Exploring International Media and Information Literacy Initiatives: Insights From DW Akademie's MIL Model

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Media and Information Literacy (MIL) is one of the most important topics in today's mediatized world. Under the leadership of United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), many international organizations in the world, as foreign donors, annually announce many projects and grants for the promotion and development of the field of MIL in the countries of the world. One of the main actors of this movement is DW Akademie with different media and MIL projects several countries of the world. This research paper delves into the role of DW Akademie's MIL model in shaping a media-savvy generation. The study explores the theoretical underpinnings and practical applications of Deutsche Welle (DW) Akademie's MIL model, analysing its effectiveness in fostering media literacy skills. The research employs a multi-faceted approach, incorporating case studies to assess the model's impact across diverse demographics. The paper also considers the model's alignment with global educational policies and proposes recommendations for its integration into broader frameworks. By investigating DW Akademie's MIL model, this research contributes to the ongoing discourse on media literacy education, providing valuable insights for educators, policymakers, and researchers. The findings offer a nuanced understanding of the model's position in cultivating a media-savvy generation poised to navigate the complexities of the information age.

Keywords: Media and Information Literacy (MIL), DW Akademie international projects, a strategic model, MIL personae, media literacy skills

Introduction

The evolution of competency research has revealed that media competences, information literacy, and media education have developed independently over time. The term "media education" was initially introduced in 1960, while "information literacy" came into existence in 1974. However, these concepts have gradually merged over the past decade to form a consolidated approach. United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) played a primary role in promoting this integrated approach by introducing the concept of Media and Information Literacy (MIL) for the first time (Kukier, 2020, p. 96).

As Marshall McLuhan famously remarked: "The medium is the message" and "We shape our tools, and thereafter, our tools shape us" (Euchner, 2016, p. 9). Indeed, the mediums through which information is disseminated play a fundamental role in shaping public perceptions and understanding. Through initiatives such as collaborative online platforms for fact-checking and digital literacy workshops in schools, some international

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donor organizations in the field of MIL, like UNESCO, European Union (EU), Internews, etc., are actively engaging with McLuhan's notion, empowering individuals to critically assess the messages conveyed through various media channels.

Among these international organizations, who are implementing several MIL projects and grants worldwide, Deutsche Welle Akademie is also one of the takeholders, which is acting on such a global scale and contributing to the development of MIL in many countries.

UNESCO advocates for the advancement of media and information literacy, empowering individuals to exercise discernment in their decision-making. The organization places a special emphasis on strengthening the proficiencies of policymakers, educators, media practitioners, youth groups, and marginalized communities in this domain, fostering member states' creation of comprehensive national policies and strategies regarding Media and Information Literacy (UNESCO, 2021).

The aim of this research paper is to investigate the contribution of international Media and Information Literacy (MIL) initiatives to the cultivation of a media-savvy generation on a global scale, with a specific focus on understanding the insights derived from DW Akademie's MIL Model.

Research questions are as follows:

RQ1. How does DW Akademie's website portray and interpret the significance of Media and Information Literacy as a hot topic in today's global landscape?

RQ2. What are the core components and methodologies of DW Akademie's MIL Model?

RQ3. What innovative strategies and practices are employed by DW Akademie and other stakeholders to advance Media and Information Literacy on a global scale?

RQ5. What are the key challenges faced in implementing and scaling up international MIL initiatives, and how can these challenges be addressed?

RQ6. What are the implications of the findings for policymakers, educators, and stakeholders involved in promoting media literacy worldwide?

Literature Review

Media and Information Literacy (MIL) initiatives have gained significant attention in response to the challenges of navigating a complex media landscape. UNESCO (Grizzle et al., 2013) emphasizes the potential of MIL programs to empower citizens and enhance democratic participation by involving them in the creative production of media and information content. This approach equips individuals with the knowledge, attitudes, and skills to critically engage with media and other information providers (p. 26).

However, for MIL to have a meaningful impact on education, it must be valued, articulated, and taught in ways that are consistent, replicable, measurable, and scalable globally, as highlighted by Jolls and Wilson (2014).

The UNESCO Institute for Information Technologies in Education (The UNESCO IITE) Unit for Digital Pedagogy and Learning Materials serves as a foundational platform for organizing MIL projects, grants, and training courses by various international organizations (UNESCO, 2024). Furthermore, Gul et al. (2020) stress the profound implications of MIL in safeguarding democratic values and promoting freedom of expression. The authors noted that MIL plays a significant role in raising awareness of basic human rights and serves as a cornerstone of the universal declaration of freedom. Over the past decade, MIL has become an integral component of the education sector, with courses being taught across Europe, Asia, and America, not only at the primary and secondary levels but also deeply ingrained in higher education systems (p. 81).

