

A DISCOURSE ON CHILD MEDIA LITERACY

Allen Nnanwuba Adum
Department of Mass Communication,
Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Anambra state,
Nigeria.
allenadum@gmail.com
+2348037585067

Ojinime Ebelechukwu Ojiakor
Department of Mass Communication,
Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Anambra state,
Nigeria
oojinime@yahoo.com
+2348162831637

Winnie Ugochi Opara
Department of Mass Communication,
Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Anambra state,
Nigeria
winnie.opr@gmail.com
+23455614681

Abstract

This paper discusses child media literacy in an exposé format. The media mould people's perception about the world and their environment. They often times do not offer reality, but mere representations of reality. It therefore takes media literacy to understand the distinction between the media and the real world. Media audience members, though really active, are not necessarily knowledgeable of media realities vis-à-vis social realities. This is especially the case with children. Media content can directly and indirectly provide a guide for action for children. The various media effects on children are expressed either as undesirable or beneficial. The only way to help children explore their media world positively is to impact the media literacy skills in them. Being trained to be in charge of their own learning, children can employ the various media literacy skills they learn, to overall national development. This being the case, the need arises to equip children with the knowledge required to face the media literacy challenge. Poverty, non-integration into the school curriculum, poor project implementation, financial constraints, and lack of efficient teachers were identified as possible obstacles to child media literacy in Nigeria. It was therefore recommended that parents, media professionals and ultimately the government should be ready to take proactive steps to ensure that the Nigerian child is media literate.

Keywords: Media literacy; child media literacy; digital literacy; media realities; social realities

Introduction

Since the inception of mass communication, there had been growing concern on effects of the mass media on individuals and society. The mass society theorists are of the assumptions that the media are a powerful force, capable of subverting the social order, norms and values of the society; directly influence the mind of average people and transform their views; ruin individual lives and create social problems (Baran and Davis, 2012:66). With the continuous growth of technology, and the complexities of communication and culture, understanding the media, their roles and effects on the audiences, and their relationship with other institutions becomes important.

In considering the importance of media education, Buckingham (2003:5) holds that “The media are major industries, generating profit and employment; they provide us with most of our information about the political process; and they offer us ideas, images and representations (both factual and fictional) that inevitably shape our view of reality. The media are undoubtedly the major contemporary means of cultural expression and communication: to become an active participant in public life necessarily involves making use of the modern media. The media, it is often argued, have now taken the place of the family, the church and the school as the major socializing influence in contemporary society.”

In view of this assertion, how much children, who are the future of the society, understand media content and use the same becomes crucial.

The concept of media literacy

Though the word ‘literacy’ implies “ability to read and write”, ‘media literacy’ goes beyond the mere “ability to read and write” media messages, to include the acquisition and application of critical and analytical understanding of the media, their operations, and relationship with other social institutions.

The media literacy movement according to Baran and Davis (2012:414), is based on various perceptions of which some are:

- The audience members though really active, are not necessarily knowledgeable of what they do with media.
- Access to media and media content affect the audience’s needs, chances, and choices.
- Media content can directly and indirectly provide a guide for action.
- It is essential that people realistically assess how their interaction with media messages can influence the purposes that interaction can serve them in their environment.

- People's use of media and the gratification derived from them are determined by the differing levels of "cognitive processing ability" of the audience members.

There are many scholarly definitions of media literacy. Anderson (1981:22) defines media literacy as "the skilful collection, interpretation, testing and application of information regardless of medium or presentation for some purposeful action" (as cited in Potter, 2010). According to Silverblatt and Eliceiri (1997:48), it is "a critical thinking skill that enables audiences to decipher the information that they receive through the channels of mass communication and empowers them to develop independent judgments about media content". In a simplistic way, the National Leadership Conference on Media Literacy (Rubin, 1998:3) defines media literacy as "the ability to access, analyze, evaluate, and communicate messages" (as cited in Baran and Davis 2012:416).

