



THE USE OF DIGITAL MEDIA FOR COMMUNICATION IN NIGERIAN EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

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Abstract

During the start of the dreaded COVID-19 lockdown, there was an abrupt transition from traditional methodology involving face to face teaching to online mode of instruction. This new mode of instruction posed serious challenge to traditional pedagogical tools to support an online educational environment: these tools posed serious challenges for teachers, students, the general public including parents. This article explores the benefits, and implications of digital media and communication in education in Nigeria. Lack of motivation, lesser attention span, too many distractions, lack of facilities, unawareness of specially-abled children, technical issues, health issues, lack of productivity, poor time management, and increased dependency were identified as the challenges of digital media and communication in education in Nigeria. Digital media and communication has influenced the life of students in several ways as it enhances their academic performance. This paper recommends that the Federal Government of Nigeria should be pragmatic in her approaches and must provide the required technical facilities such as laptops, Ipads and other smart devices for teachers and students as this will embolden the use of digital learning facilities in schools; training and retraining workshops should be organised by school administrators, principals, Parent-Teachers-Association for both teachers and students on how to use these advanced technological facilities proficiently.

Keywords: Digital Media, Communication, Education, Technology

Introduction

Digital media has enhanced communication in ways that its impact cannot be ignored in everyday life. It will not be an exaggeration to state that the digital media experience is worthwhile and has presented ample opportunities for the educational sector to thrive. According to Husna, Mulyati Karim, Hidayat, Farkhan, and Alek, (2022), Perguna, Apriyanti, and Kurniasih (2021) stated that in today's world, technology plays a critical role in both physical and virtual environments, and mobile phones provide access to a vast array of resources and communities beyond communication. The popularity of digital media has given rise to a new digital culture that has transformed the way teachers and students engage with each other. These media involve incorporating multiple digital software, devices, and platforms as tools for learning. The use of digital media in education is growing rapidly in today's age. This form of education is slowly phasing out the traditional forms of education that has been practised for a long time. With the introduction of virtual education, there has been a need for more incorporation of new digital platforms in online classrooms (Waterford, 2021). This enables the learning process to run smoothly. The use of social networking in education, coupled with face-to-face engagement, enables inclusiveness for learners, although the role of teachers needs to be well supported to develop successful digital pedagogies (White, 2012). At the same time, teachers encounter challenges in their attempts to incorporate digital literacy into teaching-learning activities (Kurniawati, Maolida, & Anjaniputra, 2018). Since technology use depends on how a teacher employs technology in the classroom, the generation gap and digital divide have become significant issues. In recent times, teachers have struggled to embrace digital technology, particularly new technologies, and are not aware of how technology can affect the quality of teaching and learning (Dudeney & Hockly, 2016).

Numerous studies have shown that overuse of digital media has been linked to a host of physical and mental health challenges in adolescents, including (but not limited to) creating opportunities for cyberbullying (Gorzig

& rumkin, 2013). In the same vein, insufficient teacher training, lack of vision of the affordances of technology to improve teaching and learning, inadequate time to experiment, and insufficient technical support (Mollaei & Riasati, 2013), it also increases the likelihood of students engaging in risky behaviour when exposed to such content, e.g., alcohol and substance abuse (Moreno, D'Angelo & Whitehill, 2016). It is on this background that the paper aims at exploring the place of digital media and communication in education in Nigeria.

Conceptual Clarification

Digital Media: Digital media refers to medium of digitized information broadcast through a screen and/or a speaker (Smith, 2013). This also includes text, audio, video, and graphics that are transmitted over the internet for viewing or listening to on the internet (Rayburn, 2012). Digital media is any form of media that uses electronic devices for distribution. This form of media can be created, viewed, modified, and distributed via electronic devices. Digital media cover commonly used software, video games, videos, websites, social media, and online advertising. Even though digital media is part of our everyday culture, educators still find themselves uncomfortable with replacing their paper advertising with internet marketing services (Lauryn, 2023).

