33</sup> BAACKE, D., *Medienpädagogik: Grundlagen der Medienkommunikation*, Bd.1, Tübingen, 1997, 42.

<sup>34</sup> See STRUCK, P., *Netzwerk Schule; Wie Kinder mit dem Computer das Lernen lernen*, München, 1998.



roots and traditional values to the background, the traditional agents for educating the young must assume once again their roles, and not leave the education of their children over to the media. In any case, we have already said that the media can inform, socialize and assist in the educational process of the young, but it is doubtful if the media are in the position to educate the young. No matter how intensive the media engage themselves in trying rapidly to usurp this function of “educating”, it is very dangerous to acclaim the media as an educator, bearing in mind what the media often do to people who get subsumed in them without caution. We should not forget that the primary interest of the media is commerce; and the media go to any length in manipulating their consumers in order to realize this interest and perhaps some other political goals. Leaving the media with the sole responsibility of forming our young people will lead to a misplacement of priorities. This, unfortunately, is already happening since many young people spend a greater part of their day with the media than with the family, church, school, peers etc. And this so-called media-usurpation of “educating” function of the young will continue unless the traditional societies, the church, the school and, most importantly, the family take their roles more seriously to win back the attention of the young people. The family is the centre where the most effective education and corrections can take place. When children are using the media, parents and guardians should endeavor to participate and share their experiences with them. Modelling by parents is the most powerful teacher when it comes to responsible media consumption.

To prevent the abuse of media accessibility, Peter Struck suggests some measures, relating to the length of time advisable to the different age-levels for the use of the media <sup>35</sup>:

- Children below the age of three should never sit before the screen, since it is dangerous to the development of their eyes.
- Children between four and five years may be allowed to sit before the screen on the average of 20 minutes a day.
- Children between the ages of six and nine years can accommodate the screen for 30 minutes at home and another 30 minutes by a learning-computer in the school.
- Children between the ages of 10 and 13 years may spend an average of one hour at home, and another hour at school by the television or computer, (important exceptions could be made).
- From the age of 14 years, two hours at home and two hours at school may not be transcended. In addition, equivalent hours of sporting activities are recommended.
- From the 12<sup>th</sup> class (around the age of 17, 18, 19 years), an average total of five hours before the screen is enough for both home and school uses.

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<sup>35</sup> STRUCK, P., *Das Erziehungsbuch*, Darmstadt, 2005, 146.

- Generally, no child should possess in his own room a computer or television before the age of 10 years. Every household should ensure that these amenities are made available for general use in the home, as well as the institutions of learning.

Meanwhile, I am of the opinion that such strict and timed regulations may not be necessary; it suffices when the parents, guardians and teachers are in good control of the media activities of their children. And one cannot be in control of what one's children do when one does not give or spend enough time with the children. Children are known to be constantly active until they are tired; and if the parent, teacher or guardian does not occupy them with reasonable activity, they occupy themselves with something else which sometimes might endanger them sooner or later. I personally admire one interesting advice, which always comes in the form of advertisement in the German television station ZDF, brought up in the last minute before the evening news at 7 pm. The programme televises in seconds different events which children often undertake and shows the many terrifying things children do and watch when their parents are not there, and ends up with the injunction: "*Schau hin, was Deine Kinder mit den Medien machen*" – look there to see what your children are doing with the media.

Furthermore, every society must secure legal processes that will ensure public accountability by those who control media. Laws of the land should empower citizens to evaluate, at franchise or license renewal time, whether cable and television outlets in local communities are servicing the community interest, convenience and necessity. No doubt, we affirm the freedom of speech and freedom of the press, but the media must work within a framework of social responsibility. And the government and politics must assist to ensure this social responsibility. To this effect, the federal republic of Germany, in the effort to secure legal protection of children and youth, provided a post for listing out all those media agents who pose threat to the development of the young. "Träger- und Telemedien, die geeignet sind, die Entwicklung von Kindern oder Jugendlichen oder ihre Erziehung zu einer eigenverantwortlichen und gemeinschaftsfähigen Persönlichkeit zu gefährden, sind von der Bundesprüfstelle für jugendgefährdende Medien in eine Liste jugendgefährdender Medien aufzunehmen."<sup>36</sup> This law stipulates that those proprietors and media agents which tend to endanger the education and development of the young towards responsible and sociable personalities must be shortlisted as such.