Principles of media literacy

The media mould people's perception about the world and their environment. The media often times do not offer reality, but mere representations of reality. It takes media literacy to understand the distinction between the media and the real world. According to Turrow (2003: 27), there are six basic principles of media literacy.

Principle 1: Media materials are constructions - The media do not reflect reality, but construct it. They also shape people's sense of reality. Media materials are always designed for specific purposes. They carry values and ideologies. A media literate understands how highly constructed and value-laden media messages are.

Principle 2: Media and their contents have commercial implications - Most media organisations are established for profit-making purposes. Thus, their activities are geared towards revenue generation. All media contents (including 'news') are for commercial purposes (Sparks, 1999, p. 50). With media literacy, one becomes aware of how media ownership and the commercial motives of the media affect media productions, operations and distributions.

Principle 3: Media and their contents have social and political implications - The media are carriers of socio-political interests, values and ideologies. As constructors of reality, media can powerfully construct messages that could cultivate various effects in individuals and the society. They could be used to propagate ideologies, values, and other aspects of culture; set agenda; form public opinion; confer status; etc.

Principle 4: Media contents are presented within the genres of news, entertainment, information, education, and advertising - Each of the genres are characterised by their codes, conventions and attributes which determine how messages are constructed, transmitted and interpreted. A media literate person easily identifies media contents in their forms and genres; and understands how these attributes affect media messages.

Principle 5: Media audience are active - There is a "meaning-making negotiation" at the audience reception of media messages. Individuals have different perception of media messages. They do not receive media messages the same way. Their meaning-making experiences undergo some selective processes and could be influenced by some demographic, socio-economic, and

psychographic factors. A media literate individual understands the ‘activity’ of the media audience in constructing meanings out of media messages; how media contents convey multiple meanings; and why people’s perception of media messages differ.

Principle 6: Media representations influence people’s perception of reality – How the media construct messages influence people’s perception of reality. People’s perceptions of issues depend on how the media portray such. A media literate person understands the values and ideologies behind media content; how media confer status on issues, individuals, people, organizations, groups, etc. and reinforce those statuses.

Stages of media literacy

According to Elizabeth Thoman, the Founder and President, Centre for Media Literacy, Los Angeles, media literacy consists of three stages (Malik, 2008) as follows:

- The first stage is **the awareness of the importance of managing one’s media “diet”**. That is, the critical selection of the media contents one exposes oneself to and the reduction of the time spent with television, videos, electronic games, films and various print media forms.
- The second stage is **the acquisition of specific skills of critical viewing**. This implies, learning to analyse and question what is in the frame, how it is constructed, and what may have been left out. Skills of critical viewing are best learned through inquiry-based classes or interactive group activities, as well as from creating and producing one’s own media messages.
- The third stage is **going behind the frame to explore deeper issues**. That is, the critical engagement with the media. Here, one is equipped with the ability to pose questions; identify fallacies; and link the ideas or scenes in a media message. He or she can discern the source or producer of the message; its purpose; the beneficiaries and losers; and the judge. This stage of social, political and economic analysis considers the meaning-making experience of everyone in the society and how the media drive the global consumer economy.

Why child media literacy?

The growth of technology has continued to create an environment filled with media opportunities ranging from newspaper, magazine, radio, television, film to Internet and related new media technologies such as mobile phones. Since the inception of television, there had been growing worries on the impact of the media on children. Several studies show the susceptibility of children to media effects (Bandura, 1986; Gerbner et al, 1976; Anderson et al, 2003; Livingstone, 2002; McQuail 2005). The various media effects on children are expressed either as undesirable or beneficial. Among the assertions of the undesirable effects as summarised by

McQuail (2005:486) are: violence and aggression; an increase in social isolation; reduction of time and attention to homework; increased passivity; reduced time for play and exercise; reduced time for reading; undermining of parental authority; premature sexual knowledge and exposure; unhealthy eating and obesity; promotion of anxiety about self-image leading to anorexia; and depressive tendencies. The beneficial effects include: the provision of a basis for social interaction; learning about the wider world; learning of prosocial attitudes and behaviours; educational effects; help in forming an identity; and developing the imagination.

