



## Theoretical approaches to Media and Information Literacy in Foreign Aid Projects (Model for Central Asian countries)

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### Abstract

*This article is devoted to the analysis of different theoretical approaches to the field of MIL. It provides theoretical insights and definitions put forward by various experts in the field of ML and MIL. The author analyses the role of these approaches in develop the MIL level of the population, as well as the to increase the effectiveness of grants and projects of foreign donor organizations in Central Asian countries in the field of MIL. Using the main sources concepts, theories and approaches in different books about ML and MIL, manuals of international organizations, such as UNESCO, DW Akademie etc., the materials of the journal publications and archives, the author tries to give his own approaches to develop MIL in Central Asian countries. The article analyzes the sociological surveys that substantiate the results of the projects implemented in the field of MIL by various donor organizations in recent years. It was emphasized that in Central Asian countries, it is necessary to pay attention to regional, political and cultural peculiarities in increasing the level of MIL of the population.*

**Keywords:** media literacy (ML), media and information literacy (MIL), theoretical approaches to ML and MIL, protectionism, critical thinking, empowerment approach, foreign aid international MIL projects, implementation, and efficiency.

### 1. Introduction

The fields of "Information literacy" (IL) and "Media literacy" (ML), which have been developing separately throughout the last XX century, are now united under one umbrella term as "Media and Information Literacy" (MIL) with the development of information technology and the formation of the information society. Because modern mediatised world requires a person to master the competencies in both areas at the same time. Modern man can find "relevant" place in his/her family, business, and society, by having a stable "immune system" against various information attacks, cyberbullying, from the traps of financial pyramids, online gambling, advertising campaigns, phishing and other types of information threats. It is also required to have sufficient knowledge and skills on MIL to maintain the funds in the bank account and bank cards, as well as to maintain the privacy and reputation.

Project Manager at Deutsche Welle Akademie Lena Nitsche writes, 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.

Is this enough for today's media world? A world in which cyberbullying leaves young people traumatized. A world in which users might go to jail for distributing false information. A world in which citizens might not be able to access the internet because governments are afraid of political dissent. A world in which a few companies have so much power that they influence how our information ecosystem works. A world in which governments are surveillant their citizens in the name of security (Nitsche, 2020, P.6).

Due to its high importance, the MIL sector has recently become the subject of many international projects, grants, conferences and trainings. Today, many organizations, such as UNESCO, UNICEF, USAID, Deutsche Welle Akademie, support long-term projects in various countries around the world.

To increase the effectiveness of such projects and efforts, it is important to study the theoretical and conceptual foundations of the field of MIL, to systematize the proposed theoretical approaches and views.

In this paper, we analyze the theoretical approaches that have been put forward so far in the field of ML and MIL. In summary, we will try to highlight the importance of international approaches of international donor organizations, such as UNESCO, in the field of MIL, as well as theoretical approaches to increase the effectiveness of projects and training programs organized in the national arena in many countries.

If we take the example of the Central Asian countries, the above donor organizations are working in these countries mainly in cooperation with NGOs, in particular, the Journalists' Retraining Centers. The organization that has been actively funding projects and grants in the field of MIL in recent years in this region is the Internews organization in Kazakhstan. He organizes trainings for specialists of Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, announces a selection of projects in the field of MIL in these countries and finances successfully presented projects. However, due to the fact that state and public organizations, in particular, ministries and state educational institutions are not widely involved in these projects, the coverage of projects is not always effective and is limited to the activities of a certain organization or project experts in a certain period. In our opinion, activities held directly under the auspices of large international donor organizations should be systematic, continuous, actions based on clear concepts and approaches, aimed at long-term results.

The following will be the main **research questions** for this study:

What are the particular problems connected with MIL in CA countries?

What theoretical approaches have been proposed by scientists for the ML and MIL fields so far?

What is the role of these approaches in increasing the MIL level of the population?

To what extent do theoretical approaches help to increase the effectiveness of media education and international projects in the field of MIL?

What methods, materials, and interventions will be used to better ensure the sustainability of MIL projects, grants, and education?

What efforts are being made to promote MIL in the countries of Central Asia?

What is the level of effectiveness of NGO organizations, which are the main propagandists of MIL in the Central Asian region? What approaches can be used to further increase the efficiency of NGOs' projects in the field of MIL?

## 2. Materials and methods

In 2021, Internews Kazakhstan, one of the donor organizations actively promoting the field of MIL in Central Asia, in cooperation with USAID and "Vektor" Research and Consulting organization conducted "Sociological Research on the Study of Media Consumption and Media Information Literacy in Central Asian Countries: Kazakhstan Tajikistan, Uzbekistan" and announced the results. This study is a continuation of a similar survey conducted in 2019 and also serves to determine the effectiveness of MIL projects, grants and training implemented in the past two years.

A total number of respondents:

- Kazakhstan — 1146 respondents
- Tajikistan — 1512 respondents
- Uzbekistan — 1512 respondents

In these sociological surveys, the level of media use of more respondents was studied. In determining the level of MIL, knowledge of certain media literacy concepts was asked. The results of the survey can be seen in the following tables.