Moreover, every society should encourage the creation of media literacy centers (where the access to media facilities is still limited) to educate the people against the tricks of manipulation and to promote the reinforcement of acceptable values. The society should support and encourage the public schools to include media education as part of the school curriculum from an early age. Par-

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<sup>36</sup> JuSchG. § 18, *Jugendrecht*, SGB VIII, 33 Auflage, 2012.

ents and guardians, on their part, must take responsibility for what their children and youth watch in the home by monitoring the use of the Information Highway, movie and video rentals; to make use of the internet lock-box or other technologies; to stay current on advertising for film, video and computer game materials, so as to make informed decisions about permissible viewing; and, above all, to help young people develop their own standards of taste and appropriate viewing behaviour.

Humanity can be proud of its progress in the media sector. Newer media forms such as interactive television and computer-mediated communication offer an increasing interactivity, autonomy and choice on the part of the user, and unprecedented personal control over the production, manipulation and distribution of content. For these reasons the 'democratic' attributes of new media have been praised for equalizing the power balance between media consumers and media producers and, in some cases such as blogs and wikis, obliterating the distinction altogether. For all the advantages that new media technologies offer some citizens, such media effectively disempower those who lack the education, abilities and economic means to access and use them; hence media policy must actively work to establish inclusiveness, directing resources to closing rather than widening gaps in accessibility.<sup>37</sup>

The provision of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) has potential benefits for economic and social development. New developments in media technologies reflect social structures and mechanisms of exclusion and inclusion. For instance, it is considered exclusionary that the technological capacity exists to meet the needs of blind web users without great expense, and yet the majority of websites are set up to cater for the needs of highly literate, sighted people. For commercial purposes, researches into new technologies are often directed at projects that serve the interests of the majority or of the most affluent, and the disabled people represent a small, fragmented and impoverished market. The development of new media technologies frequently follows market forces and reproduces existing power relations instead of transforming them; and the access to new media technologies is dependent on money and education. For these reasons, media policy must play an important role in regulating new technological developments and the manner in which they are made accessible to various sectors of the population – not just to those with the most purchasing power. Justice demands that all forms of the media must be accessible to all citizens. Poverty and disability, and not even educational deprivation or lower social status should disqualify or exclude anyone from benefiting from the gains of modern communications.

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<sup>37</sup> STADLER, J., "AIDS ADS: Make a Commercial, Make a Difference? Corporate Social Responsibility and the Media", in: *Continuum: Journal of Media and Cultural Studies* 18:4, 2004.

The digital divide (the increasing access gap between those who have and those who do not have access to new media technologies) causes the inequitable access to ICTs and access to the benefits of digital technology. And this is based on the international disparity in the world order; and can also arise from inequities *within* any community. Something must be done in the world order to improve the plight of those still lagging behind in the use of modern communication, otherwise, the social inequalities would be widening. For example, global internet usage figures released on June 30, 2006<sup>38</sup> indicate that Africa is responsible for only 2.3% of global internet usage, despite accounting for over 14% of the world's population. However, internet penetration is increasing rapidly, with South Africa's internet usage growth rated as one of the fastest in the world. Also in recent times, Nigeria has improved tremendously in communication systems with the influx of mobile telecommunications in the country.

WORLD INTERNET USAGE AND POPULATION STATISTICS						
World Regions	Population (2006 Estimate.)	Population % of World	Internet Usage, Latest Data	% Population (Penetration)	Usage % of World	Usage Growth 2000-2005
Africa	915,210,928	14.1 %	23,649,000	2.6 %	2.3 %	423.9 %
Asia	3,667,774,066	56.4 %	380,400,713	10.4 %	36.5 %	232.8 %
Europe	807,289,020	12.4 %	294,101,844	36.4 %	28.2 %	179.8 %
Middle East	190,084,161	2.9 %	18,203,500	9.6 %	1.7 %	454.2 %
North America	331,473,276	5.1 %	227,470,713	68.6 %	21.8 %	110.4 %
Latin America/ Caribbean	553,908,632	8.5 %	79,962,809	14.7 %	7.8 %	350.5 %
Oceania / Australia	33,956,977	0.5 %	17,872,707	52.6 %	1.7 %	134.6 %
<b>WORLD TOTAL</b>	6,499,697,060	100.0 %	1,043,104,886	16.0 %	100.0 %	189.0 %

