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Funding Media Literacy: Hard-Earned Lessons From a Social Enterprise

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Abstract

This article reviews and discusses the goals and strategies of media literacy education in a business context. In 2017, Mars Media Academy, a social enterprise specialising in media and information literacy, was established with the support of a university knowledge transfer fund in Hong Kong. In the past four years, the Academy has given talks, seminars, workshops, and experiential learning activities in over 47 local schools and 11 NGOs and youth organisations. This article draws on extensive fieldwork with over 3000 students and hundreds of youth workers and ponders the question of "what sells?" It begins with a reflection of the specific problems of the clients; the "product design" processes are then explained. Subsequently, three design elements underlying various educational programmes are summarised. In response to the many shifts in media as well as education, we discuss why it is important to incorporate historical perspectives, ethical considerations, and a mindful approach for media literacy initiatives.

Keywords: media literacy, social enterprise, awareness, content and pedagogy
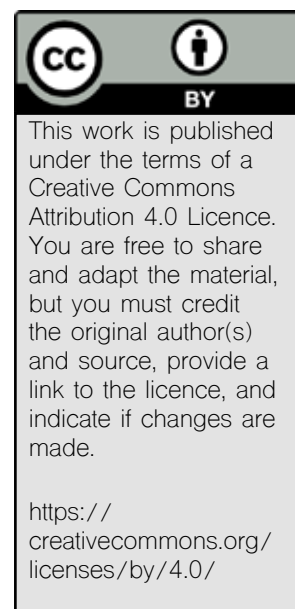
Introduction

This article reviews and discusses the goals and strategies of media literacy education from the perspective of a social enterprise. In 2017, Mars Media Academy, a social enterprise specialising in media and information literacy, was established with the support of a university knowledge transfer fund in Hong Kong. In the past four years, the Academy has given talks, seminars, workshops, and experiential learning activities in over 47 local schools and 11 NGOs and youth organisations. It managed to serve over 3000 students, mainly secondary students aged between 13 and 18, and hundreds of youth workers. Adopting an ethnographic and reflective approach, this study focuses on how a social

enterprise sells and develops its education programmes so that they not only cater for the needs of funders but also maintain the interests of the key target groups, namely, children and youth in Hong Kong.

Funding media literacy: By whom and for what?

The value of media and information literacy has been thoroughly deliberated for decades. Loaded with numerous prosocial and desirable goals, there is no lack of well-meaning education programmes and activities initiated by various organisations, often led by passionate advocates and educators. The question is, who will pay for the bills? Indeed, funding remains a major challenge (Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sports, 2021). Most existing practices suggest that funding either comes from public expenditure or charity and nongovernmental organisations. In this regard, media literacy is often perceived as a public good, which should be provided free of charge and funded by public bodies. The allocation of resources is inevitably subject to factors like relevant policies and changing priorities. To ensure more stability and continuity, what if we ask people who are interested in media literacy to pay for the services themselves? Is there a sustainable revenue model that guarantees survival and minimizes reliance on public funding?

In addition to identifying potential funders, it is imperative to ask what products or services should be funded first, especially when there exist diverse goals. One of the most frequently cited definitions of media literacy originated from the National Leadership Conference on Media Literacy held in December 1992 in the United States. Defined as "the ability of a citizen to access, analyze and produce information for specific outcomes", media literacy has been associated with many desirable goals, as stated in the opening paragraph of the conference report:

> The fundamental objective of media literacy is critical autonomy in relationship to all media. Emphases in media literacy training range widely, including informed citizenship, aesthetic appreciation and expression, social advocacy, self-esteem, and consumer competence. (Aufderheide and Firestone, 1993, p. 9)

The rhetoric for media literacy is often imbued with ambitious visions and optimistic undertones. It promises different things to different people, as reflected by the diverse definitions developed over time (Potter, 2010). In more practical terms, it is generally agreed that media literacy encompasses "a set of knowledge, skills, attitudes, competences and practices" needed in the fast-changing media environment (UNESCO, n.d.). As it is indeed fast changing, the kinds of abilities, the body of knowledge, and the set of skills are also subject to continuous changes. Livingstone (2004) had warned that the challenge was not about the acquisition of skills but rather the reconsideration of the meanings of thinking, learning, and autonomy amidst

the paradigmatic shifts in communication. The advent of digital technologies has generated much discussion about the need to update the content of media literacy. There sees a proliferation of literacies that highlight technological dimensions; indeed, digital literacy, multimodal literacy, network literacy, internet literacy, computer literacy, and social media literacy (Koltay, 2011; Leaning, 2019) have been proposed in response to the new digital landscape. In the meantime, there is also renewed interest in news literacy in the wake of disinformation and waning civic engagement (van der Meer & Hameleers, 2021; Ashley et al., 2017). Given that there are so many different concerns and needs, which one should funders fund first and foremost?