Empirical studies, such as those by Lewis and Jhally (1998), have demonstrated the positive impact of MIL interventions on enhancing individuals' media literacy skills. They argue that media literacy aims to cultivate sophisticated citizens rather than just sophisticated consumers, thereby extending democracy to the realm where it is increasingly scripted and defined.

Moreover, the European Union has acknowledged the potential of MIL initiatives, calling for every member country to report annually on media literacy programs and activities (Livingston & Wang, 2013, p. 166). This recognition underscores the growing importance of MIL in addressing the challenges posed by the modern media landscape and its significant role in promoting democratic values and critical thinking skills.

DW Academy is also active in promoting MIL in many countries of the world as other stakeholders in the international arena. DW Academy's MIL projects have been researched by the organization's specialists and trainers in previous years, and the results were published on the DW website in various formats (Reineck & Lublinski, 2015; Nitsche, 2020; Port, 2020; Kleinert & Corlateanu, 2020).

Donation activities in the field of MIL at DW Akademie have been carried out both theoretically and practically by organization's MIL experts and specialists for several years. Today, the Academy has its own experience in organizing and conducting training courses in the field, and they were covered by various publications.

Considering these insights, the present study seeks to contribute to the existing literature by examining the specific contributions of international MIL initiatives, particularly DW Akademie's MIL Model, in cultivating a media-savvy generation worldwide.

Materials and Methods

The methodology employed in this study was guided by the instructions of three prominent MIL experts within the organization and comprised the following key components: researcher observations, case studies, analysis of guidebooks written by DW Akademie's MIL experts, review of web resources and literature in the field.

Researcher actively engaged in MIL initiatives conducted on-the-ground observations to assess the implementation and effectiveness of DW Akademie's MIL Model in diverse cultural and educational settings. Observations encompassed learning outcomes and the integration of MIL principles into educational curricula. According to P. A. Adler and P. Adler (1994), observation is "the fundamental base of all research methods" (p. 389).

The research paper draws upon the methods outlined in the book *Media Literacy and Media Education Research Methods: A Handbook* edited by Pierre Fastrez and Normand Landry (2023) to ensure a rigorous and systematic approach to data collection and analysis. By leveraging the insights and methodologies presented in this handbook, the study aims to adhere to establish research practices and contribute to the growing body of literature on media literacy and education.

The research paper employs the case study method to provide in-depth analysis and contextual understanding of the implementation and impact of DW Akademie's MIL Model across diverse cultural and educational settings worldwide. Through detailed examination of specific cases, this approach allows for nuanced insights into the effectiveness and challenges of international media and information literacy initiatives in fostering a media-savvy generation.

DW Akademie's MIL experts developed comprehensive guidebooks outlining methodologies, best practices, and assessment frameworks for implementing MIL programs. These guidebooks were analyzed to identify key themes, methodologies, and theoretical underpinnings guiding MIL initiatives across different regions and contexts.

A thorough review of literature pertaining to MIL initiatives, media literacy theories, and educational practices was conducted by MIL experts associated with DW Akademie. This encompassed scholarly articles, reports, case studies, and policy documents to contextualize the significance and impact of MIL programs on cultivating media literacy skills among diverse populations.

By triangulating researcher observations, case studies and analysis of guidebooks, literature review, this study aims to provide comprehensive insights into the role of international MIL initiatives, particularly DW Akademie's MIL Model, in nurturing a media-savvy generation worldwide.

Analysis and Results

"Why MIL Is the Hot Topic?": Interpretations in DW Akademy's Website Materials

To recognize a topic or problem as important, to establish a foundation for various projects, and to allocate grants and conduct trainings, first, it is necessary to understand that the field is important for the current era. Second, it should be justified that the information is important to the level of development of a country, region, or globally.

On the DW Akademie website, MIL is elucidated as follows:

> Media and Information Literacy (MIL) is defined as the ability to access, analyze, create and reflect on media. It is a prerequisite for citizens to claim their rights to freedom of information and expression. DW Akademie creates innovative projects that promote these rights and empower people to understand and use media responsibly. Find out more about our MIL activities around the world. (DW Akademie, 2024)

In another article this definition was further clarified and completed: "MIL is a prerequisite for freedom of expression, access to information and democratic societies" (DW Akademie, 2022).

Echoing the sentiments of DW Akademie, the proficient utilization of media, coupled with responsible creation, emboldens individuals to amplify their voices and actively engage in societal dialogues. Such proficiency is paramount for citizens to actualize their inherent human right to freedom of expression, serving as a catalyst for inclusive participation in democratic processes (DW Akademie, 2022).