To encourage the beneficial effects and curb the negative influence of media on children, a child's ability to make distinction between reality and fantasy is essential. This is because; the world is media-saturated. Media and communication technologies continue to become more integrated into people's daily lives. With the increased availability of the various forms of mass media such as radio, television, newspapers, magazines, computers and video games, pop music, and the widespread use of the internet, children are exposed to media messages more often than not. A study conducted by Common Sense Media revealed that 52 percent of children 5 to 8 years old used some form of mobile media (Ladner, 2012). They spend most of their time in front a screen. Studies show that children spend an average of 7 hours with the various media than any other activity (Gerbner et al, 1976; Anderson, 1979). Paediatrics' and behavioural scientists' reports reveal a strong relationship between exposure to media and some health related issues like obesity, substance use, delinquencies, increased sexual activity, etc. in children (America Academy of Pediatrics, 2001).

Media literacy will help children understand that media materials are constructions intended to convey ideas and values. They will also be knowledgeable of the powerful influence of the media on the society. With media literacy skills, a child controls his or her media consumption rather than the media controlling him or her.

The implications of internet access to children

Studies show continuous rise in the use of the internet among children (Rumble, 2011; NTIA, 2011; Holloway, et al. 2013). Internet usage has been popularised among children. This high level of internet access among them is commonly noticed in their use of the various social sites created for adults (Holloway, et al. 2013). With the continuous growth in technology, thousands of mobile technologies are being introduced into the society every day. This makes the internet more accessible to children as parents would always make such provisions for them. Though they enjoy surfing the net, they rarely understand most of the contents therein (Rumble, 2011).

Aside the enjoyments (game play, chatting, etc) they derive from the internet, children's online engagement helps to develop "emergent digital literacies" in them. It can support their cognitive and social development. At the same time, they are most likely to be exposed to many undesirable contents on the net.

Cognitive effects

Longitudinal studies reveal positive relationship between child internet access and achievement at school (Cavanaugh et al, 2004). The studies discovered that frequent use of the internet and computer proficiencies has positive impact on children's academic performance. Internet access enhances the language and cognitive development of children (Holloway, et al. 2013). However, excessive access to the internet could make them displace other activities

including the educational. Moreover, the internet just like other mass media is a domain of both the good and the bad.

Social influence

With their emerging digital skills, children gratify their social needs with the internet. Through the internet, they socialise with their peers and family members. The more they socialise, the more they learn and are integrated into the society. Such opportunities are available to them through the social networks (*Yahoo, Facebook, Twitter, Wasup*, etc.). Using electronic mails, messages, video conferencing, etc. they sustain their social world.

However, in their bid to gratify their social and cognitive needs, they are equally exposed to some dangers. Exposure to the dark side of the medium could have undesirable effects on them. Studies report the involvement of children in many internet crimes such as fraud, pornography; etc. (Miller, et al., 2009). As they are exposed to the various sites on the net, they are most likely to experience criminal indulgences, sexual abuses and of recent the “allure” of terrorism. The only way to help children explore their digital world positively is to impact the digital media literacy skills in them. This would help them develop a better understanding of the digital media.

Media literacy as the child’s right

There had been several global debates on ways of countering the undesirable media effects on children. These debates attracted the global declarations of certain policies to ensure the child’s healthy consumption of media materials.

The UN Convention on the rights of the child

The United Nations’ Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) of 1989, a universally agreed set of non-negotiable standards and obligations to serve as basic standards on which countries all over the world set minimum entitlements and freedoms (civil, cultural, economic, political, and social rights) to be respected by governments for the people under the age of eighteen years (United Nations Human Rights, 2014). The convention defined a child as “every human being below the age of eighteen years unless under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier”. The rights were set in 54 articles and two optional protocols. Among three articles which are concerned with media and children, two (Articles 13 and 17) emphasise on children’s right to freedom of expression and access to information.