**Table 1. Knowledge of concepts related to media literacy, percent (Kazakhstan)**

(Source: [INTERNEWS Media consumption Media literacy - KAZAKHSTAN 2021.pdf](https://prevention.kg/?p=12875). P. 36 // <https://prevention.kg/?p=12875>)

	„I know“	„I've heard something about it“	„I Don't know“
Network addiction	75.2	8.5	16.2
Compromising evidence	74.9	8.1	16.9
Propaganda	72.5	9.2	18.2
Fake news	72.3	9.2	18.6
Disinformation	67.6	10.0	22.3
Information war	63.2	12.1	24.7
Troll, bot	50.2	8.9	40.9
Media literacy	46.9	14.8	38.3
Fact-checking (fact checking)	35.9	13.3	50.9
Social media algorithms	35.3	14.9	49.7

**Table 2. Knowledge of concepts related to media literacy, percent (Uzbekistan)**

(Source: [INTERNEWS Media consumption Media literacy - UZBEKISTAN 2021.pdf](https://prevention.kg/?p=12875) P.32 // <https://prevention.kg/?p=12875>)

	„I know“	„I've heard something about it“	„Don't know“
Disinformation	45.7	8.6	45.7
Propaganda	38.7	10.4	51.0
Network addiction	36.3	9.6	54.0
Media literacy	27.7	11.8	60.5
Information war	26.8	9.2	64.0
Fake news	23.8	7.6	68.6
Fact-checking (fact checking)	14.5	9.7	75.7
Compromising evidence	14.5	7.9	77.6
Social media algorithms	13.4	10.6	76.0
Troll, bot	11.8	7.7	80.5

**Table 3. Knowledge of concepts related to media literacy, percent** (Tajikistan) (Source:

INTERNEWS Media consumption Media literacy - TAJIKISTAN 2021.pdf. P.36 // <https://prevention.kg/?p=12875>)

	„I know“	„I’ve heard something about it“	„I Don’t know“
Fake news	27.10	12.64	60.26
Network addiction	26.72	11.23	62.05
Disinformation	24.57	12.98	62.45
Information war	24.56	13.06	62.37
Propaganda	21.72	11.97	66.31
Media literacy	18.59	12.34	69.07
Fact-checking (fact checking)	16.09	11.04	72.87
Compromising evidence	15.20	10.62	74.18
Social media algorithms	10.53	10.79	78.68
Troll, bot	10.42	9.76	79.82

In the tables, concepts that are more familiar to the respondents are presented on the top.

During the survey, "What can you do on the Internet?", questions that determine the attitude to the amount of information in the information flow were also addressed.

Comparative analysis of media literacy indices in Central Asian countries Based on the methodology for measuring media literacy (ML), developed on the basis of the system of ML indicators adopted in the Russian Federation, respondents' self-assessments of media skills were divided into five categories (groups). The method of calculating the index is described in the article: Maltseva D.V., Shubina L.V., Voinilov Yu.L. The level of media literacy of the population of the Russian Federation: the current state and prospects for change (XVII April International Scientific Conference on the Development of the Economy and Society // URL: <http://www.zircon.ru/upload/iblock/ea5/maltseva-d-v-shubina-l-v-voynilov-yu-l-uroven-mediagramotnosti-naseleniya-rtetekushchee-sostoyanie.pdf> ) Based on this division, the so-called private indices” of media literacy were built.

**Table 4. Average values for private media literacy indices.**

(Source: INTERNEWS Media consumption Media literacy - KAZAKHSTAN 2021.pdf. P.85 // <https://prevention.kg/?p=12875>)

Components of media literacy	Year	Kazakhstan	Tajikistan	Uzbekistan	Max
1 Ability to effectively search and find the necessary	2019	3,3	3	2,7	7
	2021	3,8	3	2,9	7

	information					
2	Ability to protect yourself from malicious and redundant content	2019	2,8	2,2	1,9	7
		2021	3,2	1,6	2	8
3	Ability to verify and critically evaluate information using alternative sources of information	2019	3,1	3,2	3,5	7
		2021	4,5	3,8	3,9	7
4	Ability to adequately perceive information and use it effectively (competently)	2019	7,6	4,8	4,6	18
		2021	8	4,5	5	19
5	Ability to disseminate information effectively and correctly, taking into account legal requirements	2019	6,4	4,4	3,6	18
		2021	7	3,9	4,6	18

According to these indicators, the authors try to give the average level of MIL in three countries.

**Table 5. Average values of the integral index of media literacy**

(Source: INTERNEWS Media consumption Media literacy - KAZAKHSTAN 2021.pdf. P. 88 // <https://prevention.kg/?p=12875>)

Year	Kazakhstan	Tajikistan	Uzbekistan	Max
2019	14,6	11,9	11,3	35
2021	16,8	11,5	12,2	35

2021	16,8	11,5	12,2	35
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**The conclusion of the survey:** Among the countries studied, the average value of the integral index of Kazakhstan (16.8) can be attributed to the average level of media literacy, Uzbekistan - on the border between low and medium (12.2), the value of Tajikistan - low (11.5).

It is clear from the general results that there is a lot of work to be done to improve the level of knowledge of the population in the field of MIL in these three countries. As a result of the projects, grants, trainings conducted after 2015, only the above results were achieved. After that, in order to further deepen the knowledge and skills of the population on MIL in the involvement of international projects and trainings, it is desirable to conduct each project and training on the basis of specific concepts and approaches. In the article, we will discuss exactly such approaches.

The main sources for writing this article have been the concepts, theories, and approaches in different books about ML and MIL, manuals of international organizations, such as UNESCO, DW Akademie etc., the materials of the journal publications and archives.

During the study the researcher used systemic and comparative methods.

The comparative method defines the difference in views on the approaches by scholars and specialists of the sphere.

Using a systematic method, theoretical approaches to the fields of ML and MIL were integrated into one system.

