



Evidence in Action

A K20 Center Research Brief

Empowering Media-Savvy Students - The Impact of Media-Powered Journalism Clubs in Secondary Schools

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Introduction

In today's digital world, students must be able to critically analyze, evaluate, and create media. However, traditional school curricula often do not explicitly teach these skills. The authors highlight that media literacy is essential for helping students navigate information, identify misinformation, and engage responsibly with media. Despite its importance, schools frequently lack structured approaches to developing these skills. This study addresses a key gap: understanding how media clubs, extracurricular student groups focused on media production and analysis, can support media literacy development. The research aims to clarify how specific media club activities (e.g., reporting, editing, and feedback) contribute to students' critical thinking, communication, and ethical media practices.

Methodology

Research Design:

The study used a mixed-methods design, combining quantitative and qualitative data. Quantitative data were collected first (via surveys), followed by qualitative data (interviews and document analysis) to deepen understanding of the findings.

Sample:

- Total participants: 100
- Students: 80 (survey respondents)
- Teachers: 10 (interview participants)
- Administrators: 10 (interview participants)
- Grade levels: Lower and upper secondary students
- Setting: Two secondary schools in Kigali City, Rwanda

Participants were selected using purposeful sampling and included students involved in media clubs and adults supporting those clubs.

Intervention Descriptions:

The intervention examined in this study is participation in school-based media clubs.



Students engaged in a range of structured and informal activities, including:

- News reporting and writing (producing articles and stories)
- Editorial work, such as:
 - Content editing
 - Peer review
 - Fact-checking
 - Layout and design
- Feedback processes, including peer, teacher, and audience feedback
- Use of social media for news sourcing and dissemination
- Mentorship from teachers, focusing on ethical journalism and media practices

Academic/developmental focus:

- Media literacy skills (analysis, evaluation, creation)
- Critical thinking
- Ethical media use and production
- Communication and writing skills

Delivery model:

- Extracurricular, club-based activities
- Collaborative and student-centered
- Hands-on, experiential learning

Implementation:

- Led by students, guided by teachers (media club advisors/mentors)

Dosage:

- Frequency: 2 sessions per week
- Duration: 90-120 minute sessions
- Timeline: 8 weeks

*Contacted Issa Kwigira to receive dosage

Data Analysis:

- Quantitative data (student surveys) were analyzed to identify patterns and relationships between participation and media literacy skills.
- Qualitative data (interviews and document analysis) were coded and interpreted to explain how and why media clubs influenced student outcomes.



Results

The study found a strong positive relationship between media club participation and media literacy development.

Key Findings

1. Improved Critical Thinking and Media Analysis

Students involved in reporting and writing demonstrated stronger abilities to:

- Analyze media content
- Evaluate sources
- Identify bias

2. Enhanced Writing and Communication Skills

Frequent participation in news writing improved:

- Writing quality
- Audience awareness
- Clarity and engagement

3. Stronger Ethical Understanding

Mentorship and editorial processes helped students:

- Understand ethical journalism
- Practice responsible media production

4. Benefits of Feedback

Feedback from peers, teachers, and readers contributed to:

- Improved writing (40%)
- Enhanced analytical skills (30%)
- Better audience understanding (20%)

5. Importance of Mentorship

Teacher mentorship was identified as a critical factor in:

- Developing ethical awareness
- Strengthening technical skills
- Supporting student learning

6. Social Media Skills Development

Students gained experience using social media for news, including:

- Opportunities: access to diverse information
- Challenges: need to verify and evaluate content

Media clubs helped students build resilience to misinformation.

Application into Practice

Media clubs offer a scalable, experiential approach to building media literacy in secondary schools.



Action Steps for Schools and Districts

- **Establish structured media clubs**
 - Provide opportunities for students to engage in reporting, writing, and editing
 - Ensure clubs include both production and analysis activities
- **Embed core media literacy activities**
 - News writing and reporting
 - Peer review and fact-checking
 - Editorial decision-making
- **Prioritize mentorship**
 - Assign trained teachers as media club advisors
 - Emphasize ethical media practices and critical evaluation
- **Integrate feedback systems**
 - Create routines for peer and teacher feedback
 - Incorporate audience feedback when possible
- **Leverage social media responsibly**
 - Teach students to verify sources and cross-check information
 - Use social platforms as learning tools, not just communication tools
- **Support collaboration and student leadership**
 - Encourage peer collaboration and shared decision-making
 - Allow students to take active roles in content creation
- **Allocate resources and institutional support**
 - Provide time, materials, and access to media tools
 - Align media club activities with broader school goals

Work Cited

Kwigira, I., Njuguna, J., & Irungu, F. (2024). The role of media clubs in developing students' media literacy skills in selected Rwanda secondary schools. *African Journal of Empirical Research*, 5(4), 583-593.