

Media Education in the Age of Convergence: Navigating Challenges and Harnessing Opportunities in Sri Lanka

Dr. Nayana Suraweera

Senior Lecturer, Department of Mass Media, University of Colombo, Colombo, Sri Lanka

Abstract: The convergence of media technologies in the digital age has revolutionized the landscape of communication and content consumption. The dawn of the digital age has brought about a profound transformation in the way we interact with information and media. As traditional boundaries between different forms of media blur and technology continue to evolve, the concept of media education has also undergone a significant shift. Media education equips individuals with the critical thinking skills necessary to navigate the complex, fast-paced, and information-rich world of media, allowing them to make informed decisions, engage with diverse perspectives, and become responsible and media-savvy citizens. With a focus on these changing pedagogical approaches, curriculum design, and skills development, this article delves into how educators can equip students with the critical thinking and digital literacy necessary to thrive in a converged media environment. This article explores the implications of media convergence on media education, analyzing the challenges and opportunities it presents, specific to the Sri Lankan education system.

Keywords: Convergence, Media education, Digital age, Technology

I. Media Education

In an era of information abundance and digital connectivity, media education has become pivotal in shaping our relationship with the world around us. Media, once confined to traditional forms of print and broadcast, now permeates every facet of our lives through digital platforms, social media, and interactive content. Media education aims to foster a deeper understanding of how media influences our perceptions, beliefs, and behaviors. In a world where information can be disseminated instantaneously and widely, media education empowers individuals to discern credible sources from misinformation, recognize bias, and navigate the complex terrain of digital media. It goes beyond technical skills, encompassing media literacy—the ability to analyze, interpret, and create media content effectively (Jenkins, 2006; Buckingham, 2003 and Hobbs, 2010).

Media education, also known as media literacy education (Buckingham, 2003 and Hobbs, 2010), refers to a process of teaching and learning that equips individuals with the skills, knowledge, and critical thinking abilities necessary to effectively navigate, analyze, create, and evaluate media content across various forms of media. It encompasses understanding the roles and impact of media in society, recognizing different media formats and their messages, interpreting the intention behind media content, and developing the capacity to engage with media content in a responsible and informed manner. Media education aims to empower individuals to become discerning consumers and thoughtful producers of media, fostering their ability to navigate the complex and rapidly changing media landscape.

Studying the subject's history made it possible to identify how national and international conventions and conferences have been held in various forms on communication and media education courses in different countries. There, the concept of media education was established as a result of the excitement from the Grunwald Declaration on Media Education (Grunwald Declaration), which published the international discourse on media education held in Germany in 1982 with the participation of nineteen (19) nations (UNESCO, 2011; UNESCO, 2009; Wilson, & Grizzle (Eds.), 2013). It was recommended to all educational institutions to start and popularize communication and media education programs for students from primary to higher education and adult education. The programs prepared to provide media education, comments on media products, how mass media can express creative impulses,

effective media use, and active participation in media programs should be included. Focusing on the entire media includes motion pictures, television, videotapes, radio, recorded music, print media, newspapers, magazines, posters, and new digital technology for all media used.

One of the fundamental goals of media education is to develop critical thinking skills. In an age where sensationalism and clickbait often dominate headlines, the ability to critically evaluate media messages becomes essential. Media education prompts individuals to question the motives behind the content, to seek diverse perspectives, and to distinguish between fact and opinion. By cultivating critical thinking, media education equips individuals with tools to make informed decisions, thereby mitigating the risks of falling victim to manipulation or misinformation. Another crucial aspect of media education is digital literacy. The digital landscape offers a myriad of platforms for content consumption and creation, but navigating this vast ecosystem requires a certain level of technological proficiency. Media education imparts digital skills that range from basic internet navigation to understanding algorithms that shape our online experiences. These skills enable individuals to engage with digital media responsibly, protect their privacy, and contribute to online conversations effectively.