Notes on methods

These two questions regarding "funding by whom" and "funding for what" have always been practical issues for media literacy advocates and educators. The present case study reviews how these issues are addressed by the social enterprise Mars Media Academy through an ethnographic approach, in which the researcher himself or herself is the major research instrument (Agar, 1996). Through immersion in a field, the researcher makes the strange familiar, or vice versa, gains insider perspectives and engages in critical reflections throughout the process (Adams et al., 2017). Despite the personal and interpretive nature, the rich narratives open up areas that are otherwise not readily accessed, and they also enable the articulations of subtle cultural experiences.

The ethnographer

As the "research instrument" in this study, I was first introduced to the field of media education when I was a postgraduate student in the United Kingdom in early 1990s. I strongly believe in the value of media literacy and have participated in its advocacy in Hong Kong, where there is no formal provision of media literacy in schools, in the past two decades. Considering that children and young people are heavily influenced by their media use and habits, I have volunteered to give talks and workshops in local secondary schools for years. I have also designed and implemented various education programmes for classroom learning and extra-curricular activities. As a television producer, I once took part in the creation and production of two television series on media education, targeting children and teenagers, in the early 2000s, while researching how the culture of schooling shaped media education (Chu, 2009a). All these experiences affect how I, as the research instrument, make sense of the many encounters and incidents in the field enabled by the social enterprise I founded.

The field

The field in this study is centered around the Mars Media Academy. It was awarded funding by the Sustainable-Knowledge Transfer Project Fund in the Chinese University of Hong Kong (hereafter CUHK) in early 2017. It will be useful to note that over the past three decades,

there have been remarkable efforts to promote "technology transfer", "knowledge transfer", and "knowledge exchange" in research universities around the world (Hayter et al., 2020; Davies, 2009). Knowledge transfer is "used to encompass a very broad range of activities to support mutually beneficial collaborations between universities, businesses and the public sector" (https://www.cam.ac.uk/research/news/what-is-knowledge-transfer). It is now considered to be the "third mission", aside from teaching and research, of higher education institutions (https://www.ugc.edu.hk/eng/ugc/activity/knowledge.html). Universities set up special offices to enable the formation of new business that is informed by research outputs, while simultaneously meeting the needs of the market. The Chinese University of Hong Kong encourages academics to apply their knowledge and ideas in projects "that are visible and beneficial to the community" (https://www2.orkts.cuhk.edu.hk/en/knowledge-transfer/funding/skpf). Seed funding and incubation services are available for academics to set up social enterprises that facilitate knowledge transfer.

In the pitching session for the funding, the Mars Media Academy presented its four objectives. First, it promotes the concept of "media and information literacy" amongst educators, parents, and the general public in Hong Kong; second, it designs and develops education programmes that blend core principles in media and information literacy; third, it aspires to enhance media literacy across generations through innovative programmes and various social media platforms; and fourth, it advocates creative, ethical, and responsible media use.

The award enabled the registration of a social enterprise with two-year funding that supported essential costs including expenses for staff and administration. Regular meetings with a business consultant were arranged, during which business strategies were discussed and reviewed.

Now entering its fifth year, the Mars Media Academy is still striving, if not struggling, to achieve its social missions while maintaining financial sustainability. Like knowledge transfer, social enterprise is also a term that generates unsettling debates (Collavo, 2018). Despite social enterprises often being seen as "not motivated by profit, in that any profit motive takes a back seat to a mission centered on curing an acute social malady" (Lane, 2011), steady and continuous sources of income are crucial for the survival of any enterprise. This article does not intend to investigate finances or the business model of social enterprises, but nevertheless, it asserts that by considering the "value" of media literacy in commercial terms, some recurring issues with the content and pedagogy in media literacy education are cast in a different light.