In Article 13, the convention agreed that children have the freedom to seek, receive, and impart information and ideas of all kinds in any forms or media of their choice; though their exercise of such rights could be subject to restrictions where necessary. Article 17 obliges the media to ensure that children’s access to the media content contribute to their social, spiritual, and moral well-being and physical and mental health.

Since 1990, there have been many other international and regional meetings on children and media aimed at improving on children’s media literacy and their protection from harmful media contents. Examples of these meetings as recorded by von Feilitzen and Bucht (2001) are the Bratislava Meeting of 1994, the First World Summit on Television and Children of 1995, the

UN Committee on the Rights of the Child of 1996, the First All African Summit of 1997, the Second World Summit on Television for Children of 1998, A West African Regional Summit on Media for Children of 2000, the Third World Summit on Media for Children, New Directions in Media Education of 1995, Educating for the Media and the Digital Age of 1999, and many others.

Modes of child media literacy

Several scholars have implicitly or explicitly, emphasized on the various influence of the media on children. The assumptions behind the various studies could be summarised under three ideas. The first is that, exposure to media messages has direct and indirect effects on them. At the point of exposure, the media influences can trigger in them, immediate effects of cognition, attitudinal, emotional, behavioural and physiological changes. Over time, the media effects gradually build up to shape and reinforce their knowledge structures, beliefs, and habits. The second assumption is that many of the media effects are harmful to individuals. The third is that, the negative effects can be counteracted. That means, there should be ways of protecting children or helping them protect themselves from these undesirable effects. These strategies are popularly known as media literacy “interventions” (Potter, 2010). These interventions can help children develop their knowledge of media effects; control their perception of reality; and curb the various undesirable effects media could have on them.

The media literacy interventions have four mediating factors - agent, target, treatment, and expected outcome (Potter & Byrne, 2007). The agent is the person (parents, guardians, teachers or researchers) carrying out the interventions. The agent can also be the means or forms (film, documentary, books, text messages, e-mails, etc.) of delivering these interventions. The target is the person (child or children, students) for whom the interventions are meant. The targets are the recipients of the interventions. The treatment is the message and plan of the intervention which may come in form of a set of critical viewing skills, media production skills, etc. that can change the child’s perspective during exposure. The treatment could be in many forms of literacy such as content, medium, etc. The expected outcomes are some aspects (attitudes, beliefs, emotions, behaviors, and cognitions) of the target which are expected to change as a result of the intervention received. These interventions are classified under natural interventions and constructed interventions. The natural interventions were developed by parents while the constructed interventions were designed and formally tested by experts.

Natural interventions

The natural interventions are those mediating strategies parents and guardians apply on their children. These interventions are purposively planned and applied on children’s daily lives. The interventions have no theoretical bases. They are rather found out of daily life experience with the intention to protect children from negative media influences. A widely referenced way of arranging the natural interventions is the use of a scheme developed by Valkenburg et al (1999). Valkenburg and his colleagues argued that there are three natural interventions: restrictive, social co-viewing and instructional interventions.

Restrictive intervention

This involves the prohibition of the target or targets (child or children) from using certain media. The parents or guardians can also set rules for the children to limit their exposure to the media. Desmond, Singer, Singer, Calam, and Colimore (1985) affirm it as an effective

method while Nathanson (2002) contend that it was observed to have less positive effects towards the expected outcome of the parents (Potter, 2010).

Social co-viewing

This method implies using the media together with the children. At the point of exposure, the parents are there to aid their understanding of the media content. The parents become aware of the kinds of media contents the children enjoy most and why such contents gratify them. Though, (Lawrence and Wozniak, 1989; Rideout, Foehr, Roberts, & Brodie, 1999) show that this method is rarely in use, researchers discovered that it has more positive outcome especially when the contents in question are of educational value (Potter, 2010).

Instructional intervention

Here, the agent applies various verbal techniques when using the media with the targets. Like the co-viewing technique, this method is found to be relatively rare. Researchers discovered that parents mostly use it to discuss the reality status of media contents. While using the media with children, they hardly comment on the offensive aspects of the content; they quickly divert to other aspects of the content or shut it off completely rather than discuss it with the children (Austin 1993). In most cases, they do not talk. The instructional intervention strategy was discovered to be effective in helping children curb the negative effects of the media. Children who receive the instructive intervention were observed to be less vulnerable to media's negative effects (Potter, 2010).