II. Convergence of the technology

The basic meaning of the Latin convergence of the word is the convergence of integration. Although some scholars agree that convergence is a critical relationship published by the US Office of Technology, the study is under discussion. The three interconnected industries have illustrated how the convergence of the telecommunications industry with the development of communication technology, the newspaper industry, the computer industry, and the media convergence are building (Filder,1997). The convergence represents the integration of pre-existing communication media. This includes telecommunication, television, personal computers, and so on. This combination plays out the forms and capabilities required for technical and industry convergence (Smith, 1997). Media convergence ICT is a phenomenon that builds on the interconnectedness of computer networks and media literacy. Communication experts believe that it is a combination of computer communication and learning that digitalization has resulted in the emergence of the media court and that the Internet is popularized.

The concept of convergence according to historical information has been used as a subject of study to describe and analyze different processes. The concept of convergence, like non-academic subjects, is first analyzed with natural science. It was later introduced to the field of social and anthropology. In the definition of convergence, it is used as an analytical framework for differentiating different constituents, as well as on different subject areas. In the definition of convergence, it is used as an analytical framework for differentiating itself from the various components and as a general platform for the interrelationships of different disciplines. Convergence is a sought-after technology in every field and has been substituted for the work of the corporate media in response to large-scale changes in world history. Media convergence is a continuous process that maintains interoperability with different formats and platforms. It would be a mistake to perceive this as a restructuring that could replace traditional media. Therefore, the Media Court was forced to create correlations with various media formats and platforms that had no previous support or integration. This is because wireless technology is now able to subscribe to the subscription and control all sources.

III. Media Education in the Age of Convergence

Media convergence, the merging of various media platforms and content into a single digital entity have reshaped the landscape of communication and content consumption. It encompasses both technological convergence, where devices and platforms become multifunctional, and content convergence, where media content combines text, images, audio, and video. This convergence has given rise to a need for media education that equips individuals with the skills necessary to navigate this complex media environment. One of the key challenges in media education is keeping up with the rapid evolution of technology. In an era of constant innovation, educators must continually update their skills to effectively teach students about the latest media tools and trends (Johnson, 2019). Additionally, the digital literacy gap has become more pronounced as individuals from different age groups and backgrounds grapple with varying levels of proficiency in navigating digital media. Media education must address this gap by focusing on imparting digital literacy skills that encompass critical evaluation of online sources, understanding data privacy, and recognizing digital manipulation.

In the age of convergence, media education faces the challenge of adapting to changing media consumption patterns (Smith, 2020). With the rise of digital platforms and streaming services, audiences are no longer limited to scheduled broadcast content. This shift demands that media education emphasize the importance of discernment in content selection and the ability to critically analyze the media messages encountered. Students should be equipped

with the skills to differentiate between reliable and unreliable sources, as well as the capacity to decipher the implicit biases present in digital media.

However, amidst these challenges, media education in the age of convergence also presents numerous opportunities. Interdisciplinary approaches become crucial as media convergence blurs the lines between previously distinct fields. Incorporating insights from communication studies, technology, design, and psychology allows educators to provide a holistic understanding of the convergent media landscape. Moreover, active learning and collaboration can thrive in this era, with students utilizing converged media platforms to create and share content in diverse formats. This hands-on approach not only enhances technical skills but also fosters a deeper understanding of the challenges and potential of converged media.

Critical thinking and media literacy take center stage in the age of convergence. Media education can empower individuals to critically evaluate media messages, consider the socio-cultural context of media content, and navigate the ethical dilemmas that arise in digital media creation and consumption. With the proliferation of misinformation and the creation of echo chambers, media literacy has become a powerful tool in helping individuals make informed decisions and engage in meaningful dialogue.