In the article entitled "MIL—A Global Movement!" Roslyn Kratochvil Moore (2018) tried to answer the question: "Why Media and Information Literacy is the hot topic?" According to the author, MIL is a field that has been in existence since the 1970s. However, it is currently experiencing rapid growth and has gained international institutional support. The global impact of MIL is extensive, palpable, and electrifying. There are significant developments taking place within the field, which professionals can sense. What was once a niche group of academics, educators, and librarians has now expanded to include development experts, technologists, social media professionals, journalists, and activists—creating a diverse movement with increasing international recognition and value. The evolution of this field is moving at an accelerated pace, reaching individuals working on MIL-related projects worldwide who were previously unaware of its importance. Nadine Gogu (Independent Center—Moldova), a member of Media and Information Literacy Expert Network (MILEN), highlights that "media literacy continues to be dynamic as we witness more people every year who are capable of critically analyzing media content" (Moore, 2018).

In the manual entitled "The Next Generation of Media and Information Literacy" Nitsche (2020) emphasizes the importance of fostering individuals' ability to navigate cyberspace, comprehend and authenticate information, generate their own content, and combat abuses. This process not only serves as a powerful tool for addressing contemporary societal issues but also empowers citizens to critically analyze media and information. However, this approach suffices in confronting one of society's most pressing concerns—digital rights violations.

Port (2020) defines the role of MIL as follows: Regardless of whether you reside in rural Moldova, the Palestinian Territories or on the outskirts of Windhoek—Namibia's capital city—your eagerness to connect and participate through media platforms remains universal. Yet upon immersing oneself into the flow of media streams, challenges such as misinformation/disinformation, propaganda dissemination, hate speech proliferation, digital security breaches and cyberbullying become all too apparent.

The issue explores the prominence of Media and Information Literacy (MIL) and its significance, focusing on interpretations found in DW Akademy website materials. It delves into the reasons behind MIL being a hot topic, examining the evolving media landscape and the increasing importance of critical thinking skills to navigate information in the digital age. The materials from DW Akademy likely provide insights into the role of media literacy in fostering a well-informed and discerning society.

In the following table (Table 1) various perspectives by DW specialists were collected from different publications about MIL's significance in modern society.

Table 1

MIL Definitions by DW Akademie MIL Experts (Source: Author's Own Processing)

Definitions by Reineck & Lublinski (2015):	**Definitions given by Nitsche (2020):**
"MIL is a composite set of knowledge, skills, and attitudes that enables and empowers citizens to competently and critically engage with media and information, in order for them to increase their individual autonomy and collective solidarity in society". "MIL, defined as the ability to access, analyze, and create media, is a prerequisite for citizens to realize their rights to freedom of information and expression". "It is assumed that wide-scale MIL makes citizens expect that media and information sources will deliver content of technical, ethical and professional quality, thus acting as a catalyst for improvements in journalistic reporting, editorial organization and the media system as a whole".	"Media and Information Literacy (MIL) comes with a great promise: It is about citizens learning how to navigate cyberspace, access news, analyze what information is true or false, and reflect on what they do online and how they can be a role model for others". "MIL is about ensuring that citizens possess the skills to access, understand and use the internet and a variety of media". "It is about creatively engaging with current media and societal issues, and actively participating in creating and protecting a public sphere which is respectful, pluralistic and engaged". "MIL is about protecting young people from cyberbullying and its traumas". "It is about making aware users from going to jail for distributing false information". "MIL is important to ensure that young people can take their future into their own hands and raise their voice against injustices, even when the challenges they face seem overwhelming". "It is essential that MIL also focuses on the dark side of technology and open citizens' eyes to how people misuse technologies and how they unashamedly commit rights violations without fear of consequences. MIL should offer guidance on what we can do about this". "MIL is important to safeguard the rights of citizens, young people, those who navigate our media and information ecosystem and internet users".
Definitions by Ruiz (2020): "Media and Information Literacy (MIL) is a key set of skills essential for protecting against online threats". "MIL is an essential tool to protect people from cyberbullying but also to prevent people from taking part in it or to prevent our children from doing so".	

These views and definitions determine the importance of DW Academy's MIL projects in various regions as well. In addition, it shows their importance in the development of MIL in different societies.

Innovative Ways of Promoting MIL

The theoretical views and methodological approaches put forward by DW Akademie trainers and researchers in educating the young generation at the level of media competence are the product of continuous observations of the organization in different regions of the world, organized trainings and allocated grants, implementation of projects, lessons learned from them and experiences.

In the process of monitoring the results of the grants and projects allocated by the Akademie, some of them are highlighted today as effective experiences in the development of media competent young people. According to their nature, these projects can be called "innovative methods of promoting MIL with different projects in various countries":

Working in cooperation with parents to improve children's media information literacy. The project "A MIL Family Quiz", which served to determine "families how can better understand each other's use of the media" and was created by DW Akademie's partners in Moldova and Ukraine, is an example of a project conducted in such a hybrid format.