During the research, scientific literature, manuals, journalistic materials, useful suggestions, and recommendations were put forward on educational sites in the field of ML and MIL, such as UNESCO, UNICEF, DW Akademie, which are directly implementing several projects on MIL in different regions of the world. The theoretical approaches used in MIL projects of international organizations and presented in the manuals for trainers, their views on this term are summarized and compared in this article.

First, theoretical views and approaches to the field of ML were presented systematically. For many years, different approaches to ML have been implemented in conferences, trainings and international and national projects. In several European countries, as well as in the United States and Canada, ML is taught as a subject in many schools.

Observations have shown that massive theoretical and practical resources have been gathered in the field of ML. Theoretical approaches have been discussed not only by scholars but also by practitioners, high school teachers; many articles and books have been published highlighting these problems.

The MIL is a field that combines the features of information literacy and media literacy and is being re-formed based on modern requirements, and there are few theoretical approaches to it.

#### Literature review.

The main purpose of the research is to identify the theoretical and conceptual foundations of the field of MIL and the theoretical approaches expressed by various scholars, to compare them and, as a result, to propose our own approach. When it comes to the many theoretical articles and books written by scholars about MIL, there was a lot of analysis of the views expressed about ML.

Definitions and theoretical approaches to the field of ML have long been widely discussed and analysed among scholars.

J. M. Pérez Tornero, and T. Varis (2010) write: "If we survey the different trends in the media literacy movement, we can discern the existence of several predominant orientations. We shall discuss the three most important ones: a) the protectionist orientation, b) the promoting orientation and c) the participatory orientation. Each of them has specific objectives and a distinctive style" (p. 40)

In the article "Critical media literacy is not an option", D. Kellner, J. Share (2007) explore the theoretical underpinnings of critical media literacy and analyse four different approaches to teaching it: protectionist, media arts education, media literacy movement, and critical media literacy approaches.

Combining cultural studies with critical pedagogy, they argue that critical media literacy aims to expand the notion of literacy to include different forms of media culture, information and communication technologies and new media, as well as deepen the potential of literacy education to critically analyse relationships between media and audiences, information and power. A multiperspectival approach addressing issues of gender, race, class and power is used to explore the interconnections of media literacy, cultural studies and critical pedagogy. In the interest of a vibrant participatory democracy, educators need to move the discourse beyond the stage of debating whether or not critical media literacy should be taught, and instead focus energy and resources on exploring the best ways for implementing it (Kellner & Share, 2007, p. 59).

The classification and comparative description of theoretical views in the field of MIL is found in the UNESCO manual "Media and Information Literacy: Policy & Strategy Guidelines" (UNESCO, 2013a).

The authors of the book "Artificial Intelligence: Media and Information Literacy, Human Rights and Freedom of Expression" also present theoretical approaches to MIL (UNESCO IITE, 2020).

In the Discussion Paper "Media and Information Literacy: A human rights-based approach in developing countries" published by DW Academy, authors D.Reineck, J.Lublinski (2015) put forward and described in detail on one approach to the field of MIL. This study presents six theoretical approaches to MIL proposed in the UNESCO publication "Media and Information Literacy: Policy & Strategy Guidelines".

In addition, the field of MIL has emerged as an advanced form of research, international projects, and trainings directly related to the field of ML.

The above-mentioned literature and sources are directly global in nature, and there is a great need for research adapted to the environment of Central Asian countries. Each country of Central Asia has its own information, media and language policy. The population's cultural outlook and approaches to receiving information differ from each other. Based on this, it should be said that an approach based on the above characteristics of each country will have a good effect on the effectiveness of projects and grants in the field of MIL.

In particular, during the COVID-19 pandemic, many training programs and projects moved from offline to online. As a result, there is a clear need to develop digital literacy and information literacy skills in people. In addition, the development of

information technology and media has led to the activation of social networks and websites in the process of exchanging information more than traditional media. Today, the media literate person must continue to "filter" the information of newspapers, magazines, radio and TV, as well as the unlimited and uninterrupted flow of information transmitted on the Internet and through various digital technologies. It is necessary to master MIL skills to protect against various ideological, financial attacks, screen violence. Therefore, in this article, we have first analysed the views in the field of ML. We then presented the theoretical approaches to the field of MIL put forward by UNESCO, and finally made our proposals in this regard.

### 3. Discussion

#### I. Theoretical APPROACHES to ML

The concept of media literacy adopted by the attempts that has began in America at the end of the 1920s and in the early 1930s, is being evaluated as a concept that must be taken elaborately. However, its value is increasing day by day. The media literacy concept plays an important role in interpreting the media messages that was affected without being aware or not (Sezgin, 2016, p.35).

As the report evaluates current approaches related to media literacy that has been published by European Commission, milestones which are related to literacy have been clarified according to the historical development process. Therefore, visual-audial literacy period which have been faced with different education approaches has followed the classical literacy period. Right after that, literacy which has been applied and directed to modern digital tools with the advent of computers was employed. Finally, a new media literacy concept was told, and they include digital literacy together with traditional literacy (European Commission, 2007).

According to Renee Hobbs, media literacy has been conceptualized in relation to four primary theoretical positions:

- ✓ as a means to counter the **negative effects of mass media.**
- ✓ as a way to counter **the hegemonic power of mass media.**
- ✓ as a way to recognize **the structure and constructed nature of media messages.**
- ✓ as a way to acknowledge **the role of play, identity, voice and subjectivity in the practices of consuming and creating media.**

Each of these four traditions has its adherents and detractors, which has contributed to some of the "great debates" in the field (Hobbs, 1998).