IV. Media Education in Sri Lanka

Media education was introduced to Sri Lanka around 1973 as a graduate-level media education course by the University of Kelaniya. At the time of its introduction, media education in Sri Lanka was dominated by state-controlled media. Radio Ceylon (later Sri Lanka Radio Corporation) and print media were state-owned, with limited private radio and television stations available. Consequently, Sri Lankan subscribers primarily consumed news through radio broadcasts and state-controlled newspapers. Entertainment during this period relied heavily on radio dramas, local film productions, and traditional media formats. However, in the 1980s-1990s, private media began to emerge, marking a significant shift in the media landscape. Independent radio stations and newspapers started presenting different opinions, breaking the government's monopoly on information dissemination. The civil war during this period influenced media coverage, leading to a focus on political conflict and propaganda. The introduction of state-owned television in 1982, followed by private channels, expanded entertainment options for the public. Additionally, the availability of video cassettes diversified film consumption and provided access to international content. From the 2000s-2010s, widespread Internet access transformed information access and communication in Sri Lanka. Online news portals, blogs, and social media platforms emerged as prominent sources of information and communication channels. The growth of mobile phone usage further facilitated media consumption, particularly with the introduction of SMS, enabling access to news and online content on the go. Satellite television also played a significant role in expanding entertainment choices by offering international channels and pay-per-view options. Social media platforms have become essential for news dissemination, information sharing, and political discourse. The recent growth of streaming services like Netflix and YouTube from 2010 to the present has challenged traditional TV viewership by offering a variety of on-demand content. Social media influencers have gained prominence, influencing consumer behavior and shaping public opinion. Overall, technology has profoundly influenced media consumption habits in Sri Lanka, shifting from state-controlled media to a more diverse landscape dominated by private media, the internet, and social media platforms. Mobile phones and online platforms have become primary access points for media content. Consequently, media literacy skills are critical in navigating Sri Lanka's complex and evolving media landscape, where news consumption has become more dynamic and interactive, and social media has played a significant role in shaping public discourse (DataReportal, 2023; De Graaf, 2004; Dissanayake, 2020; Dias, 2015; Euromonitor International, 2023; Human Rights Watch, 2023; Kumar, 2020; Seneviratne, 2018; Ratnayake, 2016; Reporters Without Borders, 2023; Selwyn, 2012; UNESCO, 2018).

Along with the growth of this medium in Sri Lanka, media consumption has also undergone a transformational change (DataReportal, 2023; World Bank, 2023 and Reuters Institute, 2022; Nielsen Radio Audience Measurement; 2023). The number of internet users has increased from 3.3% in 2003 to 39.9% in 2023, while mobile phone users have risen from 4.7% in 2003 to 145.3% in 2023. Smartphone penetration has also seen a significant increase, from 22.7% in 2014 to 79.3% in 2023. Social media usage has surged, with Facebook users growing from 0.13 million in 2005 to 8.20 million in 2023. The number of Facebook users has risen from 2.2 million in 2013 to 7.3 million in 2023, and overall social media users have increased from 440,000 in 2017 to 1.55 million in 2023. However, traditional media like newspaper readership has declined from 56% in 2009 to 39% in 2021. Fixed TV viewership remains significant, with 80% of internet users reporting access to an LED flat-screen TV, while radio listenership remains strong, with 77% of adults and 84% of youth reporting regular radio listening. Additionally, the user base is growing with platforms such as streaming services like Netflix and YouTube. Since

the 1980s, there has been a general discussion in society about how the media sector in Sri Lanka has undergone transformation driven by technological development, political changes, and socio-cultural changes. Therefore, technology has created significant opportunities for media education in Sri Lanka while also posing challenges.

V. Media Education; Navigating Challenges and Harnessing Opportunities in Sri Lanka

As this is a technological change that will affect the entire globe, the need for media education in the water society built on personalized information will be unique as well as its role. To what extent the educational space and the role of educators have changed significantly in this era of networked communication and still changing at this moment. Technology and training tools must meet the needs of stakeholders and be tailored to all representatives of all generations of society. Nowadays, the individual has been displaced to a society where a framework is built with a common social structure. In this individualized society, he must be able to select and search for and understand information from the information society himself. Therefore, in the current digital translation, the media receiver is self-generating and self-made. There, one should become a self-critic and be a self-aware person with media literacy to understand the real reality from the illusion of the media. It should be discussed not about traditional media education, but what should be the contemporary nature of open media education based on the current technological environment. However, in the Sri Lankan media education field or in any other academic field, there is still no ability to identify the correct technical practices or timely application of this digital conversion. In particular, media consumers seem to still not understand what digital transformation is.