During the initial offline international events held in Chisinau, Moldova at the onset of 2020, *Diversitate*— a Moldovan Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) and *Insha Osvita*—a Ukrainian NGO collaborated to devise and present an innovative concept known as Family Quiz. While parents engage in watching television programs or reading news on their smartphones, children tend to follow their friends on social media platforms like Instagram and TikTok while creating content for amusement purposes. The primary objective of this quiz is to facilitate families' better understanding of how different generations utilize various forms of media (Kleinert & Corlateanu, 2020).

MIL training sessions may have been conducted across diverse age groups worldwide; however, it is not always feasible to involve all family members under one specific topic during such sessions, thus making the above-mentioned event unique in its approach towards bridging that gap.

Another important point is that during the COVID-19 pandemic, the organizers of this project continued to innovate a virtual adaptation of the Family Quiz which has been developed, enabling families to delve into various media and information literacy topics from within their own homes. Each registered family forms a team with a designated captain, who collectively responds to questions posed by the moderator regarding media utilization, disinformation dissemination, social networking, and content generation. The leading team is determined by speed in answering; furthermore, this new rendition also includes creative assignments for added interaction and amusement. The entire quiz will be available via Twitch's streaming service. This online game is designed to initiate a playful dialogue between young people and their parents about diverse media usage patterns. It serves as an opportunity for mutual learning and reflection on distinct media habits, knowledge bases and experiences (Kleinert & Corlateanu, 2020).

As a successful aspect of this project, it should be noted that parents and children have been organized and encouraged to work together. In addition, if young people demonstrate the knowledge and skills they have acquired in the field of MIL in the environment of their families on different social platforms in the family environment, the range of effectiveness of such events will expand even more.

Competing for the best media education concept. The Independent Journalism Centre (IJC) and DW Akademie collaborated to organize the project "A Special Kind of Learning: Schools Compete for Best Media

Education Concept". Since 2020, MIL was integrated into the curricula of all the three school systems in Moldova, including elementary, middle, and high schools; in addition to supporting IJC's advocacy efforts, DW Akademie provided guidance on developing curricula and textbooks for these school systems.

The implementation process involved recognizing three schools that demonstrated exceptional teaching concepts for MIL through their innovative practices. These included a dance flash mob, an establishing a young journalists club, and the creation of a TV shows. The conception and execution phases were planned six months in advance with teachers presenting students' projects using images and videos during the competition.

The success of this MIL initiative is evidenced by its outcomes: The Ministry of Education, Culture, and Research of Moldova has pledged support for it in future years as an acknowledgment of its achievements (Corlateanu, 2021).

It should be noted that grants and contests for teaching MIL in innovative methods in educational institutions are also found in the practice of other international stakeholders. The uniqueness of this event is that it teaches students to be creative in the field of media, along with learning. While finding media products, sorting them and forming critical thinking in their reception is a fundamental part of MIL competencies; creating it directly is the last step.

MIL flashcards. Now, in most countries, young people spend more time on platforms such as Tik-Tok, Snapchat, and Instagram than reading newspapers and books, and it must be said that they get a lot of information and experience from there. However, they watch short animations, video products, and infographics rather than text messages. This shows that, visualization has become the most effective method of information transfer for today's youth.

Utilizing visualization and personification proves invaluable for conveying complex concepts. In 2020, DW Akademie collaborated with Namibian illustrator Karel Swanepoel to introduce "MIL Heroes", characters rooted in the five MIL competencies*:* access, analyze, create, reflect, and act. These characters facilitate navigating the complex media landscape and enable MIL practitioners worldwide to teach these competencies by making them visually tangible. By contextualizing the heroes for the Mexican setting through an invitation from the Mexican MIL Network, the MIL Heroes made their debut at a MIL Hackathon. Supported by DW Akademie, UNESCO Mexico, and the National Electoral Institute, the heroes have since become symbols inspiring Mexican youth to embrace MIL competencies. These heroes, represented through flashcards, embody DW Akademie's MIL teaching approach, serving as superheroes who exemplify responsible media consumption and production. The concept of the five heroes holds promising potential, offering a figurative and impressive representation through comics or animation.

Using influencers and social networks to enhance media information literacy level of young people. Today, MIL field is included in the curriculum of schools of most countries as a separate or additional subject. It follows that the first concepts of the field of MIL are already familiar to them. Moreover, today's youth is a generation that is growing up surrounded by digital technologies.

In the article "In Serbia, Influencers Become MIL Teachers", author Klaus Dahmann (2020) discusses the utilization of influencers and social networks in Serbia to enhance Media and Information Literacy (MIL) among young people. It highlights the prevalence of sensationalized and misleading content in Serbian media, particularly in tabloids and on social media platforms. The project, spearheaded by DW-Akademie and its partners, aims to address this issue by turning influencers into MIL educators.