Indeed, such theoretical views on the field of ML were later developed by many experts. Expressed in various forms. During observations, we found that various scholars cited three to five theoretical approaches in their articles. The following are the theoretical approaches to the work we have studied and analyzed:

1. *The protectionist or inoculation approach*
2. *Critical thinking approach.*
3. *Critical pedagogy approach.*
4. *The media arts or appreciation approach.*
5. *The promoting approach.*
6. *The creative participation approach.*

**The protectionist or inoculation approach.** The protectionist approach come from media educators, theorists and scholars who

see viewers as needing shielding from the media and all that it constructs. This approach, also known as the interventionist approach (Lowe, 2015).

It was described by Redmond as "media literacy practice is to inoculate youth with a cognitive defence against the media in order to protect them from potentially harmful media messages and effects" (Redmond, 2012, p. 107).

Scholar Abels Tobias describe viewers as people who need protection from the negative influences that the media contains. The protectionist approach focuses on students being able to have the **appropriate skills to deconstruct texts** so that students' "can protect themselves from the onslaught of negative messages and resist the ideological power of media texts" (Tobias, 2008, p. 5).

This model of media education has the function of providing these practices and techniques and the resultant media literate person is immunised' against the negative aspects of the media. (Leaning, 2019, p.8).

The protectionist approach aims at protecting vulnerable users against potential threats of media messages. This approach has been criticized for being both paternalistic and clueless (Ciurel, 2016, p.15-16).

What can be potential threats and negative influences of the mass media and media messages in these literatures?

Negative influences such as violence, stereotypes, misrepresentations, sexuality, and unhealthy attitudes toward eating, smoking and drinking (Tobias, 2008); the effects of media addiction and manipulation (Kellner and Share, 2005, p. 372) etc.

The aim is for teachers to increase students' understanding of how the media works, whose interests they serve, how media representations construct media texts and events ("reality"), and how those constructed events are read and understood (Tobias, 2008).

Despite its age (it was first developed in the 1930s) the approach is still very popular (Leaning, 2019, p.8).

**A critical media literacy approach.** The concept of critical media literacy which has a spreading researching literature in the years of 1980s and 1990s is defined in many different shapes.

- While defining the critical media literacy from the perspective of cultural studies, it is pointed that media messages is being structured by ideologies.
- In the postmodern approach, critical media literacy interests how individuals position the different cultural texts according to various social and historical contexts (Alvermann & Hagood, 2010).

We observed so many works that discussed critical approach in media education and in relation to the concept of critical media literacy (Alvermann, Moon, Hagood (1999); Hobbs, 2011; Kellner & Share, 2005 etc).

Critical media literacy which teaches on how to resist the possible media manipulation shows the way of consciously benefiting from media materials at the same time (Kellner & Share, 2005).

This approach gives big opportunities to develop different views on the subject on how to use media. It provides in-depth materials and techniques for research in ML, training and courses at different levels: analysing multimeanings of media messages,

identifying stereotyped messages, dominant values, and ideologies in the media texts, evaluating the media culture and media representation – all of these concepts underscore the importance of the approach.

**Critical pedagogy approach.** Abels Tobias stated this approach in 2008. This method entails critically thinking beyond what is offered and considering how and why it is presented, as well as the processes involved in producing the generated media.

Abels Tobias states that “critical pedagogy is a form of citizenship training and students should be taught to use their knowledge to advocate for social, political and racial equality” (Tobias, 2008, p. 8).

This approach is concerned with developing critical thinking skills about the media leading to viewers being able to make “wise” choices about their media viewing. Further, Abels Tobias (2008) states that “We need to know more than who is producing and consuming media as an appreciation of the significance of contemporary media demands knowledge of why media is produced and “under what constraints and conditions” it is produced (Tobias, 2008, p. 8).

**The media arts or appreciation approach.** One of the approaches “to teaching about media can be seen in *media arts education*, where students are taught to value the aesthetic qualities of media and the arts while using their creativity for self-expression through creating art and media” (Kellner & Share, 2007, p. 61).

This approach can be seen in the programs of stand-alone classes in community-based schools or after-school programs outside of the classroom. Learning can be made more interactive, hands-on, creative, expressive, and enjoyable by incorporating the arts and media production into education. Media arts education may bring fun into the classroom, making school more stimulating and relevant to pupils.

**The promoting approach** consists of encouraging activities that tend to stimulate greater awareness of the media environment. This approach is based on the conviction that the media offer all users opportunities. Therefore, it is less defensive than the protectionist orientation and stresses the constructive aspect of the relationship with the media through either intellectual creativity or communication relations (Ciurel, 2016, p.16).

**The Creative Participation approach.** From the early 1990s, another approach termed the participatory or creative model incorporated developments in constructivist theory.

Constructivism’s roots lay in developments in psychology and pedagogy concerning how learning occurs arguing that knowledge is acquired through a process of construction of knowledge in the learner’s mind. Furthermore, the best way to ensure this occurs is to have the learner engage in creative and productive activities, to make a shift from a position in which knowledge is considered a discreet unit to one in which learning or knowing is seen as a process (Jones & Brader-Araje, 2002, p.7).

To attend to this constructivism makes use of a range of alternative methods and teaching practices to the deconstruction of texts used in the demystification model. Typical methods used within a creative/participatory framework include: project work, collaborative media text production, group work, practice by doing, structured discussion, getting students to teach each other,

discovery and research work and a variety of other methods (Fernback, 2014).