This should include not only technical support methods but also communication and presentation and discussion methods. The widespread use of modern media products and the inclusion of media resources in the educational process and the creation of a communication media space at that time will provide the opportunity for this new generation to use a variety of familiar communication and communication tools. Especially, the new generation of students who get experience in the environment of digital technology is more interested in the digital lifestyle that is generated from it (Perera, 2020). They are especially capable of independent learning and critical thinking only when they feel the knowledge is important or valuable. And the generation living in this communication phase is more interested in active learning and a student-centered learning environment. Research in different countries has confirmed (Rideout & Roberts, 2010; Lenhart, Ling, Campbell, & Purcell, 2010; Roberts & Foehr, 2008; Rideout, Foehr & Roberts, 2010 and Rosen, & Mark Carrier, 2015) that young people turn to a digital device every seven minutes. Therefore, media education is closely related to modern digital and communication information technology and from the UNESCO perspective (Grunwald, 2003), this approach is proposed as media and information and computer literacy. Therefore, media education in the modern education space is a global approach and it is influenced by various factors globally. Among global influence factors, there is a fundamental change in the role of educators in the education space. The educational process needs to be updated, including the inclusion of media competency in the professional profile of the teacher's competencies and the global influences of the modern generation.

Media education in Sri Lanka is a field that aims to equip individuals with the skills and knowledge necessary to navigate the complex media landscape effectively, critically analyze media content, and engage with media in a responsible and informed manner. As in any country, media education in Sri Lanka plays a crucial role in promoting digital literacy, critical thinking, and ethical media engagement. However, media education in Sri Lanka faces a unique set of challenges shaped by the country's social, cultural, and technological context.

Low internet penetration can be cited as a reason why digital literacy skills in Sri Lanka are still low in rural areas (Wijesuriya, 2019). While digital technology has become central to media education, there are disparities in access to digital infrastructure across Sri Lanka. Uneven access to reliable internet connections and modern devices can hinder the implementation of digital-centric media education initiatives, particularly in rural and remote areas. The digital literacy gap is often more pronounced between urban and rural areas. Urban centers have better access to digital infrastructure, including internet connectivity and digital devices, than rural and remote areas. Especially during the recent Covid epidemic, when students had to adapt to the online system, they were able to gain a clear understanding of the limited access to internet facilities. The age difference and the level of education also affect the low percentage of internet penetration. Younger generations are likely to have access to digital devices and become familiar with technology (Fernando and Perera, 2020). However, older generations can struggle with digital literacy due to limited exposure to technology. An individual's level of education plays a crucial role in digital literacy. People with higher levels of education have digital skills and are more likely to use technology for various purposes. Another major factor related to this is the language barrier. English is often the dominant language for digital content, which can create barriers for people who need to be proficient in English. This language gap significantly affects digital literacy in a developing country like Sri Lanka.

The dominance of traditional media in Sri Lanka can indeed pose a barrier to introducing new media literacy concepts and skills that are relevant to the digital age. Traditional media outlets may be resistant to embracing new concepts and skills related to digital media literacy. They might see these changes as a threat to their established ways of operating and may be hesitant to adopt unfamiliar practices. In some cases, traditional media outlets might be rooted in cultural norms and practices that resist change. Incorporating new media literacy concepts could require navigating these cultural sensitivities. People who rely solely on traditional media might lack familiarity with digital platforms and tools. Introducing new concepts without proper guidance might be overwhelming for them. Traditional media, such as television and radio, may not be as interactive as digital media, which can hinder the implementation of interactive and participatory learning experiences that are integral to new media literacy concepts.