The business
Table 1 summarises the clients and the services to which they subscribed over the first four years.

The education sector constitutes the most important clientele, followed by the non-governmental sector which, in this case, are mainly social

Background of clients	Number	Types of Products/Services	Major themes
Higher education institutions	6	Workshops, seminars, experiential learning	Digital media; social media
Secondary schools	40	Talks, workshops, experiential learning	Digital media; social media; fake news; gender issues
Primary schools	1	Talks	Fake news
Non-governmental organisations	6	Training workshops	Digital media; social media; fake news
Education bureau	1	Teacher training workshops; student development workshops	New media; fake news
Public corporations	3	Staff development workshops; consultancy service	Media trends
Youth think tank	1	Documentary production	Special project on beauty and social media

Table 1 Summary of the Mars Media Academy business (2017–2021)

workers specialising in youth services. In total, more than 3000 people, mostly secondary school students aged between 13 and 18, have attended our media literacy education programmes. Post-activity surveys were conducted in most instances and the satisfaction level was generally high, although systematic evaluation is yet to be done and is not the focus of this paper. The clients were mainly teachers, principals, and NGO senior management who decided to buy our services. In other words, in order to reach out to our target groups of children and youth, we need to first convince the people who can afford to pay.

Unlike heavily subsidised or free education programmes, those delivered by the Mars Media Academy are given a fixed cost. The standard hourly rate is set at HKD1500 (around USD192). Programmes range from talks and workshops that last for two to three hours, to an experiential learning day that runs for six hours. Whether free or paid for, it should be noted that time is also a scarce resource. In this instance, why are clients willing to invest both time and money in "media literacy?" What are the problems they want to solve with media literacy?

I have given numerous talks about media literacy in schools in Hong Kong in the past two decades. Given that these talks were almost always free of charge, I was also free to decide on the

actual content, often receiving little-to-no counter suggestions from school administrators. However, when media literacy is turned into services with a price tag, we, as the service provider, are obliged to understand and address the needs and expectations of the clients more proactively. The commercial logic has subtly changed how content is designed and how programmes are conducted.

Findings

The clients' problems

In stark contrast with the enthusiasm of debating the meanings and benefits of media literacy in academia, our clients showed very little interest in the definitional and conceptual issues. I was involved in most initial meetings before service agreements were reached. I used to start conversations by introducing the key phrase "media and information literacy". Out of courtesy, clients would acknowledge the different principles of different literacies. Despite this, there was rarely any follow-up discussion because the subject matter would quickly be changed to the problems they wanted to solve. The excessive use of the Internet and inappropriate participation in social media of children and youth were two of the primary concerns. Clients expressed acute anxiety that younger users did not understand online risks. One secondary school principal explicitly stated that they were often worried that students could bring trouble to themselves and the school as a result of their social media activities. They wanted someone to teach students about such risks so that they would know how to avoid "making mistakes". Fake news was another specific problem they wanted to tackle. It was seen as a grave problem if students believed in false information and hence impeded their learning in the long run.

Time, or the lack of it, was another dominant theme in our conversations. Everyone in every school was busy and it seemed as if a special favour was being granted to us when time was allocated for media literacy. In Hong Kong, media literacy has yet to find a foothold in the official curriculum. In most instances, it is an extra-curricular activity. The most common practice was to organise talks that lasted for two hours. Three-hour workshops were arranged but these put strain on an already packed curriculum and demanded more coordination in timetabling. For the one-day "Digital Detox" experiential programme, only 5 out of 47 schools bought this service and it had to be conducted on a non-school day. Considering the scope of the problems our clients wanted to solve, the time constraint was particularly challenging. The 'good news' was that clients were also realistic. While expressing their concerns around the ills of the media and the hopes to help younger users, they emphasised that it would be sufficient if students became more aware of the problems afterwards.

To sum up, the Mars Media Academy is hired to solve problems surrounding digital media use, online participation, and dis-

information in one-off meetings that last for two to six hours; it is expected that students will gain more awareness about risks and exercise greater caution in their media activities.

"Product Design": Good practice and research insights
Products and services must be designed as such that not only the needs of the clients are met but also the social missions that define the social enterprise. Good practices in the field provide useful references. In addition, as a media researcher, I believe that media literacy endeavours should be informed by scholarly discussion and empirical studies. Theory and practice co-evolve in the development of our educational products.