The participatory orientation stresses the development of social production and communication for the enhancement of knowledge, interactivity, and dialogue. This attitude upholds individuals’ autonomy, critical capacity and ability to properly guide their own personal development. The Internet and the web facilitate on the highest level the sharing of resources and social interactivity (Ciurel, 2016, p.16).

If we continue to study the theoretical approaches in the field of ML, we can come across new ideas and approaches. For example, Marcus Leaning “demystification model” in media education (Leaning, 2017, p.23 - 25), Douglas Kellner and Jeff Share “media literacy movement” in the US (Kellner & Share, 2007, p. 61) etc.

All this shows that the field of ML has been widely studied by scientists for the 20th century, as well as in the 21st century, and that a great theoretical foundation has been gathered in the field.

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## II. Approaches to MIL

In the book of “Artificial Intelligence: Media and Information Literacy, Human Rights and Freedom of Expression” authors try to explore dynamic relationships among AI and relevant emerging technologies, MIL, human rights and freedom of expression. This relationship is researched from perspectives of three major areas of concern in MIL:

**Passive MIL:** accessing, using and adopting media and information,

**Active MIL:** creating, disseminating, analysing, evaluating, interacting with and influencing media and information, and

**Influential MIL:** realising and practicing media and information rights (UNESCO IITE, 2020, Executive summary, p.II).

UNESCO introduced the new concept of MIL into its strategy, thereby bringing together several interrelated concepts – such as information literacy, media literacy, ICT and digital literacy and other related aspects – under one umbrella concept. The Organization considers information literacy and media literacy, along with ICT and digital literacy, as complementary and united within a compound concept. At the same time, UNESCO acknowledges that those types of literacy are independent, with their own integrity and identity (UNESCO, 2013, p30).

**“Information Literacy + Media Literacy = Media and Information Literacy”.**

This forward-looking approach harmonises the field and might possibly relax the theoretical debate. It is harmonising because it encapsulates the many notions of related literacies or multi-literacies. These include library literacy, news literacy, digital literacy, computer literacy, Internet literacy, Freedom of Expression and Freedom of Access to Information literacy, television literacy, advertising literacy, cinema literacy, games literacy and perhaps soon we will be hearing about social networking literacy (UNESCO, 2013, p30).

Most of the research on MIL is limited to quoting theoretical views that are largely ML-specific when it comes to theoretical foundations and approaches. Due to the nature and versatility of

the MIL sector, we found a theoretical approach to it in the section “A development / theoretical framework for MIL policies and strategies” of the UNESCO Media and Information Literacy: Policy & Strategy Guidelines.

The manual contains the following theoretical / development framework:

1. **A convergence approach** – More collaboration and partnerships across government ministries are needed in order to articulate and harmonise broad-based national and multilateral developmental policies. Thus it is important to purpose a “crossing policy” that embeds MIL in different areas of public government (UNESCO, 2013a, p. 20).

This approach is particularly effective in conducting MIL projects in countries where the education system is largely managed by public education ministries. For example, in Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, although there are private educational institutions from Central Asian countries, there are a large number of public educational institutions of secondary and higher education, which are based on the activities, curricula, the publication of educational programs, textbooks and manuals are regulated by state ministries. The population also has more confidence in public education institutions and the certificates and diplomas issued by them than in private ones. One of the reasons why projects implemented in these countries with the help of major international organizations are not so popular is that the projects are implemented directly with non-governmental organizations, rather than directly cooperating with the Ministries of Education.

MIL can shape educational, workplace, and community settings in important ways, which requires carefully articulated policies and strategies that can be implemented across these settings (Lloyd and Williamson, 2008).

2. **A human rights based approach** - Within this approach, the rights-holders and their entitlements are identified, as well as corresponding duty-bearers and their obligations. The approach stresses strengthening the capacities of rights-holders (e.g. women, children) to make their claims, and of duty-bearers (e.g. education institutions, media organisations) to meet their obligations (UNESCO, 2013a, p. 20-21).

This approach was also developed by specialists of Research and Evaluation of DW Akademie Dennis Reineck and Dr. Jan Lublinski in their Discussion paper.

A human rights approach to MIL must address three parties: the government, the individual citizen, and the media.

- The government is to be considered a duty-bearer, which must respect and protect the right to freedom of expression in all its aspects, including a free press.
- Citizens themselves are human rights holders.
- As a third party, as intermediaries, the media have a vested interest in MIL programs as well, since these not only help users make sense of media reporting, but can also help build relationships of trust that the media depend upon. (Reineck & Lublinski, 2015, 4-5).

3. **An empowerment approach** - The ‘everywhereness’ of information, media, Internet and other information providers requires a greater emphasis on citizens’ empowerment by ensuring that they have the skills, attitudes and knowledge that will enable

them to critically and effectively interact with content in all forms of media and with all information providers (UNESCO, 2013a, p. 21).

Today, in Central Asia, social networks, blogging, and even telegram channels have become important information channels that provide the population with fast daily news. Experts see them as important elements of “citizen journalism.”

The population sees these networks as a key tool in solving everyday problems in life, work, family. The growing number of lawsuits against bloggers is also due to a lack of skills and knowledge in the field of blogging. Young people who are well versed in computers and mobile technologies strive to provide paid services by blogging and then helping them by advertising and covering people's problems. Lack of knowledge and skills in working with the media and the media is causing them serious problems.

It is the use of an empowerment approach in media literacy training for bloggers and young people interested in journalism that will have a positive impact on their future careers. In seminars and trainings with this approach, they gain a certain level of journalistic knowledge.