The formal education curriculum can pose a barrier to introducing new media literacy concepts and skills relevant to the digital age in Sri Lanka (Hettige & Gunasekara, 2016; Rathnayake & Wijesundara, 2020; Kumarasinghe, 2016 and Fernando, & Perera, 2020). This challenge is common in Sri Lanka and is faced by many education systems worldwide. Formal education curricula must often adapt quickly to rapidly changing digital technologies and media trends. This can result in outdated content that does not reflect the current media landscape. In many cases, curricula are already crowded with existing subjects, leaving limited space for introducing new topics like digital media literacy. The existing curricula' non-updating is a significant weakness of the university's media education system. Although the new media education subject has been revised in the school system in the past periods, it is clear in the overall analysis that the relevant revisions have been made without proper scientific study. There, it can be identified that critical thinking, creativity, imagination, logical ability, and innovative thoughts are minimal throughout the curriculum as the existing problems regarding the curriculum of Sri Lankan media education.

The lack of teacher training in media education (Hettige & Gunasekara, 2016 and Kumarasinghe, 2016) can indeed hinder the effective integration of media education into the curriculum. Teachers play a crucial role in imparting media literacy skills to students, and their training is essential to ensure that students receive high-quality instruction. This can be identified as a major problem with media education, especially in the school system of Sri Lanka. This can be identified as a major problem with media education, especially in the school system of Sri Lanka. Sri Lanka's major university system graduates more than 100 students each year with honors degrees in communication and media. But in the school system, the relevant subject is taught by teachers who have graduated from another subject field or those who have just obtained a general degree. This can lead to teachers being unprepared or unfamiliar with the subject matter and lacking the confidence to teach media education effectively.

VI. Harnessing Opportunities

Media education in Sri Lanka has a significant role to play in harnessing opportunities presented by the dynamic and ever-evolving media landscape. By empowering individuals with the knowledge and skills needed to navigate, critically engage with, and contribute to the media environment, media education can unlock a range of opportunities.

Media education can bridge the digital divide by providing individuals, especially in rural and underserved areas, with the digital literacy skills necessary to access and use digital media. This enables them to participate in the digital economy, access information, and engage with the global community. Digital Literacy and Access Media education can bridge the digital divide by providing people with the digital literacy skills needed to access and use digital media, especially in rural and underserved areas. This enables them to participate in the digital economy, access information, and connect with the global community. Address the digital divide by implementing digital literacy programs that reach urban and rural populations alike. These programs can include basic digital skills, online safety, and responsible internet use.

Figures from GSMA Intelligence show that Sri Lanka's mobile connectivity is equivalent to 165.5 percent of the total population in January 2023. Between 2022 and 2023, the number of mobile phone connections in Sri Lanka increased by 2.7 million (+8.0 percent) (GSMA Intelligence, 2023). This can be considered a positive situation because most people are capable of defeating some electronic communication devices. According to estimates, 15,085,783 people, or 92.64% of the adult population (15 years and above) in Sri Lanka can read and write. Therefore, developing digital literacy skills among the elderly population in Sri Lanka is not a difficult task. What needs to be done is to provide the necessary facilities for it. To this end, Launch government-led digital literacy programs that target marginalized communities, offering free or subsidized digital literacy training and access to digital resources, Establish community digital centers equipped with computers and internet access, Collaborate with private sector organizations to sponsor digital literacy initiatives, including funding training

programs, providing hardware, and offering internships to students, Ensure that digital literacy materials are available in multiple languages, Promote awareness of online safety and responsible digital citizenship, especially among young users, Offer adult education programs that focus on digital literacy, Recognize the importance of mobile devices in digital access and Emphasize that digital literacy is a lifelong skill.

Continuously assess the effectiveness of digital literacy programs and gather feedback from participants to make improvements. Promoting digital literacy for all in Sri Lanka requires a holistic approach involving government, educational institutions, private sector entities, civil society organizations, and communities. By ensuring equitable access to digital education and resources, Sri Lanka can empower its citizens to participate in the digital world, access educational and economic opportunities, and contribute to the country's socio-economic development.