*(Courtesy of the internet-world-statistical data)*

It is not surprising that we experience the access gap in the use of media technology. In most of the developing countries, the rate of poverty makes the availability of such media technology impossible. One cannot hope for communica-

<sup>38</sup> Confer [www.internetworldstats.com](http://www.internetworldstats.com). ©Copyright 2006.

tion facility where the necessary infrastructure is lacking. How can one talk of computer and the internet where there is no electricity or merely little but fluctuating power supply. In such poorer regions of the globe, the young people are faced with more hurdles to jump than their counterparts in the developed nations. They must put in 200% more effort in order to achieve the same result. No electronic learning. No security in documentation, since every document is in paper files. Every work must be accomplished manually. Global and international information is hard to come by. To improve the relevance of the media and its advantages in all parts of the world, international solidarity is required in tackling the infrastructural problems. We can only begin to talk, in the real sense, about global civilization and educating the young in global values when all peoples of the world have equal access to media technology.

Generally, it is a known fact today that the major challenge facing the young people all over the world, over and above the challenges of their daily living-conditions, is that of the media world. Here they are confronted with an unbelievable number of contradictory forms and styles of live; contradictory goals, norms and values; contradictory beliefs and worldviews. Amidst these contradictory life-conditions, they must be in the position to take value-oriented decisions. Based on their different living conditions, young people tick variably, and these affect their value-decisions. In Germany, the *Bund der Deutschen Katholischen Jugend* (BDKJ) and *Misereor* organized a workshop with the *Sinus-Institut* of Heidelberg in 2008 to analyze how the young people tick and how they (based on their life-situations) imagine values.<sup>39</sup> With the model of the Sinus-Milieus, they arrived at different life-style impressions of the young people, their value-orientations, desires and longings, their imaginations of the future, their views of society and participation. The basic foundation of the Sinus method is the life-conditions; and from these living conditions, the young form their orientation towards values.

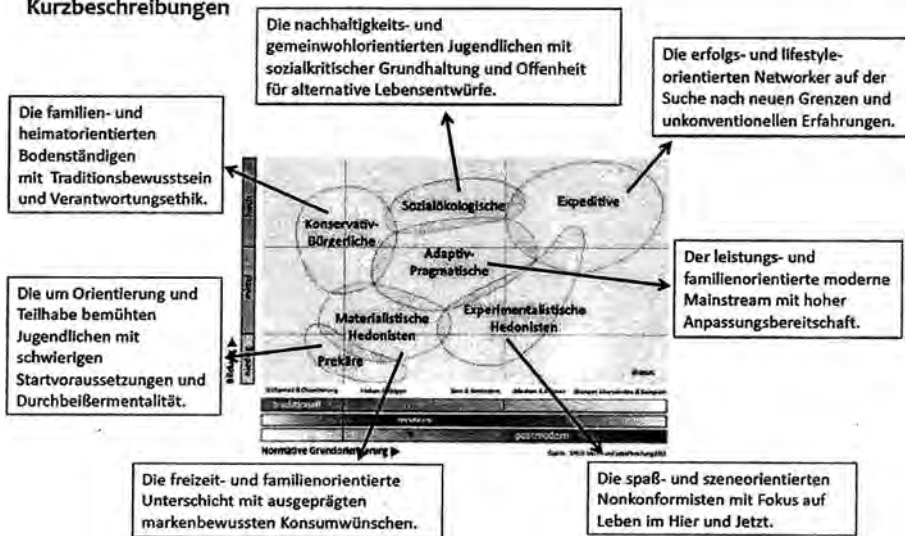
Based on their social and material living conditions, some young people are conservative. These are family oriented, home oriented, down-to-earth, with high consciousness for tradition and moral. Some others have socio-ecological orientations. These exhibit concern for sustainable future and environment. They often exercise social critic and are more open for alternative live-forms. There are also some who tend to be pragmatically adaptive – that means, in their achievement and modern family orientations, they manifest a high range of flexibility and readiness to adapt to new situations. Some are in their nature expeditive – showing strong orientation towards adventures, searching for new bounds and unconventional experiences.