**4.A knowledge societies based approach.** Access to information is a necessary requirement to achieve “Education for All”. MIL encompasses competencies to access, evaluate and effectively and ethically use information, media and other information providers; MIL also relates to quality education since it elucidates the need for an expanded definition for literacy.

The Information Society requires everyone to have sufficient knowledge and skills in the field of media and Internet technologies, regardless of their profession or field of activity. Today, mobile and Internet technologies are actively used in rural areas too.

Following conditions show the importance of knowledge societies based approach:

- Social networks, mobile messengers were widely used at all levels of education during the COVID-19. Today, although offline education has been returned, online interactive communication with parents is continued through social media and messengers.

- After the quarantine period, it is possible to observe the continuation of school classes on TV channels. For example, in Uzbekistan there are separate channels for elementary and secondary school graders, a separate channel for teaching foreign languages. The importance of such channels is that they provide the same level of quality education in all regions of the country. So far, school education has not been at the same level in urban and rural areas.

Today's young people are growing up in the coverage of mobile technologies and the global network Internet, no matter where they live. Now, even young children can easily access the Internet, especially U-Tube channels, find cartoons, movies and online games, and quickly learn to use them.

All of this highlights the role of a knowledge societies based approach in developing MIL education. When planning media literacy projects with this approach, the age of the target audience is important, and trainings should be organized in all regions of the country.

In the Central Asian region, the experience MIL specialists in Kyrgyz Republic is a good example to this approach. From our interviews with experts from the Media Support Centre in Kyrgyzstan, one of the main promoters of media literacy in the country, as well as its website Mediasabak.org, it became clear that the organization has a special representative in each region of the country. appointed. These representatives can be both responsible and consultant for a range of activities, such as planning, organizing, and conducting surveys of all projects and trainings that have previously been trained in central trainings and later in their “regions”. Most importantly, these representatives are from the local community, and they provide training in the local language to all segments of the population.

**5.A cultural and linguistic diversity approach** - cultural and linguistic diversity are important resources for MIL policies and strategies in terms of how these are articulated through, language, education and communication. MIL enables viable strategies towards linguistic diversity: language policies that promote multilingualism in societies, empowering local and vernacular languages, translation between and across languages, linguistic diversity in the media and in cyberspace.

Similarly, MIL articulates the notion of the right to education. The right to education ensures “the diversity of learners’ needs – especially those of minority, indigenous and nomadic groups – and by integrating a corresponding diversity of methods and contents. In increasingly complex multicultural societies, education must enable us to acquire the intercultural competencies that will permit us to live together with – and not despite – our cultural differences.”

In some international projects implemented so far, this approach is very common and that it gave good results. For example, when UNESCO introduces MIL projects to any country, the experience gained during the training will be published as a guide in the language of that country. Trainers from local scholars and experts will also be appointed to organize the training, taking into account the language and cultural views of the country. This makes it important that the training content is easily accepted by the trainees and communicated to others in the future.

Several international projects at DW Akademie also provide good examples of a cultural and linguistic diversity approach.

While studying the website information about DW Akademie MIL projects, we see a unique project under the heading “Training Citizens to become MIL heroes: DW Akademie’s approach”. Visualization and personification can be of great help in conveying complex ideas and content. That’s why in 2020, DW Akademie and Namibian illustrator Karel Swanepoel developed the MIL Heroes. The characters are based on the five MIL competencies to navigate our complex media landscape: Access, Analyze, Create, Reflect and Act.

MIL practitioners around the world can use these visualizations to teach MIL competencies and to make these skills more tangible in terms of visible character attributes. This encourages youth to become MIL Heroes as they can see themselves in the characters. It therefore rose the question if the heroes could have potentially higher personal resonance if their personification was contextualised? In this light, we took the opportunity to adapt the MIL Heroes into the Mexican setting when the Mexican MIL Network (Red AMI México) invited the Heroes to Mexico. They

made their first appearance at a MIL Hackathon, organized by the tech start-up Tomato Valley and supported by DW Akademie, UNESCO Mexico and the National Electoral Institute. Since then, MIL Heroes have turned Mexico into their new home to inspire youth to become MIL Heroes (<https://www.dw.com/en/mexican-mil-heroes-defeat-the-villains/a-60624190>).

Projects in Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan are currently planned mainly through the centre in Kazakhstan. Seminars, trainings, conferences are organized mainly in Russian language. Simultaneous translation is also available in other languages. But these countries do not have the same population density, language, media education and approach to journalism. The seminar trainings are mainly attended by specialists who know Russian. In most cases, the participants do not change. Sometimes, due to problems and barriers in traveling to a neighbouring country, registered attendees are unable to attend the seminar. As a result, the efficiency of projects reaching all regions of the country decreases. The trainers who gained new knowledge during the trainings in Kazakhstan return to their home countries and organize sub-trainings” in their country, but this does not mean that that knowledge and ideas will reach to majority population of all regions.

Also, the level of learning and interest in the Russian language in Uzbekistan today is not the same as before. There, the younger generation is more interested in learning other foreign languages, especially English, and another significant number of them learning German.

**6.A gender and development based approach** - at the national level, all members of the society should have the same access to MIL competencies; men and women should participate equally in developing and implementing MIL policies and strategies.

One of the best examples of this approach is the UniSat international educational program for girls.