Teacher training for media education subjects in Sri Lanka is crucial to ensure educators are well-prepared to teach these subjects effectively. There, special programs can be prepared for school teachers who teach the subject of media education. These programs should cover both theoretical knowledge and practical teaching skills related to media literacy, digital media, and communication. Collaboration with universities and higher education institutions is essential to offer these media education teacher training programs. These institutions have the expertise and resources to develop comprehensive training modules. Where teachers can get hands-on experience in media production, digital storytelling, and media analysis by organizing practical workshops and seminars. Ensure that teacher training incorporates the use of media technology and digital tools. Teachers should be proficient in using these tools for instruction. Opportunities like these can teach teachers how to align media literacy concepts with different subjects to make learning more relevant and engaging. Online training modules should be developed that are accessible to teachers across the country, not just physically. Online courses provide flexibility and accessibility, especially for educators in remote areas.

Teachers should be encouraged to engage in continuing professional development related to media education. This may include attending conferences, webinars, and workshops to stay up-to-date on industry trends and teaching methods. Establishing peer learning communities or networks where teachers can share experiences, lesson plans and best practices related to media education is another positive opportunity for their subject development. Because the support of friends is invaluable for professional and subject development. Developing assessment methods to evaluate the effectiveness of media education teacher training programs will also lead to a satisfied professional. Certification or recognition programs can be introduced there for teachers who show talent in media education. This can motivate educators to improve their skills and contribute to the field. It should also be noted that advocating for policies that prioritize media education and collaborating with education authorities and policymakers to allocate resources for relevant teacher training is essential. Government intervention should be set up immediately so that the school system can acquire the knowledge of students who graduate with honors degrees. It will be a good ground for the development of the subject as well as the credibility of the profession.

Media education is increasingly vital in today's digital age, where information is disseminated rapidly through a multitude of channels. In Sri Lanka, a nation marked by rich cultural diversity, it is essential to prepare students with the skills and knowledge to navigate the rapidly evolving media landscape. For that the development of a well-structured curriculum for media education is paramount. Sri Lanka's media landscape has undergone a significant transformation over the years (GSMA Intelligence, 2023; DataReportal, 2023; World Bank, 2023; APIDM, 2021; Reuters Institute, 2022; Nielsen Radio Audience Measurement; 2023). Traditional forms of media, such as newspapers, television, and radio, have been joined by digital media, including online news portals, social media platforms, and streaming services. This convergence of media necessitates an education system that equips individuals with the skills to navigate this multifaceted landscape. A well-designed media education curriculum in Sri Lanka can foster media literacy among its citizens. Media literacy is the ability to access, analyze, evaluate, and create media content effectively. It enables individuals to discern credible sources from misinformation, understand media bias, and critically engage with the content they consume. In a society inundated with information, media literacy is a shield against disinformation and a tool for responsible citizenship. Sri Lanka's media industry is dynamic, offering opportunities for careers in journalism, broadcasting, digital marketing, and content creation. A well-structured media education curriculum can equip students with the practical skills required for these professions. Whether it's writing news articles, producing multimedia content, or conducting interviews, students gain hands-on experience that prepares them for the job market. Curriculum design is the cornerstone of achieving this vision, ensuring that the benefits of media education are realized across the nation.

Industry Collaboration plays a crucial role in the development of media education in Sri Lanka. The media landscape is characterized by constant change and innovation. Industry collaboration ensures that media education remains up-to-date and aligned with industry trends. Media professionals can provide insights into the latest

technologies, emerging platforms, and changing audience behaviors. This real-world relevance is essential for preparing students to thrive in the competitive media sector.

Especially Internships with media companies are a cornerstone of practical learning in media education. Industry collaboration facilitates the placement of students in reputable media organizations. These internships offer students invaluable experiences, allowing them to apply classroom knowledge in a professional setting, build networks, and gain mentorship from industry professionals. This Industry collaboration allows educational institutions to bridge the gap between theoretical learning and practical application. By working closely with media companies, students can gain hands-on experience. There is a lack of resources for students, especially in public universities. But Media companies often have access to cutting-edge technologies, software, and media production facilities. Collaborating with these companies grants educational institutions access to these resources, enriching the learning experience for students. This access fosters creativity and innovation, empowering students to produce high-quality media content. It will also nurture the innovation and entrepreneurship skills of the students. Students can be encouraged to exploratory study of this collaboration as a platform for creativity and business opportunities.