Communication: According to Skillsyouneed.com, communication is simply the act of transferring information from one place, person or group to another. Every communication involves (at least) one sender, a message and a recipient. This may sound simple, but communication is actually a very complex subject. The transmission of the message from sender to recipient can be affected by a huge range of things (Skillsyouneed, 2023).

Education: Education is a social institution through which a society's children are taught basic academic knowledge, learning skills, and cultural norms. Education is an inseparable part of human life. Without it, human life is incomplete, painful, and hopeless. It stands for deliberate instruction or training. The term education is derived from the Latin word 'Educare' which

means to “bring up” (Hood, 2023).

Digital Media and Communication in Education in Nigeria

During the start of the dreaded COVID-19 lockdown, there was an abrupt transition of traditional pedagogical tools to support an online educational environment. The shift from traditional pedagogical tools to support an online educational environment became necessary due to several factors. One of the primary reasons is the advancement of technology and the widespread availability of the internet. With the increasing use of digital devices and online platforms, there was the growing need to adapt teaching methods to meet the changing needs of learners. According to Siemens (2005), the emergence of digital technologies has transformed the way information is accessed, shared, and communicated. Online educational environments provide opportunities for interactive and collaborative learning, allowing students to engage with course materials in a more dynamic and flexible manner (Siemens, 2005). Furthermore, the COVID-19 pandemic accelerated the adoption of online learning as schools and educational institutions were forced to temporarily close and transition to remote teaching. The shift to online education during the pandemic highlighted the importance of digital tools and resources in ensuring continuity of learning (UNESCO, 2020).

The flexibility and accessibility of online learning platforms also make it easier for students to access educational resources from anywhere, at any time. This is particularly beneficial for learners who may have limited access to traditional educational settings or who prefer a more self-directed approach to learning (Siemens, 2005). The shift from traditional pedagogical tools to online educational environments has become necessary to adapt to the changing technological landscape, provide more interactive and collaborative learning opportunities, and ensure continuity of learning in the face of external disruptions such as the COVID-19 pandemic. These tools posed serious challenges for teachers, students, school staff, and parents; however, they also created opportunities

for creative usage of digital media, and its communication technologies helped students stay engaged and ensure continued learning among students even during stay-at-home orders. These digital platforms have currently become the backbone of online learning and have helped to facilitate the shift from face-to-face instruction into an online learning environment (Rizvi & Nabi, 2021). Digital media uses different communication platforms, such as email, video, websites, photos, and slideshows. The platforms are most beneficial with the use of advanced technological devices, such as iPads, smart phones and laptops, that have also been found useful in many classrooms.

In a study, 'Humanizing STEM education through student-faculty pedagogical partnership' carried out by Alison Cook-Sather (2023), students tend to be more comfortable communicating by e-mail because it facilitates direct communication between students and instructors outside the classroom. Students can establish a dialogue at any time with their teachers on problems or questions. Through visual presentations, students and instructors can put forth their information with video and photos for context or engagement. Showcasing their topic through video and photos has become a major tool in the classroom for visual learners (Saringsson, 2023). Digital media and its communication technologies are useful in enabling students to brainstorm and collaborate in information and knowledge construction.

In higher education, students and teachers connect with each other through digital devices. It has influenced the learning of higher education students as it helps them to improve the academic performance. It provides a new mechanism where they can have discussions on their assignments, class schedules, etc. (Amankwaa, 2016). In the same vein, to improve educational quality and student engagement, many educators have recently incorporated social outlets, such as blogs and micro-blogs (e.g., Blogger, Wordpress, and Twiducate), and educational communication platforms (e.g., Edmodo and ClassDojo), to reinforce their teaching skills and the material covered in class. Through blog posts, students have the opportunity to use their voices to

formulate their own opinions, share their perspectives, and comment on their classmates' ideas. On micro-blogging platforms such as Twitter, Talkwall, and Edmodo, students can use hashtags to engage with their teachers and ask questions that can further increase engagement with the lesson being taught. Through the internet and websites like Google Classroom, Canvas, Blackboard, Slack, and Discord, students and teachers can obtain and share information and assignments in one place. This use of digital media in education allows students to access useful information, communicate, and find opportunities. As time has passed, different forms of digital media, such as laptops, video, and online research, have been incorporated into daily educational technology (Saringson, 2023).