The author noted the introduction of "Language, Media, and Culture" as an elective subject for secondary schools (9th to 12th grade). Despite this, primary school children are already exposed to and engage with media, encountering issues like hate speech, cyberbullying, and fake news. Recognizing this, involving influencers in training, especially in Serbia, has proven effective. DW Akademie collaborates with journalists and YouTubers on the "Young Media" project, training over 30 MIL trainers in the past three years, including 12 influencers. These trainers, reaching students, teachers, and young YouTubers facilitate discussions on media ethics, handling hate speech, and addressing privacy attacks online. In 2019, DW Akademie supported eight YouTubers in creating music clips opposing hate speech and cyberbullying, garnering over three million clicks each. The merits of such initiatives include influencers serving as credible authorities and potential catalysts for change in media content, fostering a more conscious approach to their work and the broader media landscape.

The urgent need for MIL is underscored by the prevalence of hate speech, cyberbullying, and fake news, which affect children from a young age. Traditional methods of teaching MIL through schools alone are insufficient, necessitating the involvement of media professionals such as journalists and influencers. These figures possess specialist knowledge and credibility among young people, making them effective agents for promoting media literacy.

Through the "Young Media" project, DW Akademie collaborates with journalists and YouTubers to train MIL educators, including influencers. These trainers engage students, teachers, and fellow YouTubers in discussions on media ethics, hate speech, and online privacy. Successful initiatives, such as music clips addressing hate speech and cyberbullying, have garnered millions of views and sparked broader social discussions.

The collaborative effort between teachers, NGOs, media associations, journalists, and influencers demonstrates the potential for innovative approaches to MIL. By leveraging influencers' reach and credibility, alongside traditional educational channels, Serbia aims to empower young people with the critical thinking skills necessary to navigate today's media landscape effectively.

The positive sides of such projects and trainings are as follows:

1. YouTubers, as idols for children and young people, wield substantial credibility, and their discussions on topics like cybersecurity, hate speech, or bullying carry heightened influence due to their influential status among their audience.

2. Journalists and influencers, by adopting a MIL perspective, can drive change by reflecting on their work consciously and contributing to the conscious evolution of the overall media landscape.

Discussion

A Strategic Model of DW Akademie

DW Akademie is currently undertaking projects in approximately 50 developing and emerging countries with the objective of enhancing the right to freedom of expression (DW Akademie, 2020, p. 7).

In 2015, DW Akademie developed a "Strategy Paper" entitled "Strategic Model for Media Development" based on its 50 years of experience (DW Akademie, 2015). The strategies advanced in this "Model" can serve as a basis for the organization's projects in the field of international media and information literacy.

The strategic model, which was developed by DW Akademie in conjunction with Germany's Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), aims to define development policy regarding the

promotion of freedom of expression and access to information. Moreover, this model can also serve as a guide for those seeking to establish media development programs or projects (DW Akademie, 2015).

This strategic model is not only a framework for the organization's projects in international media and information literacy but also serves as a guide for those seeking to establish media development programs or projects. At the core of DW Akademie's strategic model is a human rights-based approach, with a focus on enabling all individuals to freely inform and express themselves, in line with Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (DW Akademie, 2015).

This model identifies four principal areas of strategic action: political and legal frameworks, qualification, professionalism and economic viability within the media sector, and participation in society. Each area is important in fostering access to information and freedom of expression.

Furthermore, the strategic model integrates digital transformation as a cross-cutting issue that impacts all four key areas. This includes the need for political and legal frameworks to reflect digital realities, relevant qualifications for media professionals to understand the digital media environment, and support for the adaptation of business models to the internet age within the professional media sector. Additionally, it emphasizes the importance of enabling people to use social media and other digital platforms to participate and have their voices heard, while empowering civil society to defend privacy and human rights against government surveillance and commercial interests.

In addition, the strategic model places a strong emphasis on promoting media literacy and digital innovation, acknowledging the evolving landscape of media consumption and production. DW Akademie seeks to empower individuals and communities to critically engage with media content and harness digital tools for effective storytelling and communication.

Overall, the strategic model of DW Akademie reflects a comprehensive and dynamic approach to media development, encompassing capacity building, media literacy, advocacy, and digital innovation to support a vibrant and pluralistic media landscape worldwide.

Methods and Approaches of the DW Akademie's MIL Model

DW Akademie's MIL projects span across 29 countries worldwide and employ various approaches tailored to the local context. The organization uses a range of different approaches. These include training MIL multipliers to support non-formal education, integrating MIL into formal education systems, developing interactive media content and games, and advocating for MIL on national and international platforms. By collaborating with local partners and leveraging diverse methodologies, DW Akademie seeks to foster a culture of media literacy and digital citizenship globally.

DW Akademie's Media and Information Literacy (MIL) projects are strategically designed to address the pervasive spread of misinformation, hate speech, and online threats in today's public sphere. Through a combination of targeted initiatives and partnerships, DW Akademie aims to empower individuals with the necessary skills and knowledge to navigate the digital landscape responsibly.