Constructed interventions

The constructed interventions are those special treatments designed by researchers to promote some aspects of media literacy among targets (Potter, 2010). Following the employment of these interventions, is the measurement of the child's level of media literacy to ascertain whether the intervention achieved its aim. Through correlational experiments, focus groups, qualitative surveys, and participant observations, agents ascertain how media literacy skills can regulate media effects (Potter, 2010). Potter categorizes the media literacy interventions experiments according to media content, sexual portrayals, health, stereotype, and fear inducing content.

Violence content

Much empirical attention has been given to this content area. Several assessments have been aimed at reducing the aggressive effects of violent media texts (Cantor & Wilson, 2003). Some of the intervention yielded positive outcomes while many cultivated the aggressive attitudes of the targets (Byrne, 2009; Cantor & Wilson, 2003).

Sexual content

Among various studies on the general influence of the media, many examine the effects of sexual contents on audiences, while a few studied the effects of media literacy interventions critical viewing skills (Potter, 2010). Some of the studies were successful. Among them is that of

Pinkleton, Austin, Cohen, Chen, and Fitzgerald (2008) (as cited in Potter, 2010). Pinkleton and colleagues examined a teen-led media literacy intervention (a 5-lesson media curriculum targeted mainly at middle school students) and discovered that the participants of the intervention “were less likely to overestimate sexual activity among teens; more likely to think they could delay sexual activity; less likely to expect social benefits from sexual activity; more aware of myths about sex, and less likely to consider sexual media imagery desirable compared to participants in a control group” (Potter, 2010).

Health

Studies like (Choma, Foster, & Radford, 2007; Evans et al., 2006; etc) found that media literacy interventions on health especially on the issues of smoking and eating disorders were found to be successful in combating the effects of media’s glamorization of smoking; helping adolescents and young adults have a better understanding of media’s portrayals of models; and avoid cultivating eating disorders (Potter, 2010). However, those targeted at preventing children and adolescents from cultivating unhealthy attitudes and behaviours as a result of exposure to advertisements were not that successful.

Stereotypes

Interventions designed and tested on media-induced stereotypes were targeted at reducing viewers’ stereotypes in connection with age, gender roles, and race (Cohen, 2002; Nathanson, Wilson, McGee, & Sebastian, 2002; Ramasubramanian & Oliver, 2007). The outcome of some of the experiments were less positive evaluations of stereotypical messages and less acceptance while others failed or boomeranged (Potter, 2010).

Fear-inducing content

Several studies like that of Slone and Shoshani (2006) discovered that media literacy intentions on fright inducing content succeeded in helping children understand horror content and reduce fright. Some found that the use of media literacy skills could help media audience control the anxiety and fear that could stem from some news content and even add to their positive experiences (Potter, 2010). However, Jeong, et al (2012) observed from the numerous studies on the media literacy interventions that, there were factors (age, setting, etc) that must have influenced the results of the tests. Though studies have not tested whether these factors correlate to yield positive effects, frequency of media literacy intervention sessions may cause differences in the outcomes.

Integrating digital media literacy in children

Digital media literacy goes beyond technological knowledge. Digital media literacy involves the multiple literacies that are embedded in the use, understanding and creation of digital media. Here, children learn how to use the digital devices especially computer with the internet, and acquire the skills that accompany the technological knowledge (that is, how to use digital programmes such as word processors, web browsers, publishers, databases, etc.). With digital media literacy, they would acquire the set of skills required to understand and critically evaluate digital media contents. They also become equipped with the abilities to create digital materials and communicate effectively with the digital media tools.

