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**Research and Innovations in Media Education for Curriculum Improvement in Education**

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By

**CHRISTIANA ISIOMA NKENCHOR***Department of Linguistics and Communication Studies,  
University of Port Harcourt,  
Rivers State.***Abstract**

*This paper highlighted the need for research and innovation in media education for curriculum improvement in education. The paper first examines the concept of media and media education and proceeds to provide justification for media education and its inclusion in the school curriculum. The paper finally highlighted areas of felt need for research and innovations in media education for curriculum improvement. The paper opined that the media is an indispensable means for knowledge acquisition and that the various components of the media structure can be researched into in order to understand their specific roles in impacting knowledge and therefore explored to maximize their learning benefits. Thus, the specific educative roles of the radio, television, social media, internet and the print media can be isolated and incorporated into the school curriculum for educative purpose.*

**Keyword:** Research, Innovations, Media education, Curriculum Improvement.

Research endeavours have led to the emergence of various new fields among which is media education. Media as we all know play significant role in social transformation of every society and its citizenry. The availability of highly developed technology has made the media to become much more integrated into man's experience of the world and reality. Access to various media at home and public places have made them active contributors in the upbringing and socialization of the young ones. Several research efforts have shown that young people are spending more time interacting with the media (Baran 1976, Khan 2008). They gain lots of learning experiences that expand their ideological horizons and increases in them potential to be facilitators in the free exchange of diverse information and knowledge. Hence, media develops the cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains of the young ones both positively and negatively. Media educate the students on many social issues such as global warming, politics,

poverty, diseases, new invention as well as some social vices which the school don't ordinarily teach. Therefore there is need to build a strong connection between school and media culture of young people. This makes the inclusion of media education in school curriculum more important.

In the field of education, research process has been a continuous one. Educational practitioners have continuously been involved in searching for ways and means of improving the quality of education. In other words, educational practitioners are regularly involved in continuous experimentation and research to bring improvement in the overall practices in the education system. Research has proved a potent weapon in the hand of man for progress and ultimate social transformation. Scientific discoveries in science and technology brought with it the need for changes and innovations in the curriculum content of education. With the discovery of ICT, there is a felt need for innovations in the content of what is offered in schools and a change in the aims and structures of the teaching-learning process. This need is felt serious in several areas which include mass media education and its inclusion in the school curriculum.

The role of the media in social transformation cannot be ignored. The media have prominently played meaningful role in education, by informing, entertaining and educating the citizens. The Media is known to have played significant role in moulding the realities, perceptions and behaviours of adolescents in many distinct ways either positively or negatively. Even among school children of different age brackets, the media is generally acknowledged as one of the strong agents of socialization after the family and peer group.

The adolescents due to their psychological makeup remain most vulnerable to the influence of media messages as they tend to believe whatever they listen to, watch and read on radio, television, print materials etc. Hence the media can exert both negative and positive influence on the adolescents who are exposed to them. Several researches have been conducted on the role of the media in socialization and such related issues. There is a felt need for more research in media education to bring about a functional relationship between media and learning experiences. The significant role played by a given media can be researched into with a view to including them in the school curriculum. If this is achieved, it will go a long way in facilitating adolescent academic development and help reduce the uncontrolled negative influences of media messages hitherto experienced.

### **The Media and Media Education**

The media is a channel or vehicle through which something is carried or transmitted (Ifedayo, 2005). They extend people's ability to communicate, to hear messages and to see images that would have been unavailable. It follows therefore that the media is used to disseminate information on vital issues to the society. Mass media are channels that construct messages with embedded values and disseminate them in

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order to achieve specific goals (<http://www.understandmedia.com>). They are means of conveying information, concepts and ideas to both the general public and specific audience. The mass media are capable of achieving short-term, intermediate-term and long-term effects on the audience. Short-term exposes audiences to issues, create awareness and knowledge, alter outdated or incurrent knowledge and enhance recall of particular announcement or programmes. Intermediate term aims to achieve changes in behaviours, attitudes and improve understanding of social norms, while long term objectives focuses on restructuring of perceived social norms and maintenance of behaviour change (Albrecht and Robert, 2002). The mass media is known to perform three key functions, educating, entertaining and informing the populace. As a tool for education, the media does not only impart knowledge, but can be part of larger efforts (e.g social marketing) to promote actions. They play significant role in forming and influencing people's attitudes and behaviours. As a source of information, mass media offer facts and opinions about various events and situations to the audience. The media helps the public to know about the happenings within and outside their environment. As an entertaining agent, the mass media provides amusement and assist in reducing tension to a large degree. They offer comic reliefs, tell stories, show films, sports, news, columns on arts and fashion etc to entertain the audience. The mass media could be electronic, or print, they can be analogue or digital in nature. Among them are television, radio, movies, the internet, newspapers, magazines, books and other publications.