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<sup>39</sup> Sinus-Milieus Studie, Bund der Deutschen Katholischen Jugend (BDKJ) & Misereor, *Wie ticken Jugendliche?*, Osnabrück, 2011.

## Sinus-Lebensweltenmodell u18

## Kurzbeschreibungen



(Courtesy of BDKJ / Misereor, 2011)<sup>40</sup>

There are also young people with very precarious life-conditions, with very difficult means for starting life. They must always bite their ways through and as such they have a struggling mentality. Some have materialist-hedonistic orientations. Even when they belong to the lower classes, they often manifest a longing for material wealth. Others have experimentalist-hedonistic orientations: these are the nonconformists whose focus on life is enjoyment for here and now. Meanwhile, all these variable conditions are not completely disintegrated from one another. They are basically interconnected; and the same group of the young can at the same time manifest many of these different life-conditions. These life-conditions and orientations deeply affect the value-decisions of the young people. For this reason any proper socialization of the young in the media world must consider the life-conditions of the targeted group. It is helpful to know their life-backgrounds; how and why they tick the way they do; or why they fancy this or that programme on television, in video or the internet; why they prefer Mp3 players on their ears more than discussing with the peer-group; or why playing games the whole afternoon in the computer is more attractive than doing the school assignments; and above all, why they opt for this or that style of life and not the other.

<sup>40</sup> Cited in POLLAK, G., *Vorlesung: „Einführung in die Bildungswissenschaften“*, Passau, WS 2012/13.



The media-offer of contradictory life-styles does not make decisions easy for the young people. They are faced with the challenge of deciphering the right values. The younger the children are, the more problematic this challenge becomes. Since the media contents are often daily life issues, the young people should be given access to the media, but be properly educated on the use of the media. And this also involves educating them into the right values and adequate life-decisions. In this regard, Dieter Spanhel gave some insight to value-oriented qualities which every media educator must target to achieve in the young people:

- They must discover their own order of preference and its contained value-orientations, and make this the basis of their actions.
- They must discover the value orientations offered and transmitted by the media, analyze them, and must be in the position to judge them on the basis of their own values.
- They must be in the position to justify the values they decide for in their media-actions, considering their possible consequences for them and others.
- Above all, children must be made to know that values can arise from different value systems and worldviews, and as such must be evaluated differently.
- Also they must be made to know of the existence of some basic fundamental values, which are not subject to debate.<sup>41</sup> A typical example of such values is the preservation of life.

The purpose and goal of the value-oriented media-education is to build up and stabilize the sense of responsibility in the young as regards the use of the media. And this involves the integration of variable knowledge of values in their psyche and the manner of their application to the media. The media educator, however, must avoid the danger of forcing his/her own value orientations and convictions on the child. His/her responsibility is more of exposing the child to the basic values for judgment and action in relation to the media, and to divulge the consequences that may follow any direction of decision the child may make. As such, media education is all about enabling the young person to learn the basis for deciding his own hierarchy of values and using them to judge the media-contents and to justify his own media-actions.

The young people must, as such, be in the position to communicate their own needs and values to their media partners. This demands therefore that media-education, in line with the opinions of Gerfried Hunold and Andreas Greis<sup>42</sup>, must accord the young with the following media-competence: 1. *Competence for se-*

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<sup>41</sup> SPANHEL, D., *Handbuch Medienpädagogik*, (Bd.3 *Medienerziehung*), Stuttgart, 2006, 192-3.

<sup>42</sup> HUNOLD, G.W., / GREIS, A., „Medienkompetenz, Ein Ethisches Plädoyer“, in: *Medienethik – Kritik einer populären Unversalkonzeption*, (Forum Medienethik 1/2002), München, 2002, 7-17.

*lection and evaluation* – They must be able to select from the many offers of the media, and be able to organize them by evaluating their possibilities for communicative contacts which synchronizes with their needs, motives and goals. 2. *Competence for perception (Visual literacy)* – The young must be in the position to use the available techniques of the media to build up their social interactional contacts; they must be in the position to perceive media messages, evaluate them responsibly and build up reasonable judgments. 3. *Competence for reception (media literacy)* – Young people must be able to understand the different codes of the media, be in the position to decode them, decipher the senses and intentions behind the codes, and reasonably apply them in their social relations and communicative process. 4. *Network-competence* – This is a form of new social competence which enables the young to build up a network of communication within one's social group and take part in controlling the communicative processes at the local, regional or global levels.