Digital media literacy skills could fall under the categories of technological literacy, information literacy, visual literacy, communication literacy and social literacy. Technological

literacy is the profound knowledge of digital technology and constitutes both the user and technical computing skills. With digital technological literacy, children can acquire some skills such as film editing, software designing, etc. Information literacy is the ability to “locate, identify, retrieve, process and use digital information optimally” (Karpati, 2011). It also includes the ability to evaluate and assess the credibility and originality of information. With digital media literacy children would be able to critically evaluate news stories from the numerous news sources on the net; access and assess online information and sources. Visual literacy is the ability to understand and create digital visual contents. Such skills such as graphics designing, web designing, etc. can help children develop their visual creative skills. Communication literacy is the ability to integrate ideas from multiple sources and use multiple sources to share data and knowledge. It involves knowing how to create or represent information using digital tools. Social literacy is the ability to interact and enjoy other media activities that digital technology offer, with other users. With digital social literacy skills, children can cautiously explore the numerous potentials the social networks offer.

Integrating media studies into school curricula

Employing the routine approach to imparting media literacy in children is essential. Here, media studies are integrated into schools’ curricula. This implies making space for media studies in students’ and teachers’ education curricula as an integral part of every subject or as an independent subject of its own (Zhang and Zhu, 2014; Potter, 2010).

There is a relevance of media literacy in every subject. For instance, in History class, students may be linked to the impact of media in shaping historical events and their views of history; in Geography class, they can analyse how news coverage influence people’s perception of other people in the different parts of the world; in the class of Sciences, they may look at how the media shape the ideologies and activities of scientists; in Music class, they may consider how financial pressures affect music productions, how to interpret music content, how musicians are portrayed by media, and how the representation influence people especially children, etc. Teachers can incorporate media analysis and media production activities into the school’s curriculum by designing an elective subject on media studies. This will give both the teachers and students more time and space to explore the various aspects of media literacy. The students can be engaged in the creation of media contents in their varying formats of newspapers, magazines, radio and television programmes, films, websites and other digital materials, etc.

Child media literacy in Nigeria

Being trained to be in charge of their own learning (taking an active rather than passive role in acquiring knowledge and skills), children employ the various media literacy skills acquired to overall national development. They are empowered to become full participants in the social, political, economic and cultural spheres of the society.

In 1989, the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child assigned certain obligations to the media in the course of implementing the rights of children (von Feilitzen and Butch, 2001). The primary aim of such responsibilities is to guarantee that children access to media contents contribute to their cognitive, social, and psychological development.

On 16 April, 1991, Nigeria ratified the CRC, and passed the Child's Rights Act in 2003 (*Premium Times*, 01 June, 2014). Several conferences and meetings have been held to uphold the rights of children, but these meetings have in most cases excluded the media literacy of children as an essential aspect of their development that helps advance their rights.

On 30 July, 2008, three organisations concerned with the empowerment of children and youths and the promotion of the benefits of information and communication technologies (the Youth Media and Communicative Initiative (YMCI); the British Council, Nigeria; and the National Film and Video Censors Board (NFVCB) held the 1st Africa Media Literacy Conference in Abuja. Among items on the agenda of the conference was how to foster child media literacy in Africa by integrating media education into school curricula across the continent (Onumah, 2008). In the same vein, the Youth Media and Communication Initiative (an international non-profit organisation dedicated to children and media) has designed a project, "The Centre for Media Literacy" to train children and youths on media studies, and also work with the Nigerian Union of Teachers (NUT) to integrate media literacy into schools' curricula (WCE, 2010).

The National Film and Video Censors Board reports that it has commenced a national media literacy campaign with the aim of fostering the value and understanding of the impact of media in children's development and national building; increase their appreciation and passion for the art of film and creative art generally; etc. (<http://www.nfvcb.gov.ng/pages.asp?pageid=365>). The organisation's primary aim is to see to it that media literacy is integrated into school curricula. From their report, 16 schools across the nation have been visited and had the movement established. However, there are neither studies to show the outcomes of these projects, nor reports to show that media literacy has been integrated into the Nigerian primary and secondary schools' curricula.

Possible impediments to child media education in Nigeria

Poverty, non-integration into the school curriculum, poor project implementation, financial constraints, and lack of efficient teachers could be the possible obstacles to child media literacy in Nigeria.