#### **Media Education**

Media education also known as media literacy is the process of teaching and learning about the media. It is a process of acquiring skills and knowledge that enables an individual to understand the media and the roles they play in his personal and social life. Orlu Orlu (2013) defined media education as a “process of making the people capable of understanding the mass media as much as possible so that they are able to defend themselves from their negative influences; The Media Literacy Project sees media education and literacy as the ability to access, analyze and evaluate media messages of all kinds. Baran (2004) saw media literacy as the ability to effectively and efficiently comprehend and utilize mass media content.

In the light of the above, media education is summarized to mean an education provided with the aim of teaching the young adolescents how to consume media messages critically. It is a type of training that helps the individual to understand the basic principles that governs the workings of the media in human society. This training includes a practical consideration of the special nature of each medium and as it is best utilized.

Art Silverblatt 1995, (cited in Baran 2004) identified five fundamental elements of media education. These include;

- (1) An awareness of the impact of the media: The media helps in bringing about change. If we ignore the impact of the media in our lives and society, then we will be caught up and carried along by that change rather than being in control and leading it.
- (2) Understanding the process of mass Communication: If we understand the components of mass communication and how they relate to one another, we can formulate or develop expectations of how they can serve us. How do the various media industries operate? What are their obligations to us? How do different media limit or enhance knowledge? Which form of feedback is most effective and why? All these questions are answered through media education.
- (3) Strategies for analyzing and discussing media messages: To thoughtfully consume media messages we need a strong foundation on which to base our thought and reflections.
- (4) An understanding of Media content as a text that provides insight into our culture and lives: We know a culture and its people by the use of communication. Media messages are increasingly dominated by cultural patterns, thus shaping our understanding of and providing insight into our culture.
- (5) The ability to enjoy, understand and appreciate media contents: Learning to enjoy, understand and appreciate media content includes the ability to approach media content from a variety of directions and derive from it many levels of meaning.

#### **Justifications for Media Education**

It is a Known fact that majority of school children (students/pupils) are now in contact with media, both traditional and digital media, including the internet. It is difficult now to distinguish between traditional media and new media. For example, one can read newspapers, watch television and movies in computer or a mobile phone. Today search engines such as Google, mama, etc, make it possible for one to virtually take a walk in a neighbourhood, in far away countries instead of looking at a map in an Atlas. Children with similar interest are able to be in contact with each other even though they might be in different countries.

To keep abreast with this rapid flow of information, there is need to understand the increasing role of the media in our daily lives and develop new skills and competence that support students to become “information literate”, and the easiest means to achieve this is by including media education in the school curriculum.

Changes in Media practices brought with it new dimension and innovations in the structure of modern society. This changes and innovations also need to be reflected in the school curriculum. This has become necessary due to the following reasons;

1. High rate of media consumption and the saturation of contemporary societies by the media
2. The ideological importance of the media and their influence as consciousness industries.

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3. The growth in the management and manufacture of information and its dissemination by the media.
  4. The increasing penetration of media into our democratic process.
  5. The increasing importance of visual communication in all areas.
  6. The importance of educating students to meet the demands of the future.
  7. The fast growing national and international pressures to privatize information.
- Orlu Orlu (2013; Pp 123-124).

The above provide justification for the inclusion of media education in the school curriculum. Media education will assist in mitigating the potential adverse effects of media and empower the students to be able to:

- Make critical decisions about the media messages they consume especially when there is no adult supervision.
- It will help the students play active role in the democratic process.
- The knowledge gained will help them to ask questions, reflect on information and become critically engaged and aware of the role of the media in the society.
- It will also help students develop the habits of inquiry and skills of expression they need to be critical thinkers, effective communicators and active citizens in the society.