The young must be helped to construct their own personal world of experience through the media. The media offers enormous materials for building up one's horizon of feelings. The human being enjoys being entertained with the world of fictions and phantasy, and these help in the development of human personality and identity. To actualize this positively, media competence is a necessity. In this regard, Lothar Krappmann<sup>43</sup> described the roll of communicative competence in building up identity. This involves the ability to, on the one hand, take up or identify with rolls of media heroes, and on the other hand, distance themselves from these rolls. It is all about finding a balance between the media paradoxes and forming out their own specific world of experiences. This demands from the young person the ability to a reflective self-control, which can be achieved faster with help from an experienced adult. Otherwise the child remains prone to the influences of the one-sided images of the media like violence, brutality, aggression, mobbing, murder, etc.

Every young person must be helped to be able to understand and interpret the sense behind the media messages. This demands the competence to use the media critically, which involves the knowledge of the functions and the effects of the media as well as the ability to organize its cognitive and emotional effects on oneself; and the ability to differentiate and decide for specific programmes as against others. The function of media education here is to help the young to be in the position, or learn to choose meaningfully and responsibly from the overloaded media offers. They must be able to realize and understand the reality-content of whatever they have chosen. And this requires that they perceive the basic concept of the construction and reduction of reality in the media, and be able to differentiate between fictions and reality in media presentations. Every

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<sup>43</sup> KRAPPMANN, L., *Soziologische Dimensionen der Identität: Strukturelle Bedingungen für die Teilnahme an Interaktionsprozessen*, Stuttgart, 1971.

good choice is an advantage not only for the child, but for his parents, family, and the society in general.

Furthermore, in cognizance of the global responsibility of every human being, media education must also take an intercultural form. The products of the media and their marketing have become very international. The internet opens today many avenues for global contacts, forms of universal communications and international experiences. The young people, and in fact all users of the media, are daily confronted in different ways with the daily happenings in other parts of the globe – different ways of thinking, different ways of expression, and different value-preferences from other cultures. This fact makes it obvious that the young people must be directed towards the knowledge of other cultures. Internet pages and television programmes which portray the good cultures of other people can be of help. The elements of the foreign cultures which are always compounded in the media widen the horizon of experience, give more than one can get from his own culture, and offer enormous enrichment for personality development.<sup>44</sup> For this advantage to be actualized, the young person should at least possess the basic knowledge of other cultures, and be in the position to interpret and apply them reasonably. This should be part of the responsibility of media education.

Media education is a necessity, but must be carried out within the legal bounds of protecting the young. In some developed countries of Europe and America, we notice some legal regulations meant to protect the young people from the abuses of the media. In Germany, for example, there is a detailed content of the measures to be taken in the task of protecting the youth from the abuses of the media – “*Jugendmedienschutz*”. In a contract between the media and the state,<sup>45</sup> it was agreed to exclude: programmes which can ginger hatred against some parts of the population because of national, racist or religious affiliation; programmes which can inflame violence and attack against the personality or human dignity of the others; programmes which castigate or insult other groups. Also forbidden are: programmes which try to present inhuman violent actions as harmless; programmes which extol unjustified attacks and wars; pornography; programmes which undermine morality or endanger the moral development of children; programmes which may present the dying, the sick, and the handicapped in derogatory manners are not allowed. Care must be taken not to present programmes which can have negative influence or corrupt the minds of children, unless they are aired when the non-participation of children is guaranteed, for example in the night between the hours of 23.00pm and 6.00am. In such cases or in the case of dangerous television/kino/cinema/video films, a warning must be issued stipulating the age limit of the participants.

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<sup>44</sup> SPANHEL, D., *Handbuch Medienpädagogik*, (Bd.3 *Medienerziehung*), Stuttgart, 2006, 215.

<sup>45</sup> Confer *Deutscher Rundfunkstaatsvertrag* (RStV), 26.8.1996.