Also, this collaboration enhances students' employability by facilitating direct connections between students and potential employers. Media companies can identify talented individuals during internships and workshops, leading to employment opportunities after graduation. This synergy benefits both students and the industry. This collaboration is important not only for students. Media companies also face their own set of challenges, including ethical dilemmas, digital disruptions, and changing audience behaviors. Collaboration with educational institutions allows industry professionals to engage in dialogues about these challenges and explore innovative solutions. This exchange of ideas benefits the industry's growth and sustainability. Even now, universities in Sri Lanka are providing corporate training to students studying media. But the positive conditions shown above should be further developed. By embracing industry collaboration, Sri Lanka's media education can adapt to the dynamic media landscape and contribute to the nation's media excellence.

VII. Conclusion

In conclusion, media education in the age of convergence presents a unique set of challenges and opportunities in Sri Lanka. As the country navigates the dynamic and multifaceted media landscape, it must adapt its educational strategies to empower its citizens effectively. Challenges such as limited access to digital infrastructure, the digital literacy gap, traditional media dominance, and rigid formal education curricula persist. These challenges can hinder the full realization of media education's potential in Sri Lanka. However, there is optimism in the face of these challenges. Sri Lanka has the opportunity to leverage its linguistic diversity, cultural heritage, and a strong sense of community to promote media literacy effectively. By focusing on multilingual content, community engagement, local content production, and global exposure, media education can bridge gaps and foster a culture of critical thinking and responsible digital citizenship. Furthermore, the collaboration between educational institutions, policymakers, media organizations, and communities is essential to overcome these challenges and harness the opportunities that convergence offers. By advocating for digital infrastructure development, investing in teacher training, fostering industry collaboration, and continuously updating the curriculum, Sri Lanka can ensure that its citizens are equipped with the skills and knowledge needed to thrive in the digital age. Media education in Sri Lanka holds the potential to empower individuals, preserve cultural heritage, promote responsible digital behavior, and contribute to a vibrant and informed society. To seize these opportunities, Sri Lanka must embrace media education as a cornerstone of its educational system, ensuring that it remains relevant, accessible, and impactful in the age of convergence. With the right strategies and a collective effort, Sri Lanka can pave the way for a media-literate and digitally competent future generation.

References

1. Buckingham, D. (2003). *Media education: Literacy, learning and contemporary culture*. John Wiley & Sons.
2. DataReportal, (2023). <https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2023-global-overview-report>
3. De Graaf, M. (2004). *The Politics of Media Development in Sri Lanka: Between State Control and Market Liberalization*. Commonwealth & Comparative Politics
4. Dias, A. (2015). *The Impact of New Media Technologies on the Political Communication Landscape in Sri Lanka*. *International Journal of Communication*, 9(5), 3567-3586.
5. Dissanayake, G. (2020). *Media Evolution in Sri Lanka: From State Control to Digital Freedom*. Colombo: Vijitha Yapa Bookshop.