Non-integration into the school curriculum

The major obstacle to child media literacy in Nigeria is the non-integration of media literacy in children's school curricula. Media studies should be an independent subject (Minkinen, 1978). There are no education policies in the country to accommodate media literacy in the school curricula. Thus, children are not taught media studies at school.

Poor project implementation

Nigeria has for long ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, but the implementation of the policies have not been observed (*Premium Times*, 01 June, 2014; Onumah, 2008). Some non-governmental organisations had made efforts to see to the establishment of media studies in Nigerian primary and secondary schools, but there are no progressive reports to show that such projects were implemented.

Financial constraints

Most schools lack goods libraries and do not have enough money to equip their facilities. In some schools for instance, one can hardly find more than one or two computer systems installed for students' learning. In most cases, they are rarely used.

Lack of efficient teachers

Most teachers may not be aware of anything like media education, because it was not taught to them. If teachers are not trained to teach, how would they impart media into students? Day by day, the present day society keeps witnessing the over saturation of media made easy by the growth in communication technology. Children continue to have access to multitudes of media contents. There is need to equip them with the knowledge required to face future challenges.

Conclusion/Recommendations

Technological growth keeps bringing varieties of communication technologies into the society coupled with the changing trends of communication. Children will continue to have access to them and be exposed to the numerous contents they offer. With emergent digital literacy children explore their digital world to gratify themselves. They read, play games, socialise, watch movies, etc. At the same time, they wander into the dark side of the media. It is therefore necessary that they understand the process of mass communication, and roles and effects of media; and learn to critically analyse and create media contents.

Media literacy is continuum, developmental, multidimensional, and purposive, as Potter (1998) observes. It is a continuous process and covers many aspects of life. As the mass media continue to play their part in people's daily lives, so should media literacy form an integral part of children's education. The government should implement the official document proposed by the United Nations by putting into practice the UNCRC policy on children's right to media literacy; and incorporate media studies into the elementary and secondary school curricula. It is also essential to integrate media literacy education into teachers' training curricula. This will prepare all teachers as agents of media literacy to impart the fundamental media literacy skills in students through the various subjects they teach. The various school libraries should be adequately equipped to aid students' learning and practice. The media professionals should help promote media studies through the various mass media, and by pressurising government policy makers to incorporate media education into schools. They can equally start by organising outside school media education for children. Parents and guardians, on their part, should monitor children's consumption of media; observe what they do with the various media they are exposed to, instruct them where necessary rather than keep silent or restrict them unnecessarily; and, of course, pressurize the government on this issue.

References

- American Academy of Pediatrics 2001. Media violence. *Pediatrics*. Retrieved on 24 August, 2014 from <http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/108/5/1222.full.html>
- Anderson, D. Sept. 1979. "Active and Passive Processes in Children's Television Viewing". Retrieved on 19 July, 2014 from <http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED182008.pdf>
- Anderson, J. A. 1981. Receptiveness skills: An educational response. In M. Ploghoft & J. A. Anderson (Eds.), *Education for the Television Age*. Springfield, IL: Charles C. Thomas.
- Anderson, C. A., L. Berkwitz, E. Donnerstein, L. R. Huesmann, J. D. Johnson, D. Linz, N. M. Malamuth, and E. Wartella. 2003. "The Influence of Media Violence on Youth". *Psychological Science in the Public Interest*, 4: 81 -110
- Austin, E. W. 1993. The importance of perspective in parent-child interpretations of family communication patterns. *Journalism Quarterly*. 70(3), 558–568.
- Bandura, A. 1986. *Social Formations of Thoughts and Actions: a Social Cognitive Theory*. Englewood Cliff, NJ: Prentice-Hall
- Baran, S. and Davis, D. 2012. *Mass Communication Theory: Foundations, Fervent and Future*. (Sixth Ed). Wadsworth: Cengage Learning.
- Buckingham, D. 2003. *Media education: Literacy, learning and contemporary culture*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Cantor, J. and Wilson, B. J. 2003. Media and violence: Intervention strategies for reducing aggression. *Media Psychology*. 5(4), 363–403
- Cavanaugh, C., Gillan, K. J., Kromrey, J., Hess, M., and Blomeyer, R. 2004. The effects of distance education on K–12 student outcomes: A meta-analysis. Naperville, Ill.: Learning Point Associates. Retrieved from <http://faculty.education.ufl.edu/cathycavanaugh/docs/EffectsDLonK-12Students1.pdf>
- Choma, B. L., Foster, M. D., and Radford, E. 2007. Use of objectification theory to examine the effects of a media literacy intervention on women. *Sex Roles*. 56(9–10), 581–590.
- Cohen, H. L. 2002. Developing media literacy skills to challenge television's portrayal of older women. *Educational Gerontology*. 28(7), 599–620.
- Desmond, R. J., Singer, J. L., Singer, D. G., Calam, R., and Colimore, K. 1985. Family mediation patterns and television viewing: Young children's use and grasp of the medium. *Human Communication Research*. 11(4), 461–480.
- Evans, A. E., Dave, J., Tanner, A., Duhe, S., et al. 2006. Changing the home nutrition environment: Effects of a nutrition and media literacy pilot intervention. *Family & Community Health*. 29(1), 43–54.