Good practice
In a recent mapping exercise and literature review on media literacy in the United Kingdom (DCMS, 2021), good practices were said to share four characteristics. First, a sustained approach, meaning one with more frequency, is preferred over a one-off approach; second, it should be a flexible approach that caters to the needs of different groups of people; third, skills should be stressed instead of awareness; and, finally, it should involve active audience participation.

As discussed previously, time is very limited, and frequency can rarely be increased in our case. A flexible approach is vital in terms of saving time and cost. In view of active audience participation, I have both advocated and practiced an experiential model of media education for years (Chu, 2009b; Chu, 2015). Active participation is always an integral part of the learning experience; this is indeed good advice for media literacy practice. However, when the report asserted that awareness did not translate to effective skills and behaviours (DCMS, 2021, p.53), it raised a point that needs more critical discussion. What is meant by awareness and skills? What kinds of awareness? What level of awareness is sufficient for someone to become media literate? Similarly, what kinds of skills? Are skills necessarily beneficial, or can they also be perceived as risks? In a workshop on disinformation for youth workers, we taught adult participants different fact-checking techniques. Since these techniques could also be used in doxing or stalking, a few participants expressed concerns about the impact of similar training if they were directly given to young people, and questioned if these skills were indeed necessary.

These questions bring to mind an inspiring study of Kruger and Dunning (1999), which explicated the dual burden of being "unskilled and unaware of it." Their study explained how people's incompetence also made them unaware of it; similar results were observed in later studies about information literacy (Mahmood, 2016). Kruger and Dunning (1999) also identified that the problems can be addressed with training in metacognition, metamemory, meta comprehension, and metacogni-

tive skills. They suggested that awareness and skills are indeed closely intertwined. The idea of metacognition is particularly illuminating here. The cognitive ability to think on a wider scale and beyond is undoubtedly also a form of awareness (Flavell, 1976). Awareness matters in media literacy education. The question is: when time is so limited, what kinds of awareness should be cultivated first and foremost?

Research insights
The rich and varied literature in media studies have provided many insights regarding the question of awareness. For example, in view of the use of digital media, scholars have long since asked if children should be perceived as potential victims or resourceful participants (Starksrud & Livingstone, 2009), or whether children are digital natives or naive experts (Ni Bhroin & Rehder, 2018). These questions contradict popular references to the digital generation, net generation, or Google generation, which assume that younger people naturally possess the knowledge and skills, or simply the awareness, to navigate in the digital media environment. Indeed, digital familiarity is by no means equivalent to information literacy (Mahmood, 2016; Hargittai, 2010). Ni Bhroin and Rehder (2018), in their study of Norwegian children, ascertained that there was a lack of holistic understanding of the risks and opportunities with the use of the Internet. As argued by Starksrud and Livingstone (2009), a risk-free internet was an illusion and hence attention should be paid to children's risk avoidance and their online coping strategies. These in turn depended on how they perceived risks in the first place. It is inevitable to go back to the first question: what risks are they aware of? Are they competent enough to be aware of their incompetence?

Similarly, studies probing into the changing nature of participation in the networked media environment have inspired how we should address the problem of "social media and online participation." "Participation" has often been celebrated as a form of civic engagement, yet recent studies have noted emergent trends in passive participation and even non-participation (O'Toole et al., 2003; Hayes et al., 2006; Carpentier, 2009; Neves et al., 2015; Casemajor et al., 2015). The rise of social media and its use in social activism have further raised questions about the forms of civic participation a society deems worthy. A report found that 18% of teenagers aged between 12 and 15 had used social media to support social causes, compared to 12% in 2018. Actions included sharing, commenting on posts, and signing online petitions. In the same survey, however, half of teenagers in the aforementioned age group said that they were uncertain about what is and what is not acceptable on social media (Ofcom, 2019). The mixed findings suggested that despite technological affordances for a participatory culture, the participation gap is still evident. Recent studies have discussed how trust and doubt shape social media experience (Haider & Sundin, 2020), while ethical media competence

was found to be a protective factor in reducing cyberbullying (Müller et al., 2014). Instead of seeing participation as inherently desirable, these studies urge educators to recognise its diverse forms and consider what motivates and promotes meaningful and ethical participation.