According to DW Akademie, MIL is not just about accessing information but also about using it responsibly to participate in societal debates and uphold freedom of expression. The organization emphasizes the importance of equipping citizens with the ability to discern reliable information from falsehoods, thereby enabling them to make informed decisions and contribute positively to their communities.

DW Akademie's MIL approach is multifaceted and holistic, addressing both the individual and societal dimensions of media literacy. Through its projects and partnerships, the organization strives to empower individuals to critically engage with media, uphold democratic values, and contribute to positive social change.

The present inquiry is steered by DW Akademies MIL Model, encompassing its five dimensions as outlined in Figure 1:
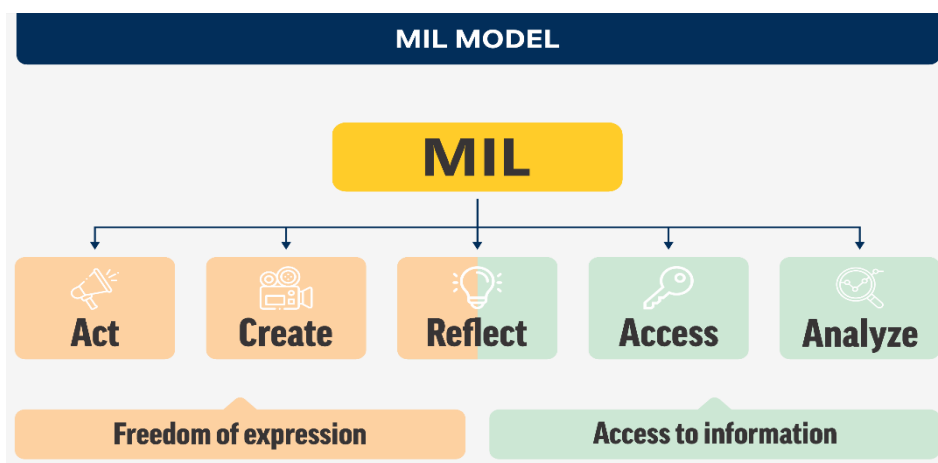

Figure 1. DW Akademie's MIL Model and its five dimensions (Source: DW Akademie, 2020).

According to DW Academies' website, for the purposes of the study, Media and Information Literacy was defined according to the five dimensions as laid out in DW Akademie's MIL Model (Table 2):

Table 2

DW Akademie's MIL Model

#	Dimension	Explanation
1.	Access	Device possession, frequency of (digital) media consumption, frequency of mobile application usage, internet connectivity, locations of (digital) media consumption, areas of interest.
2.	Analysis	Assessment of media environment, understanding social media, journalism and various forms of media genres as well as the right to freedom of speech.
3.	Reflection	Contemplation on miscommunication (hate speech, disinformation, cyberbullying, news bias and censorship), self-assessment on MIL skills and tolerance towards miscommunication (hate speech, disinformation, cyberbullying news bias and censorship).
4.	Creation	Regularity in creative activities such as photography editing or video/audio production/editing; regularity in digital practices including uploading content onto different platforms or programming-related tasks.
5.	Action	Advocacy by means of sharing information online through commenting or campaigning with the help of MIL skills acquired during the course/ program.

Source: DW Akademie, 2020.

"Five MIL Personae" Approach

Many stakeholders, NGOs, and scholars who worked over MIL projects and programs have their own measurements and approaches to verifying and improving the level of MIL. But at this point it should be noted that DW Academy formulated these criteria by summarizing several years of experience to determine the effectiveness of its projects and to set specific goals for training.

In addition, there is another breakthrough in the academy MIL model. This is to divide individuals into different groups depending on the level of MIL and offer online and offline trainings and educational materials suitable for each group.

According to Pruitt and Adlin (2006), "personas" make it easy to imagine the real people who will eventually use the product you are designing and building.

These individual profiles assist in visualizing clients throughout the product development process, with a focus on their desires and requirements. The personae are constructed using research data, specifically derived from cross-national data through cluster analysis. They inform practitioners of the strengths and weaknesses of various types of media users regarding MIL.

Reineck, Sch ürhoff, and Lublinski employed *the persona method* outlined in "Zooming in on Media and Information Literacy: A Survey-Based Typology of Young Media Users" to segment consumers within marketing practices (2019). The five personae are briefly described in table (Table 3) below:

Table 3

Classification of Five MIL Personae by D. Reineck, R. Sch ürhoff, J. Lublinski

#	Five MIL personae	Suggestion for capacity building
1.	Persona "Media and Information Literacy Novice"	From a pragmatic standpoint, these specific groups of individuals require fundamental Media and Information Literacy skills that concentrate on the basics of mass media consumption. It is imperative to encourage a critical attitude towards problematic forms of communication while providing them with opportunities to express their concerns. One significant hurdle is crafting appropriate learning materials and workshops that cater to MIL novices' limited educational background. The current resources are primarily tailored for students in schools, which may be too complex for this audience.
2.	Persona "Digital Literacy Veteran"	Regarding MIL training, Digital Literacy Veterans necessitate conventional news literacy courses. Although they do employ traditional media, it is important to encourage them to contemplate its usage. Additionally, emphasis should be given on social engagement, enabling them to produce and distribute media content aimed at instigating change.
3.	Persona "News Literacy Veteran"	MIL courses can leverage the existing knowledge base of News Literacy Veterans, who possess a comprehensive understanding of the media landscape including traditional media's societal role. However, digital literacy skills require development, encompassing technical aspects such as navigation and privacy concerns along with more critical issues like disinformation, hate speech, and filter bubbles. These phenomena must be deconstructed to address localized contexts effectively.
4.	Persona "Media and Information Literacy Intermediate"	MIL intermediates possess a firm grasp of both conventional and digital media, yet their capabilities can be enhanced. To further elevate their proficiency, advanced MIL training is required to facilitate reflection on pertinent topics such as disinformation and hate speech within the local milieu. Additionally, they must develop tactics for coping with or combatting these issues effectively.
5.	Persona "Media and Information Literacy Veteran"	Regarding MIL Veterans, it is imperative to devise novel peer-to-peer MIL training formats. Identifying and engaging these experts as mentors, multipliers and role models for the aforementioned citizens would be a logical approach to disseminate their expertise. Consequently, emphasis should be placed on fostering soft skills and refining training techniques that enable them to impart knowledge effectively.

Source: Reineck et al., 2019, pp. 1-20.

In this classification there are comments clearly aimed at increasing the MIL level of each "type" of persona. If MIL training is organized based on this criterion, understandable and useful content will be provided for the trainees, and the training will fully justify itself. Conveying the same information to participants of different levels is not always effective, as participants with high MIL knowledge waste time during the training, while trainees with relatively low MIL levels may not fully understand the training topic.

Key Challenges in Implementing and Scaling up DW Akademie's International MIL Initiatives

Implementing and scaling up international Media and Information Literacy (MIL) initiatives, such as those undertaken by DW Akademie, pose several challenges that require careful consideration and strategic planning. These challenges encompass various aspects ranging from logistical hurdles to cultural and

contextual barriers. However, addressing these challenges is essential to maximize the impact and reach of MIL programs worldwide.

One significant challenge lies in ensuring accessibility and inclusivity across diverse regions and communities. As DW Akademie aims to cultivate a media-savvy generation globally, it must navigate the complexities of language barriers, technological infrastructure disparities, and socio-economic inequalities. As highlighted by Beaunoyer, Dupéré and Guitton (2020), in the worldwide "not all are equals in terms of access to networks or connected devices, or when it comes to the skills required to navigate computerized spaces optimally". And ensuring equal access to MIL resources and training materials remains a daunting task, especially in regions with limited internet connectivity and digital literacy.

As highlighted on the United Nations Development Programme website (2024), in [some] nations, the youthful demographic continues to expand, driving up the demand for internet connectivity, digital services, and digital literacy. Nevertheless, internet accessibility remains limited, particularly in peri-urban and rural regions, leading to an unequal distribution of digital opportunities and literacy. Furthermore, traditional educational systems are struggling to adapt to the evolving demands of the workforce. With the progression of digitalization, there arises a pressing need for the acquisition of new skills, mindsets, and digital literacy. However, project-based and digital education initiatives are still largely inaccessible to a significant portion of the population, leaving many young individuals without access to formal academic training.

This situation highlights the significance of comprehensive training initiatives and programs for digital inclusion aimed at closing skill disparities and enabling individuals to proficiently utilize technology and digital resources across diverse settings. Although participants possess fundamental skills in popular communication and social networking applications, they demonstrate a lack of familiarity and proficiency with productivity and design tools. There is an acknowledgment of technology's potential for personal and professional advancement, along with a readiness to acquire new knowledge. Consequently, hands-on training sessions and educational programs concentrating on these aspects and promoting ongoing learning could potentially bolster participants' overall digital proficiency (United Nations Development Programme, 2024).

Moreover, cultural and contextual factors present unique challenges in tailoring MIL initiatives to specific regions and communities. DW Akademie must navigate cultural sensitivities, political environments, and educational systems to effectively implement MIL programs. Adapting MIL content and methodologies to resonate with diverse cultural norms and educational systems requires careful consideration and continuous dialogue with local stakeholders.

Furthermore, sustaining engagement and participation over the long term poses another challenge. As MIL initiatives strive to foster critical thinking and digital citizenship, maintaining interest and motivation among participants is essential. This requires innovative approaches and continuous evaluation of program effectiveness. Ensuring sustained engagement and active participation in MIL initiatives necessitates ongoing evaluation, feedback mechanisms, and the integration of interactive learning methods.