October 11, 2021 - On International Girls' Day, UNICEF Uzbekistan presented the following statistics in its telegram channel:

“According to the UNICEF youth survey, in Uzbekistan the share of girls who are not computer literate is 43.5% compared to 30.0% among boys. 68% of girls and young women aged 14 to 30 never use the Internet for various reasons. This significantly reduces their opportunities to receive education and realize their potential in the labor market.

Girls need digital literacy and a safe digital space free from the risk of gender-based violence so that their talents can be unleashed.

The study, conducted between 2018 and 2020, involved young people aged 14 to 30 in 12 regions of Uzbekistan, the city of Tashkent and the Republic of Karakalpakstan. A mixed approach was used to collect data, including a survey of 4,458 respondents and 24 focus group discussions”.

Then the UniSat program was launched. More than 150 girls from Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan, completed 4 months of training and a 10-day internship in Almaty, launched three ultra-modern nanosatellites into the stratosphere. The programme is supported by UNICEF country offices in Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan.

Munir Mammadzadeh, UNICEF Head of the Office in Uzbekistan stressed: "In Uzbekistan, as in other countries of the world, for



various reasons there remains a significant gap between boys and girls in the areas of computer literacy, technical education and career. The UniSat educational program will help to reduce this gap, to interest and teach girls the relevant skills in the field of science and technology. UniSat will help draw the attention of the general public to the gender issue in technological spheres among the youth of Uzbekistan" (<https://www.uzdaily.uz/index.php/ru/post/64891>).

#### 4. Results

These approaches, promoted by UNESCO, will certainly focus on international projects, grants, as well as approaches to the educational process in countries where the MIL sector is directly integrated into the education system, which is now widely used around the world. Most importantly, it should serve to ensure their effectiveness.

In recent years, Central Asian countries have received international projects and grants from many foreign organizations in the field of MIL.

We will try to make recommendations on which of the theoretical approaches analysed above are most effective in these projects and trainings.

The idea that MIL should be taught at all levels of education is frequently voiced by Central Asian scholars and experts. For example, according to the expert popularizer of media and digital literacy Guzal Makhkamova from Tajikistan "*Media literacy should be taught from kindergarten*"(Rhodoreva, 2021). After many years of efforts by Kazakh MIL activists, MIL could be included in the school curriculum in Kazakhstan and the first textbook in Kazakhstan on media literacy for schoolchildren was approved by the state expert commission and recommended for use in educational institutions (Kim, 2021). Efforts have also been made in Uzbekistan to include MIL topics in school textbooks for 10-11 grades (<https://youtu.be/S3d98hF Uac>).

Theoretical approaches to teaching MIL at different levels of education can be used as follows:

#	Educational levels	Period	Approach
1	Early childhood education		Protectionism approach
2	Primary education	1-2 grades	Protectionism approach
		3-4 grades	An empowerment approach
3	Lower secondary education	5-9 grades	An empowerment approach
4	Upper secondary and secondary special education	10-11(12) grades, professional colleges, lyceums	The Creative Participation approach
5	Higher education	Bachelor's degree	The Creative Participation and critical thinking approach
6	Postgraduate	Masters	A knowledge societies-

	and adultery education	degree and professional development courses, internships	based approach
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Of course, we do not think it is necessary to introduce the practice of strict application of these approaches in the above educational periods and not to use other approaches in this process. However, these approaches can increase the effectiveness of education if they are based on:

- In the development of specific topics in a separate subject or other subject for MIL for the period of study;
- Creation of textbooks, development of educational resources;

The more clearly science and its content, goals and objectives are created, the more accurate the results will be.

However, in practical learning processes, teachers and trainers will be able to organize educational processes using different elements of approach based on their experience and creativity.

In addition, in Central Asia today, MIL is not taught directly at all levels of education. MIL projects and trainings are organized on the basis of grants from various international donors. MIL theoretical approaches also help to make these trainings effective.

We recommend the following approaches as more important in creating the content of MIL projects that are being distributed as international aid to developed countries, as well as Republics in Central Asia:

#	Approach	Definition	Implementation, efficiency, and sustainability	Implementation techniques, methods, and materials
<b>For long term global projects and educational levels</b>				
1	<b>The protectionist or inoculation approach</b>	The protectionist approach focuses on students being able to have the <b>appropriate skills to deconstruct texts</b> so that students' can protect themselves from the onslaught of negative messages and resist the ideological	This approach works well in kindergarten, primary school. Young people in primary and secondary education will have different careers in the future, and not all of them may be directly involved in	Implementation as a subject or workshops at kindergartens and primary schools, as well as online and offline trainings, workshops