Likewise, regarding the prevalent "fake news problem", insightful discussion has stressed how it is one of the symptoms in the changing information ecosystem (Schudson & Zelizer, 2017), and how it reflects changing practices in the production, circulation, and consumption of news (Hermida, 2011), the growing prominence of social media platforms (Bode & Vraga, 2015), and the rising importance of "the economy of emotions" (Bakir & McStay, 2018), etc. In this sense, fake news can hardly be addressed without one also being aware of other factors. Again, it demands a holistic understanding of the production, or *prosumption*, of information.

These scholarly discussions do not necessarily focus on the field of media literacy. The empirical findings and theoretical perspectives nonetheless inform media literacy educators of the central debates and the latest trends. They also echo the key concerns raised by our clients. Like awareness and skills, theory and practice are not two separate entities but co-evolve and enrich one another. The "product design" has been informed by both good practice and research insights.

Three design elements
The Mars Media Academy has designed several regular programmes that aim to cultivate some "metacognition" with a one-off approach. It seems that a holistic understanding of anything is unlikely to be achieved in little time. Our experience indicates otherwise. In this section, we will examine how three key elements underlying various programmes contribute to an enhanced awareness of the media environment.

Historical perspective
A divide between old and new media is often implied in debates centring on "digital natives" and "digital generation". Nevertheless, as Natale (2016) vividly argued, there is no old media because the media is constantly changing, and new media is bound to be a relational concept. A holistic understanding, in this case, is about recognising both continuities and changes in media development. A historical perspective is purposefully built into our programmes so that participants, predominantly secondary school students, can look beyond their present media world and identify similarities and differences in communication at different times.

"The Earth in a Blink" is a two-hour workshop emphasising the history of communication technologies. It is divided into three parts. In the first part, participants are asked to get a pen and paper ready as they will need to jot down information from a presentation. The 30-minute

presentation is composed of around 70 slides. The first slide shows 40,000-year-old cave paintings. Moving on, the second slide shows artifacts used to record thoughts and numbers in ancient times, followed by slides on the invention of writing, printing, telegraph, the telephone, radio, film, television, the internet, etc. Major social media platforms and applications are also introduced. The year in which all inventions is highlighted. It is a fast-paced presentation of "historical facts" which are relatively plain and straightforward. Some explanations and storytelling are given in the earlier part of the presentation but eventually only years and inventions are mentioned toward the latter part with accelerating speed. This arrangement compels participants to focus on the content as they know that the information will be useful for the upcoming tasks. The presentation ends with different social media applications over the years, from Instagram to TikTok.

In the second part, participants are asked to study what they have jotted down in their notes. Working first on their own and later in group discussions in the following 30 minutes, participants will organise a timeline and identify major patterns as reflected in it. There are certainly variations in the content presented. Overall, however, there are always a few participants who can pinpoint the characteristics of the timeline. It is noted that the pace of development was much faster in recent decades. Some observe the growing importance of visual images, while some see how connectivity increases with social media platforms. With several leading questions, for example, "what kinds of problems do different media solve in different times", participants are encouraged to "think like our ancestors" and imagine what uses they will make out of various communication tools. The discussion normally goes on for up to 30 minutes. Surprisingly, there is always someone who manages to summarise this remarkable pattern for the whole class: technologies help human beings to overcome barriers in communication through changing time and space.

In the remaining 30 minutes, participants are given drawing paper. They can draw or write about how they envision the next major invention or breakthrough in communication. It is often fun filled with lots of creative ideas about the future, while also thought-provoking at times when they begin to share their worries and exhaustion about the dominance of media in their everyday lives.

The workshop does not impart "designated answers" or any "textbook knowledge". It is not a history lesson but is designed as such so that participants are invited to take a fresh look at media, with considerations of the past, present, and future.

Born in the digital age, digital natives can indeed be naive about what happened before their time. This design principle aims to cultivate a sense of time, with comparisons of the "then" and "now".

The historical perspective is also incorporated in talks and workshops about "fake news". While fact-checking skills are often the key selling point, an overview of how news and newspapers first emerged in history and how they developed is given right from the beginning. With just a historical background, it gives participants a better orientation to comprehend the impact of self-media on news production.