Benefits and Implication of Digital Media to Education

According to Nap.Edu (2018), the main benefit of digital media to education is that it increases students' engagement. In addition, it helps students work through difficult concepts with multiple resources. Digital instruction also helps solve/address difficult topics that are often hard to understand. When students use digital technology in a course, all the students in the classroom have the opportunity to hone those digital skills. This implies that it gives teachers and instructors the opportunity to engage in dialogue based on mutual respect and reciprocity. Secondly, at the foundation of teaching and learning, there is a link between the virtual and the actual based on the fundamental human relationship. New programmes and classes are being added to the curriculum. These include web design, digital culture and animation.

The process of education through the use of digital media can be split up into four types of learning activities: passive, active, constructive, and interactive. It is shown that students will gain more knowledge if they use more interactive types of learning activities rather than more passive ones (Lohr, Stadler, Schultz, Florian, Sailer, & Fischer, 2021). Digital media in the classroom can bring new styles of learning that are more engaging and interactive (Buckingham, 2007). In the same vein, it allows students to also

showcase their skills and talents on social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. Students' work can also reach a larger crowd and receive comments and opinions via Reddit, YouTube, and Vimeo. Pages like these allow the public to display anyone's ideas and work. Students looking for work or internships to strengthen their resumes will also find opportunities online through sites such as LinkedIn.

The knowledge that students in education have related to media technologies varies, which would require some to have assistance while using them (Buckingham, 2007). Digital media usage allows educators to teach digital citizenship, which involves thinking critically when faced with digital dilemmas, behaving safely, and participating responsibly in the digital world (Probst, 2017). Video-based platforms such as YouTube and TikTok, which have been widely used for entertainment, are also increasingly being used for educational purposes (Yunus et al., 2019); such platforms can also be used to spread awareness of skills and competencies (Probst, 2017). The main benefits and implications of digital media in Nigeria includes:

1. **Increased Access to Information:** Digital media has democratized information access in Nigeria, allowing people to quickly and easily access news, educational content, and resources online (Onibere, 2019).
2. **Enhanced Communication:** Platforms like social media and messaging apps enable real-time communication, connecting people across vast distances and fostering social interactions (Olayinka, 2018).
3. **Empowerment of Citizens:** Digital media has provided a platform for Nigerian citizens to express their opinions, engage in public discourse, and hold government officials accountable (Onibere, 2019).

Implications of Digital Media in Nigeria involves the spread of misinformation which has to do with rapid dissemination of information through digital media has also led to the spread of fake news and misinformation, which can have serious consequences for society (Onibere, 2019). Onibere (2019) also went further in highlighting that disparities in access to digital technologies

and literacy levels can exacerbate existing inequalities in Nigeria, creating a digital divide between urban and rural areas, as well as between socio-economic groups. In the same vein Adebayo (2020) also stated that the collection and use of personal data by digital platforms raise concerns about privacy and data security among Nigerian users (Adebayo, 2020). Furthermore, Adebayo (2020) opined that the increasing digital presence in Nigeria has also exposed individuals and organizations to cybersecurity threats such as hacking, phishing, and data breaches.

Educational Policy on Digital Media and Its Implementation in Schools in Nigeria

Educational policy on the integration of digital media in Nigerian schools is primarily guided by the National Policy on Education. The National Policy on Education emphasizes the importance of technology in enhancing teaching and learning experiences for students (Ararume, 2015). The policy serves as a framework for educational institutions to incorporate digital media tools and resources into their curricula in order to improve educational outcomes. One of the key components of the policy is the provision of ICT infrastructure in schools, including computers, internet access, and other digital devices (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2013). The policy also requires teachers to be trained in the effective use of digital media tools to support instruction in the classroom (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2013).