6. Euromonitor International. (2023). Sri Lanka: Social and Cultural Trends 2023. <https://www.euromonitor.com/sri-lanka>
7. Fernando, S., & Perera, S. (2020). Digital Divide in Sri Lanka: Challenges and Opportunities. *International Journal of Scientific and Research Publications*, 10(6), 10-12.
8. Fernando, S., & Perera, S. (2020). Challenges of Media Education in Sri Lanka: Perspectives of Teachers and Students. *Journal of Communication Media Watch*, 11(1), 238-252.
9. Fidler, R. (1997). *Metamorphosis*.
10. GSMA Intelligence. (2023). The Mobile Economy: Sri Lanka 2023. Retrieved from <https://www.gsma.com/mobileeconomy/srilanka/>
11. Grunwald, H. (2003). Media education in the twenty-first century: A UNESCO perspective. In J. K. T. Fung & A. T. Y. Ho (Eds.), *Media Education in Asia* (pp. 3-17). Springer.
12. Hettige, S. T., & Gunasekara, S. R. (2016). Barriers and challenges faced by teachers in the implementation of media literacy education in secondary schools in Sri Lanka. *International Journal of Education and Development using ICT*, 12(1), 4-17.
13. Hobbs, R. (2010). *Digital and media literacy: A plan of action*. Aspen Institute.
14. Human Rights Watch. (2023). Sri Lanka: Human Rights Developments. <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2022/country-chapters/sri-lanka>
15. Jenkins, H. (2006). *Confronting the challenges of participatory culture: Media education for the 21st century*. MIT Press.
16. Kumar, S. (2020). Digital Media and Social Change in Sri Lanka. *South Asian Studies*, 39(3).
17. Kumarasinghe, M. (2016). Challenges in Integrating Media Education into Formal Education: A Study Conducted in Sri Lanka. In *Proceedings of the International Conference on Social Sciences and Humanities* (pp. 50-55).
18. Lenhart, A., Ling, R., Campbell, S., & Purcell, K. (2010). *Teens and Mobile Phones*. Pew Research Center.
19. Nielsen (2022). *Digital Media Insights 2022: Sri Lanka*. Colombo, Sri Lanka: Nielsen.
20. Perera, R., (2020). *Sri Lankan Journal of Information Technology*. 8 (2), Colombo; University of Colombo Press
21. Ratnayake, J. (2016). New Media and Cultural Change in Sri Lanka. *International Communication Studies*, 7(2), 129-143.
22. Rathnayake, N. S., & Wijesundara, D. T. (2020). Media literacy in Sri Lanka: Challenges and prospects. In *13th Annual International Conference on Education and New Learning Technologies (EDULEARN)* (pp. 6472-6481).
23. Reporters Without Borders. (2023). *Freedom of the Press in Sri Lanka: 2023 Update*. <https://rsf.org/en/country/sri-lanka>
24. Reuters Institute, (2022). *Digital News Report 2022*, <https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/digital-news-report/2022>
25. Rideout, V. J., Foehr, U. G., & Roberts, D. F. (2010). *Generation M2: Media in the Lives of 8- to 18-Year-Olds*. Kaiser Family Foundation.
26. Roberts, D. F., & Foehr, U. G. (2008). Trends in media use. *The Future of Children*, 18(1), 11-37.
27. Rosen, L. D., & Mark Carrier, L. (2015). *The promises and perils of digital technology in lifestyles, learning, and literacy*. Oxford Handbooks Online.
28. Selwyn, A. (2012). The Impact of Media on Sinhala Buddhist Nationalism in Sri Lanka. *South Asia Research*, 31(2), 166-187.
29. Seneviratne, M. (2018). *Media Freedom and Democracy in Sri Lanka: Assessing the Post-War Era*. *South Asian Journal of Global Studies*
30. Smith, J., (2020). Adapting Media Education to Changing Consumption Patterns. *Media Education Journal*, vol. 10, no. 2.
31. Wijesuriya, A. (2019). Digital literacy education for sustainable development: Case of Sri Lanka. In A. Tatnall & T. Okamoto (Eds.), *Education and Technology for a Better World* (pp. 603-612). Springer.
32. World Bank, (2023). *Sri Lanka Development Update 2023*, <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/srilanka/publication/sri-lanka-development-update-2023>
33. UNESCO. (2009). *UNESCO's Strategy for Communication and Information*. UNESCO Publishing.
34. UNESCO. (2011). *Media and Information Literacy for Knowledge Societies: A Development-oriented Research Agenda*. UNESCO Publishing.

35. UNESCO. (2018). Media and Information Literacy Country Report: Sri Lanka. <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000224655>
36. Wilson, C., & Grizzle, A., (Eds.). (2013). Media and Information Literacy and Intercultural Dialogue. UNESCO.