		power of media texts. The protectionist approach aims at protecting vulnerable users against potential threats of media messages. As a result the media literate person is 'immunised' against the negative aspects of the media.	the information production industry. This approach builds fundamental knowledge and skills to protect themselves and their families from reclamation, manipulation, cyberbullying, hacking, and information attacks on social media in their mediated society.			systems and processes			
2	<b>An empowerment approach</b>	It enables access and makes sure people gain MIL competences so they can evaluate the content on their own and make a well-informed decision about whether to accept or reject it. emphasis on laws and regulations MIL is prioritized so that all residents, not just lobby groups, can promote the adoption of essential and mandatory rules and legislation. systems and processes are highlighted placing a focus on people and ensuring they get MIL competences so they can choose	Teaching textbooks based on this approach in school increases the MIL level of the younger generation, building their media and IT skills. Analyzes media products of all formats, differentiates between media promotion and advertising, advertising and PR concepts.	Implementation as a subject or unofficial workshops at kindergartens and primary schools, as well as online and offline trainings, workshops	3	<b>The Creative Participation approach</b>	In order to improve knowledge, engagement, and dialogue, the participatory orientation places a strong emphasis on the growth of social production and communication. This mindset supports people's autonomy, critical thinking skills, and capability to effectively direct their own personal development. The maximum level of resource sharing and social interaction is made possible by the Internet and the web.	Textbooks and trainings based on this approach provide practical assistance to young people in various social networks to express their opinions, participate in discussions in the field of communication, run their own page or blog. The widespread use of a direct creative approach in the course or training process allows learners to observe patterns of a number of information threats, such as bullying, manipulation, and trolling.	
					4	<b>Critical thinking approach</b>	<i>Analyzing the prevailing worldview and challenging the means of production are encouraged by critical media literacy. It examines the "behind the scenes" of ownership, production, and distribution and is grounded in social justice. An investigation into power, particularly the</i>	Critical thinking gives big opportunities to develop different approaches on the subject on how to use media. It provides in-depth materials and techniques for research in ML, trainings and courses at different	Online and offline trainings; teaching as a subject at secondary and higher education, publishing manuals, books, booklets

		<i>power of the media businesses and how they choose the narratives and messages that our audience is exposed to, is at the heart of critical media literacy.</i>	levels: analysing multimeanings of media messages, identifying stereotyped messages, dominant values, and ideologies in the media texts, evaluating the media culture and media representation – all of these concepts underscore the importance of the approach.	
5	<b>A knowledge based approach</b>	To accomplish Education for All, access to information is a requirement. MIL includes skills for finding, analyzing, and utilizing information, media, and other information sources, particularly those on the Internet, in an ethical and effective manner. Since MIL highlights the need for an extended concept of literacy, it is also related to high-quality education.	Textbooks and trainings based on this approach provide a wide range of practical knowledge, such as working in information systems and information environments in the Information Society, protecting themselves and their loved ones from information threats, professionally working in the field of information and social media, and gathering partners or customers to serve around them. The	online and offline trainings; teaching as a subject at secondary and higher education, conferences and seminars, manuals and books

			main richness of the information society is information and information technology. A person who can work properly in them can be a person in a media literacy	
<b>For short term local projects and trainings</b>				
6	<b>A convergenc e approach</b>	MIL will be presented with the collaboration and partnerships across government ministries and in different areas of public administration	This approach afterward can be continued within the projects conducted with “a knowledge societies-based approach” and “an empowerment approach”	Making contracts with state and non-state bodies , online and offline trainings; teaching as a subject at secondary and higher education, social Ads, conferences and seminars, manuals and books
7	<b>A cultural and linguistic diversity approach</b>	This approach serves to create media literacy projects based on the language, religion, and	In multi-ethnic countries, organizing separate trainings for each nation is a	conferences and seminars, online

		cultural outlook of people of all nationalities in the country.	complex, time-consuming process. But it can also be done and distributed through newspapers and magazines, radio, TV and the Internet. Project materials include people's cultural views, and, if necessary, literary and film characters in animation, video, and painting. This approach can be continued in "A knowledge societies-based approach".	and offline trainings, social Ads, online projects, video materials
8	<b>A human rights based approach</b>	Emphasis on nature of rights afforded to all sectors of society to promote responsible participation. It supports also religious and ethnic tolerance.	This approach can be continued in "a knowledge societies-based approach".	Online and offline trainings; conferences and seminars, manuals and books
9	<b>A gender and development based approach</b>	This approach supplies equal access to MIL competencies for all genders. It emphasises women /girls rights and empowerment without discriminating against men/boys.	This approach can be continued in "A knowledge societies-based approach".	conferences and seminars, online and offline trainings, social Ads, online projects, video materials

9	<b>A gender and development based approach</b>	This approach supplies equal access to MIL competencies for all genders. It emphasises women /girls rights and empowerment without discriminating against men/boys.	This approach can be continued in "A knowledge societies-based approach".	conferences and seminars, online and offline trainings, social Ads, online projects, video materials
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## 5. Conclusion

We believe that in order to increase the effectiveness of MIL projects, grants and conferences sponsored by many international organizations today, it is necessary to take a clear approach to set goals for each project. The following factors should be considered in this regard:

1. The level of development of the country and its main developed areas.
2. International legal norms in the country, conditions for freedom of speech and opinion, issues of gender equality.
3. The level of development and popularity of mass media in the country, and issues related to Internet access.
4. Short and long-term plans of the governments etc.

These factors play an important role in Central Asian countries. Prices of Internet access and its use, attitude to the media are not the same in countries. In addition, there is not much information in the national language on the Internet. The population mostly turns to world news in Russian, English and other languages. In Uzbekistan alone, middle-aged and older people turn to Russian sources, and younger Internet users turn to English-language sources.

In recent times, the popularity of news channels in Telegram messengers has also been observed. All this shows that actions aimed at increasing the level of media use and MIL of the population should be carried out based on local conditions, the level of language knowledge of the population, religious and cultural worldviews.

So far, training and grants for projects have been held in Central Asia based on foreign grants. Today, teams of trainers have also been formed in all countries. However, to increase the level of MIL in the region and to develop MIL competencies in the population, it is necessary to plan projects, considering the information policy and strategy, language, culture, living conditions of each country. At the same time, depending on the aims and objectives of projects, it is necessary to identify specific topic areas and scopes, and approaches to them based on these factors.

Theoretical approaches will be an important guideline for planning projects and training, achieving their objectives, and developing resources and materials.

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