In addition to the National Policy on Education, individual states in Nigeria have also developed their own guidelines and initiatives to promote the use of digital media in schools. For example, Lagos State has implemented the Smart School Initiative, which aims to equip schools with ICT equipment and provide training for teachers on how to effectively integrate technology into their lessons (Lagos State Ministry of Education, 2020). However, despite the policy guidelines and initiatives in place, there are challenges to the implementation of digital media in Nigerian schools. Limited access to technology, inadequate infrastructure, and a lack of resources in rural areas are some of the barriers that hinder the effective integration of digital media in education (Oyedokun, 2017). Overall,

while there are policies and initiatives in place to support the use of digital media in Nigerian schools, there is still work to be done to address the challenges and ensure that all students have equal access to technology in the classroom.

Challenges of Using Digital Media in Education in Nigeria

Amberstudent (2023) identified the following as Challenges of Digital Media in Education in Nigeria:

1. **Lack of motivation:** The first phase of online learning was seen with a high level of excitement. However, as the process continued, students have started to lose motivation. Most students feel as if they were staring at the wall and were hardly motivated every single day to get up and start online classes. One of the major problems faced by students in online classes is that they feel demotivated to sit in front of a screen for hours unless it's something of their interest. To resolve one of these challenges in online learning, the students can be asked to switch on their cameras to inculcate a sense of face-to-face interaction. More activities can be designed where a maximum number of students can participate. Playing games related to the subject can be a win-win to keep the students motivated. Incentives and rewards like provision of data can also serve as motivation.
2. **Lesser attention span:** Most of the time, in online classes, students' concentration deteriorates very easily. It becomes very difficult for the students to concentrate and grasp whatever is taught. This mostly happens because of a lack of interaction between the student and the faculty. If observed, the students are completely attentive in the initial minutes and understand whatever is taught; however, after a certain amount of time, the student does not understand what is being taught. It becomes difficult for students to concentrate and grasp because of the receding span of attention. Due to this, students often face difficulties while self-studying or preparing for exams. This is one of the major online learning

challenges that students deal with. To resolve this, students can organise and choose a specific space to study or sit for online classes. Here are some tips for organising your room, which will help you in making your room a comfortable space to study in. This helps train the brain and sets the atmosphere, which helps in studying better. Here are some tips on how to increase attention span. The students should try and set a specific study table in the corner of the room with minimal distractions.