Ethical considerations

Early media literacy education was characterised by a protectionist approach. In a recent study by De Leyn et al. (2022), it was found that teenagers who had encountered media literacy initiatives in schools still shared the risk discourse. Teenagers were taught about online risks and were introduced to e-safety measures when there were cases of cyberbullying in schools. They also received informal advice about what not to post on social media, in addition to being told victimisation stories on social media. In view of the uncertainties about digital footprints, some would rather take "a pedagogy of regret" (Brown & Gregg, 2012) to avoid unforeseeable troubles. The problem is risks are not only plentiful but also increasingly unpredictable in a networked media environment. As Staksrud and Livingstone (2009) argued, there should be a balance between tolerable levels of risks and desirable freedoms of opportunity, and that children's resilience needs to be developed.

The Mars Media Academy shares this view about the balance between risks and opportunities. We believe that the abilities to make ethical considerations are most crucial and relevant in developing resilience in a risky environment. Ethics defies simple definitions but for the sake of discussion, we take it as the deliberative process of differentiating right from wrong, or vice versa. In our workshops on social media participation and fake news, we intentionally create scenarios that invite participants to exercise judgements regarding appropriate and inappropriate behaviours. We ask participants to put themselves in different roles and examine their concerns, explain dilemmas, and discuss resolutions for instances such as cyberbullying and conflicts in forums, among others.

In a workshop on social media etiquette, we invited participants to describe questionable and objectionable behaviours they have witnessed online by drawing them in four comic strips. Their drawings presented familiar scenarios for group discussion. Participants offered varied interpretations about what happened and why it was problematic. They took turns to comment on the wrongdoings and shared what they would do if they were present. Again, there were no "correct" answers to these questions. However, participants could elaborate on how they defined "right" and "wrong". Consensus was rare but the discussion alone allowed participants to listen to the views of other people who are, contrary to anonymous Internet users, "real people." Ethical considerations are therefore not limited to value judgements but also an appreciation of respect and sociality in communication.

In fake news workshops, debunking skills are often prioritised. To make such skills work, however, one needs to first care about what is "true" or "false." Why should one value truth in a world filled with falsehood? We prepare abundant examples of disinformation for analysis; without exception, we always return to the question "what's wrong with it?" This question emphasises how a fabricated story could make an impact on society. What is right? What is wrong? Why are they so? These questions are integral to the acquisition of skills because without ethical considerations, the same skillsets can easily be turned around and used in the production of fake news instead.

Mindful approach
We adopt a mindful approach as a concluding note in most of our programmes. We use mindfulness as a running thread in "Digital Detox". The Digital Detox is a six-hour day activity in which participants go through different tasks about digital and social media. The day begins with participants surrendering their mobile devices which will be locked up for the rest of the day. After bidding farewell to their phones, participants are asked to fill in a questionnaire about their media habits. The questions are designed not for data collection but are a reflection of one's media use. It marks the beginning of the mindful journey.

In between tasks, a mindful lunch is organised. Participants keep a significant distance from others while eating their lunch. Silence is required. Participants are reminded to eat slowly and mindfully. Afterwards, they are given time to describe in detail what they have eaten. Unlike posting on social media, they need to write it down on paper. In the debriefing that follows, some participants can hardly recall what they have eaten, while some give minute details. The difference makes one aware of the benefit of being mindful as some pay far greater attention to detail.

Before the end of the day's programme, and before the reunion with their phones, participants follow a guided meditation that lasts for up to 20 minutes. The teacher in charge prompts the young participants to calm their mind and try to achieve some moments of inner peace. The joy of solitude, or getting along with oneself, is a feeling shared by many participants in the debriefing that follows. This meditation has also been practiced before the end of talks and workshops, although it is much shorter in duration.

The call for mindfulness is a response to the overload of information and entertainment in our everyday lives. Attention spans are getting shorter. Information fatigue is often related to exhaustion and increasing apathy. As discussed previously, our clients were most concerned with three problems: the excessive use of the Internet, risky online participation, and fake news. A mindful approach addresses each of these problems with a clear message. By taking

away mobile devices, participants are invited to experience a day without distraction from the Internet. The solitary lunch encourages one to withdraw from social participation for a while and spend time with oneself. Together with the concluding meditation, these mindful exercises encourage one to maintain a critical distance from the ubiquitous media. From a distance, we hope to sow the seeds of healthy scepticism, especially when a participatory culture is much celebrated.