### **Areas of Felt Need for Research and Innovations in Media Education for Curriculum Improvement**

Media education is not only necessary but vital, it is because of this that countries in North America, Europe and some countries in the Mediterranean and Asia have recognized the importance of media education, thus, included it in their curricula and used it effectively. Lots of researches need to be carried out before media education is accepted and included in our school curriculum.

Today's adolescents are surrounded by the media and readily have access to these media especially the new media of which the internet has prominent domineering influence. The major problem is that most content convey by these media are not only produced by the media professionals but also untrained individuals. These messages are unfiltered and constantly designed to have impact on cognitive, effective and psychomotor development of the adolescents. Unfortunately, most, adolescent doesn't have the necessary skills required to work out those messages. Research effort is needed to uncover the dangers these messages especially the unfiltered ones that saturate the social media have on the minds of the young adults. This will guide curriculum planners/developers to understand the urgent need for the inclusion of media education in school curriculum to help mitigate the negative influences of media messages.

Media education aims at promoting the development of individual student's personality and inculcate in them, knowledge that will enable them play active role in society development as well as become responsible citizens in our democratic society.

Hence, it is necessary to conduct research on what should constitute the content for media education curriculum. The findings of such research will serve as guide in developing curriculum content of media education at all levels bearing in mind that media play active role in promoting and sustaining democracy in every nation. Students often consume messages related to promotion and sustenance of democracy but need the assistance of a teacher to actually comprehend the needs to cultivate the attitude of playing active part in the nation's democracy. Implementing media education in classrooms, will sustain and strengthen students interest in political participation, thus promote the nations democracy and unity.

The Implementation of media education in Nigeria school system will not be possible without adequate manpower. Lack of qualified teachers in this field is a major challenge for media education in Nigerian schools. Thus research should be conducted to discover means of educating future teachers and training teachers in the field of media education. This will require developing curriculum content of media education in teacher-training programme. The content will reflect inculcation of skill that will enable the trainee ask questions, reflect on information conveyed by the media and become critically engage and aware of the role of media in the society. This will enhance their understanding of the subject matter and facilitate their teaching of media education in the classroom.

Research activities are regularly carried out to either add new knowledge or refine or modify existing knowledge. Research findings have been the major source of new ideas, skills in doing things and new methods of performing tasks and solving problems more effectively. Research outcomes have provided the variety of information needed in the world of work and learning and have helped to improve practices in medicine, engineering, communication and information technology (Adiele, 2016). In education, just like other sectors of economic activities, researches are also conducted to bring about innovations and changes in educational practices. One such area that represents areas of educational problems seeking for research attention is Media education. The media is an indispensable means for knowledge acquisition. The various components of the media structure can be researched into to understand their specific roles in impacting knowledge and therefore explored to maximize their knowledge learning benefits. These include (radio, television, internet, books, social media etc.). To understand the role of the various media in education, research is required. Within the framework of such research findings, the specific functions of the radio, television, newspapers, social media etc can be isolated and incorporated into the school curriculum. The thinking here is that each medium is been researched into as an indispensable means of knowledge transmission rather than being seen in the light of the negative messages they convey. There is hardly any school subject or courses offered at any level of education that does not have significant bearing on one of the components of the media especially print. Therein lies the need to explore further how a given medium can be used to enhance learning experience of

learners across all levels of the education system. Each of these areas are considered below:

### **Television**

The television as a medium of communication is an audio-visual that appeals more to its audience. Researches have shown that kids spend much time glued to the television watching cartoons. Other adolescents are also addicted to some television programmes such as telemundo, Clinic matters, super story etc. Television presents the learners with a world that is different from the one they live. This implies that if further researches are conducted on how the television can be employed as a means of teaching and learning, the learners will be more willing to learn and will be exposed to a wider variety of views and knowledge than the conventional teacher-student and chalk-talk method that is becoming outdated.