Implementing and scaling up international MIL initiatives, such as those led by DW Akademie, confront several challenges that necessitate strategic planning and innovative solutions. These challenges were summarized in the following table (Table 4):

Table 4

Key Challenges in Implementing and Scaling up International MIL Initiatives (Source: Author's Own Processing Based on the Research Results)

#	Challenges	Explanation
1.	Accessibility and inclusivity	Ensuring equal access to MIL resources and training materials across diverse regions and communities is a significant challenge. Disparities in technological infrastructure, internet connectivity, and digital literacy levels can hinder participation. Addressing this challenge requires efforts to provide offline resources, mobile-friendly platforms, and localized content to reach marginalized populations.
2.	Cultural sensitivities and contextual adaptation	Adapting MIL initiatives to resonate with diverse cultural norms, languages, and educational systems poses a challenge. Cultural sensitivities, political environments, and historical contexts must be carefully navigated to ensure the relevance and effectiveness of MIL programs. Strategies to address this challenge include engaging local stakeholders, conducting thorough needs assessments, and fostering cross-cultural dialogue.
3.	Sustainability and long-term engagement	Sustaining interest and participation in MIL initiatives over the long term presents a challenge. Ensuring continued engagement requires ongoing evaluation, feedback mechanisms, and the integration of interactive learning methods. Building partnerships with local organizations, educational institutions, and governments can also facilitate sustainability by embedding MIL principles into existing structures and curricula.
4.	Digital divide and technological barriers	Bridging the digital divide and overcoming technological barriers are critical challenges in implementing MIL initiatives, particularly in underserved regions. Providing access to affordable technology, internet connectivity, and digital literacy training is essential to ensure equitable participation. Collaborating with telecommunications companies, community centers, and non-profit organizations can help address this challenge.
5.	Capacity building and training	Developing a skilled workforce capable of delivering MIL programs effectively is another challenge. Providing comprehensive training for educators, community leaders, and media professionals is essential to build capacity and ensure program quality. Offering train-the-trainer workshops, online courses, and professional development opportunities can help address this challenge.

To address these challenges, DW Akademie and other stakeholders can adopt several strategies.

Firstly, fostering partnerships with local organizations, educational institutions, and governments can help facilitate the adaptation and implementation of MIL initiatives within specific contexts.

Additionally, leveraging technology to develop scalable and interactive learning platforms can enhance accessibility and engagement.

Finally, incorporating community feedback and participatory approaches into program design and evaluation can ensure relevance and sustainability.

These strategies can be summed up as following table (Table 5):

Table 5

Strategies for International Stakeholder Organizations Against Key Challenges (Source: Author's Own Processing Based on the Research Results)

Strategies for international stakeholder organizations	Foster partnerships with local organizations, governments, and international agencies to leverage resources and expertise.
	Develop scalable and adaptable MIL models that can be customized to suit different contexts and target audiences.
	Utilize innovative technologies and platforms to deliver MIL content and facilitate interactive learning experiences.
	Prioritize community engagement and participatory approaches to ensure the relevance and sustainability of MIL initiatives.
	Advocate for policy changes and investments in education and digital infrastructure to support the long-term success of MIL programs.

By addressing these challenges and implementing strategic solutions, DW Akademie can enhance the impact and reach of its international MIL initiatives, ultimately contributing to the cultivation of a media-savvy generation worldwide.

Considering all of these, while implementing and scaling up international MIL initiatives present formidable

challenges, proactive measures and collaborative efforts can mitigate these hurdles and maximize the impact of initiatives such as DW Akademie's MIL Model on cultivating a media-savvy generation worldwide.

Conclusion

DW Akademie's holistic MIL Model, with its emphasis on critical thinking, digital literacy, and ethical media consumption, emerges as an impressive contribution to media education. The innovative projects implemented by DW Academy showcase adaptability and responsiveness to diverse global contexts, addressing the evolving challenges of the digital era.

The analysis of DW Akademie's media information literacy model has revealed its comprehensive approach to fostering media literacy. By encompassing media production, media analysis, and media reflection, this model places learners in an active role, encouraging their engagement and enabling them to become more proactive in navigating the media environment.

Moreover, the examination of innovative projects executed by DW Akademie worldwide has demonstrated their efficacy in addressing the diverse challenges faced by different communities. These projects not only educate individuals on media information literacy but also leverage technology and local context to ensure maximum impact and relevance.

Therefore, based on the analysis presented in this scientific research paper, it can be concluded that DW Akademie's Media and Information Literacy initiatives hold a significant position in cultivating a media-savvy generation. By prioritizing critical thinking, responsible media consumption, and active engagement, DW Akademie's approach has proven effective in equipping individuals with the necessary skills to navigate the complex media landscape of the future. As the world evolves, the importance of media literacy cannot be understated, and research such as this contributes towards furthering our understanding of its implementation, impact, and potential for societal growth.

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