Lessons for media literacy

Owing to constraints in time and space, most of the details of our products are left out in the present discussion. Nonetheless, the three elements have best summarised the valuable experience of running this social enterprise. On the one hand, workshops have met clients' expectations as a one-off activity with an emphasis on awareness building. On the other hand, they are aligned with the missions of the social enterprise to design programmes for children and youth, which adhere to core principles in media literacy while generating sufficient interest and attention for both the fee-paying clients and the actual participants.

Since its earliest days, media literacy has faced recurring difficulties. The "why" of media literacy has long been established, yet a consensus is yet to be reached regarding the "what" and "how". Problems abound. It lacks time, nor does it possess a clear body of knowledge. Furthermore, content and skills keep changing when the media are also undergoing tremendous changes. Attitudes and values matter, yet it is challenging to teach these subject matters when we also value the media experiences of students and try to avoid a top-down approach. Assessment and evaluation further complicate the scenario. It has been difficult to develop credible measurement tools to evaluate how media literacy initiatives perform. Without solid evidence, there are doubts about the use and value of media literacy.

With all these existing problems in mind, this ethnographic study focuses on how funding affects the assessment of problems and the thought processes underlying programme designs. As a media education enthusiast, I have had diverse and rich experiences in partnering with schools in the experimentation of different programmes; I was not surprised to run into recurrent issues. Nonetheless, when my role was changed from a voluntary university teacher to a founder of a social enterprise, I observed that the pressure to secure enough funding did make me asking a core question: what sells? McDougall and Potter (2015) have noted that debates have long centred on the "nouns" of the curriculum but not the "verbs" of pedagogy. In the case of the Mars Media Academy, the "verbs" were driven by the imminent need to find business. The self-funding model has compelled us to analyse the problems carefully and to improvise in various situations. Although these practices should also apply in cases when they are funded by public money, the four-year fieldwork has provided a

rare opportunity to frame schools and youth organizations as "clients". Several lessons have emerged in this entrepreneurial journey.

Firstly, time will always be lacking for media literacy. Most people will agree that it is important to understand the media, but few are ready to invest substantial time in this. We are competing with a great many problems in the world. It is even harder to compete with other "problems" when the "solutions" are not free of charge. Second, we have to be versatile in time, approach, and focus in designing the "products". Here, a key lesson is to "repackage" the immediate problems of the clients and connect them to the wider phenomena. By doing so, the clients' problems are situated within a rich research tradition and existing practices, where media studies and media literacy practices are interdependent. Finally, awareness and skills are mutually enriching. Awareness is not lower order thinking. Rather, an awareness of history, ethics, and individual well-being covers knowledge, values, and attitudes. If we could cultivate an awareness of these attributes as a starting point, we might bring more attention and interest to media literacy.

Conclusion

This article reviews the experience of a social enterprise specialising in media and information literacy. It describes the characteristics of this atypical business, revisits the expectations of clients, and discusses how products are designed and implemented. It discovered that three elements work consistently well to convince clients to invest in both time and money, to educate children and youth on media awareness, and to serve the social missions of the social enterprise.

In reality, the journey has been much rockier and messier. Knowledge transfer initiatives are increasingly common and popular for academics to effect changes in the world. While there is little doubt that certain knowledge can be turned into profitable products and services, the present case has suggested otherwise. Media literacy is not considered a daily necessity, nor an innovation that needs to be paid for in Hong Kong. Even when it is funded by governments or charity organisations, it is not easy to recruit target participants without the consent and support of their guardians. It becomes more difficult if such learning experiences have to be paid for. This case raises a crucial question about the nature of media literacy. Is this mainly for individual empowerment or is this for the public good? If it is widely perceived to be the former, perhaps it can still achieve financial sustainability through individual contributions. If it is the latter, the responsibility will be shifted to public funding organisations. If a consensus can be reached on that matter, viable funding models should be developed accordingly.

The knowledge transfer initiative as reported here has not led to a successful enterprise in monetary terms. The case nonetheless invites educators to consider this question: What sells to both the "clients" and

the target groups, in our case, children and youth? Given that children and youth rarely have the chance to decide "what to buy", the ones who can afford to pay will largely shape and determine the characteristics of the education programmes. How do they make the decisions? In addition to considerations for time and money, it will certainly make a difference if they are truly convinced of the value and benefits of media literacy education in the first place. This will remain a major challenge for practitioners with or without commercial pressures.

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