3. Too many Distractions: Another common online learning challenge is being surrounded by a handful of distractions. When you are studying in an online learning environment, you are not in the public eye. No one can see or hear you. Such a situation encourages students to start engaging themselves in other things. In many cases, students log in to the meeting but surround themselves with many distractions. They will play games, listen to music, or watch a movie instead. Students distract themselves due to environmental factors.
4. Lack of technological facilities: Nowadays, almost everyone you come across has a smartphone. It doesn't matter if it is a teenager or a grandparent. More or less they have a basic knowledge of how to use it. The only requirement online classes have is a laptop, a desktop or a mobile phone with an internet connection. However, there are still some classes of the economy which cannot afford these facilities and are not able to benefit from online learning. The lack of these facilities still continues to be one of the major online learning challenges.
5. Unawareness of specially-abled children: All children have equal right to educate themselves in whichever way possible. But during online learning, how will specially abled children cope with the rest of the students? The visually impaired students learn with the help of braille, whereas hearing-impaired students study the noises in detail. In online classes, most of the knowledge is imparted through videos. In the phase of online learning, many students who are specially-abled are ignored as videos are one of the main graphics used for online teaching.
6. Technical glitches: The entire population is distributed in rural as well as urban areas. Strong connectivity is not always offered. This creates barriers in the process of online learning. Additionally, sometimes due to overloading on a single site, there are high chances of the website crashing. This delays the classes, and students do not get enough time to cover the syllabus, plus they rarely understand what is going on in the lectures. During online lectures, this is one of the most common online learning challenges faced by students, which causes students to miss their classes.
7. Health issues: The online classes schedule is the same as the 6-7 hours of school. Continuous screen time for such a long period of time takes a toll on a student's health. Students complain about frequent headaches and fatigue. Online classes disrupt the daily routine to some extent, as there are no specific meal times. Exercising is usually overlooked, which decreases the body's ability to stay fit and causes frequent illness. Health issues are one of the commonly faced online learning challenges. To make sure students do not go through this, the students should focus on taking small breaks between two (2) lectures and try to stay away from any screen during the break. Teachers and students should go for a walk, or take a power nap. Additionally, there are some of the best health care apps for students that help them monitor and check their health.
8. Boredom: One huge drawback of online classes is that students have to sit in one place for hours. This also encourages laziness. The student is tired most of the time and is least interested in taking up another activity. The students may choose to sit in one place, scrolling through their phones rather than doing something productive. This can be a major online learning challenge for students in the longer run. Students can take up their hobbies or try finding new interests. Here are a few tips to stay proactive during online

studying. This was one of the problems faced by students in online classes on a maximum level. Post Covid-19 pandemic, many opportunities have been explored, and one of them is work-from-home internships.

9. **Poor time management:** Greater and effective time management causes lesser anxiety and results in better academic performance for the student. In reality, many students struggle to manage their studies with their day-to-day lives. For instance, if work is assigned to students, many of them are seen starting the work a day before the submission. This is a very common example of poor time management. This online learning challenge can lead to poor academic performance as they can face anxiety. It is essential to keep a balance between the two. Here are some tips that will guide students in time management.
10. **Increased dependency:** In an online environment, it is very easy for students to depend on the internet, artificial intelligence tools, or even an acquaintance from the class to complete their assignments. Students choose to copy work from external sources and submit the assignment. Students are rarely encouraged to do assignments and often go for shortcuts. In order to encourage participation and communication among the students, teachers should assign group assignments. However, this usually happens as students lack creativity and are demotivated to work and become dependent on others to complete the assignment. Increased dependency on others is also one of the major online learning challenges. In such cases, the tasks that are assigned can be assigned keeping in mind the common interests of students.

Conclusion

The article was aimed at exploring digital media and communication in education in Nigeria. Conclusively, students and teachers connect with each other through the use of digital media platforms. Though a lack of technological facilities in the educational sector in Nigeria has continued to be a major challenge,

Notwithstanding, digital media and communication have influenced the lives of students in several ways as they enhance their academic performance. In the same vein, it allows students to showcase their skills and talents in navigating digital media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. If digital media is adopted and implemented in the educational sector in Nigeria, it will enable both students and teachers to reach a larger crowd and receive comments and opinions via such communication channels.

Recommendations

In considering the challenges, benefits and implications of digital media and communication in education in Nigeria, the following recommendations are highlighted:

1. **Supranational institutions, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), school administrators, and the Federal Government of Nigeria** must deliberately prioritise digital media and communication in Nigeria as an emerging technology of the 21st century. The government should enact laws and make favourable policies that will encourage its adoption in both public and private schools.
2. **The Federal Government of Nigeria** should be pragmatic in her approach and must provide the required technical facilities, such as laptops, iPads, and other smart devices, which will encourage the use of digital learning facilities in schools.
3. **Training and retraining workshops** should be organised by school administrators, principals, and Parent-Teacher Associations for both teachers and students on how to use this advanced technological facility proficiently.
4. **Teacher and student education programmes or curriculum in schools** should plan instruction around digital media use for classroom purposes. As technology changes, so should pedagogy expand to match the new available tools that teachers and students will encounter.

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