### **Movies/ Documentaries and video Games**

These are another form of media that catch the fancy of learners, especially the post primary and post-secondary students and to a large extent, primary school pupils. They have good qualities and can be meaningfully employed to enhance learning experiences in history, social studies, religious studies and indeed any other subject. For example, movies and documentaries that show the lives and times of Jesus Christ and other great men such as Prophet Mohammed, Nelson Mandela, Awolowo, Nnamdi Azikiwe, Herbert Macaulay, Tafawa Belewa etc can be used to teach history, government, political science, religious studies etc. They could also be used to teach the evils of war and the need for unity with such examples of war documentaries like the Nigeria-Biafra war, Vietnamese war, Burundi, Eritrea etc. It is clear here that these medium possesses the potential to enhance learning, but can only be possible if properly researched into.

### **Radio**

This is an electronic device that transmits human voice electro-magnetically through air waves over a long distance (Mathew, 2007). The importance of this medium in teaching and learning cannot be underestimated. It has been extensively used in enhancing learning experience in a variety of ways and many subject areas such as health, agriculture, current affairs, English language etc. Important health habits, disease preventions as in the case of laser fever, Ebola, etc and health promotion programmes are known to have been aired on radio. More researches are needed to further explore benefits of the radio and how it could be employed in classroom situation to teach. When this is done, it provides awareness for curriculum innovation in the school system.

### **Internet**

This appears to be the most popular form of media that the learners of this generation are exposed to. The internet is a global network of interconnected computers that communicate freely, share and exchange information (Paul, 2010). Majority of secondary school students and all students of higher institutions have access to the internet. They access several web search engines such as Yahoo, Google, Microsoft, Ask etc. The internet is a source of information on all issues covering every subject matter in the school curriculum. The need to explore the possibility of its inclusion in the school curriculum through research is therefore very imperative. This will help maximize their use in the teaching and learning process.

### **Social Media**

This is a group of application that employs mobile and web based technology to create highly interactive platform through which people share, discuss and modify user's generated content. Social media include Facebook, Whatsapp, Twitter, 2go, Eskimo, Imo etc. They are intellectual tool kits that enable the students exposed to them to build more meaningful personal interpretations and representation of the world. The availability and accessibility of mobile devices such as laptops, ipads, phones, tablets etc have made it possible for students to engage in conversations on different issues from which they gather lots of experiences that aid and improve them academically. Hence the need for research to explore how teachers at all levels of the education system can employ them in the teaching-learning process.

### **The Print Media**

The print media include Books, Magazines and Newspapers. Fortunately these days most books are accessed through the internet. Research efforts need to be directed towards making more books accessible through the net. Students can then be referred to the necessary website to access those books for academic purpose.

Access to both traditional and new media by students constitute a major challenge for the students in particular and society at large because most of these students that use the media and consume the information they dispatch are still not well equipped with the critical and analytical skills required to navigate the flood of information in our environment. The call for the inclusion of media education in Nigeria school curriculum is necessary, because we need not only to protect young people from the potential danger of the influences from the negative media message by guiding them not to consume certain media products but also teach young people to deconstruct the hidden ideology of the media messages. It is time to teach our students to have independent judgment about the values and ideologies hidden in some media messages so that they are not easily misled by the media.



### **Conclusion**

Researches and innovations in media education have become very paramount in the light of the role each of the medium play in the educative process. The media is known to exert positive influences on all categories of learners. These have helped to enhance their learning experiences in school subjects. Since the role of the media in educating the young mind is not in doubt, there is a need for innovations in the school curriculum to include media education. More research findings in the areas of television, movies/ documentaries and video games, radio, internet, the social media and print media are of necessity to further ascertain the relevance of each medium in enhancing teaching-learning and how these can be tapped to improve classroom teaching and learning at all levels of the education system.

### **Recommendations**

The following recommendations are made:

- (1) As a matter of urgency, educational planners should consider the adjustment of existing school curriculum at all levels of education to include media education. This has become necessary because of the new roles of the media in the educative process.
- (2) There is also the felt need for continuous exposure and re-training of teachers on the role of the media in teaching and learning and further teaches how to handle these media facilities to facilitate teaching. This has become necessary in the light of the obsolesce of the old method of teaching still adopted by most teachers.
- (3) Curriculum planners and indeed researchers in education equally need to develop the technical skills in media education research for continuous improvement in educational practices
- (4) Teachers can be encouraged to use internet and social media by creating online study group where students can communicate easily and share information and resources.
- (5) The various medium can be employed as instructional materials and used in teaching school setting.

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