In the computer and internet arena, there are also available programmes and techniques for filtering what the young people can/may consume. Also there are browsers which allow access only to selected websites of the internet. These measures can help protect children, although some questions still remain open. For example, discussions still go on regarding: who evaluates the internet website and with what criteria?<sup>46</sup> Nonetheless, it is obvious that parents and authorized persons always take responsibility for decisions regarding the under-aged. And the control measures are very necessary because they checkmate both the producers and the recipients of the media products, and can protect the young against all sorts of abuses and negative influences. The control measures however, should not be used for political manipulations and propaganda like is the case in some countries with dictatorial regimes, rather should earnestly be aimed at protecting children from misuse, and educating them towards the right use of the media. Media education and media protection of the young augment each other and go hand in hand. They are two complimentary responsibilities of the parents, teachers and people in authority in the society and state.

The parents are the principal, but not the only, authority responsible for the education of the children. And because the parents, most of the time, lose the overview of the media-world of their children, especially during and after puberty, the institutions of learning should include media education as one of their primary assignments. To accomplish this assignment effectively, teachers should not forget that they are only trying to build on already existing foundations brought along from different families. Based on this background therefore, teachers (just like parents) have the duty to:

1. Acquaint themselves with the exact horizon of the media-world and media-activities of their pupils;
2. Make a pedagogical evaluation of the media-habit of the pupils, which will act as a basis for the media-educational plan;
3. Accompany each pupil in his media-activities with understanding and without bias, but x-raying and explaining the consequences of every media action/influence – which opens up the door for corrections;
4. Integrating the parents as indispensable partners in the task of media education of their children.

In this fourth assignment, we envisage, with Wolfgang Burkhardt,<sup>47</sup> the difficulty of convincing the parents on the existing or impending developmental problems, as well as the developmental chances surrounding the media activities of their children without running the risks of being misunderstood – whereby the

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<sup>46</sup> MACHILL, M., & VON PETER, F., (Hrsg.) *Internetverantwortung an Schulen*, Gütersloh, 2001, 20.

<sup>47</sup> BURKHARDT, W., *Förderung kindlicher Medienkompetenz durch die Eltern: Grundlagen, Konzepte und Zukunftsmodelle*, Opladen, 2001.

parents could feel accused of educational failures or feel tutored by the teachers on the task of bringing their children up. It must be clear that without a consistent cooperation between the parents, teachers and with all the other agents of socialization, it would be difficult to achieve a successful media education. All the agents responsible for socializing the child must cooperate to help the young person achieve his own reflective, critical and practical analysis of how to come to terms with the problems of the media.

This cooperation must aim at benefiting the young person; and according to Bernd Schorb<sup>48</sup>, it should achieve five goals at the end. First: The expansion of the possibility for the young person to act, in the sense of being in the position to use the media not just as a consumer, rather using the media technically as a medium and a working instrument. Second: Experiencing and learning conscious communication – that means, having the ability to use and apply the media to develop and strengthen communication as a two-way process between communicative partners. Third: The ability to use the media to discover one's own self-interests; to strengthen them or creatively criticize them; awakening and strengthening one's trust in one's creative abilities. Fourth: Acquiring behavioral confidence in different social situations; establishing in the young person the experience of personal worth in the defense and presentation of one's interests. Fifth: Using the media as a social medium, based on subjective abilities, for presenting personal experiences and personal problems with images and words. That means, seeing the media as a medium of expression.

With a good mastery of media activities, the young person is equipped with a good participative and communicative competence for the present and his future roles in our global society which has “medialized” and “digitalized” itself. Finally therefore, the young must be trained towards using responsibly the communicative and media accessories without being enslaved to the demands of these technologies. The illusion persists that technological progress necessarily brings freedom and happiness. No! The truth is not complete. Every coin has two sides. To worship technology and media techniques, is to elevate them over and above humanity, therefore making them objects of humanity's awe and veneration. The media is indispensable in our time, but can however be dangerous. It must not and should not be deified. Media illusions can deceive.

Meanwhile, the advantages of the media are great. They can be intelligently and responsibly harnessed without our being engulfed in their elusive and deceptive “promises”. This is our goal and our wish for the young people in the quest for global values and intercultural togetherness.

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<sup>48</sup> SCHORB, B., „Die Lernorte und die erwerbbaeren Fähigkeiten, mit Medienkompetenz umgehen“, in: *Medienkompetenz* (Hrsg. SCHELL/ STOLZENBURG/ THEUNERT), München, 1999, 390-414.