**A Discourse on Child Media Literacy – Allen Nnanwuba Adum, Ojinime Ebelechukwu Ojiakor,
Winnie Ugochi Opara**

- Gerbner, G. and L. Gross 1976. Living with television: The violence profile. *Journal of Communication*, 26: 173 – 199
- Holloway, D., Green, L. and Livingstone, S. 2013. *Zero to eight: Young children and their internet use*. LSE, London: EU Kids Online. Accessed from http://eprint.lse.ac.uk/52630/1/Zero_to_eight.pdf
- Jeong, S., Cho, H., and Hwang, Y. April, 2012. Media literacy interventions: A meta-analytic review. *Journal of Communication*. Accessed on 25 august, 2014 from <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3377317/>
- Karpati, A. 2011. Digital media in education. *Policy Brief*. Moscow: UNESCO Institute for Information Technologies in Education. Retrieved from <http://unesco.unesco.org/images/0021/002144/00214485e.pdf>
- Ladner, J. Sept. 2012. Why media literacy is so important for children today. Accessed on 22 August, 2014 from <http://telegram.com/article/20120905/NEWS/120909939&Template=printart>
- Lawrence, F. and Wozniak, P. 1989. Children's television viewing with family members. *Psychological Reports*. 65(2), 395–400.
- Livingstone, S. 2002. *Young People and New Media*. London: Sage.
- Malik, S. Dec. 2008. Media Literacy and its Importance. Retrieved on 20 August, 2014 from <http://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/pakistan/06542.pdf>
- McQuail, Denis 2005. *McQuail's Mass Communication Theory*. (5th Ed). New Delhi: Sage Publications.
- Miller, P. and Lewis, M. October, 2009. Internet crimes against children: An annotated bibliography of major studies. Retrieved on 17 August, 2014 from <http://www.loc.gov/rr/frd/pdf-files/internet-report-1.pdf>
- Minkinen, S. 1978. *A general curricular model for mass media education*. Spain: J M Llorca.
- Nathanson, A. I., Wilson, B. J., McGee, J., and Sebastian, M. 2002. Counteracting the effects of female stereotypes on television via active mediation. *Journal of Communication*. 52(4), 922–937.

- National Telecommunications and Information Administration 2011. How Americans are expanding their use of the Internet. *A Nation Online*. Accessed on 26 August, 2014 from <http://www.ntia.doc.gov/legacy/ntiahome/dn/html/Chapter5.htm>
- Onumah, C. 2008. The benefits of media literacy. Accessed on 29, August, 2014 from <http://www.nigerianmuse.com/10080721153816zg/nigeria-watch/education-for-nigerians/the-benefits-of-media-literacy/>
- Potter, W. J. December, 2010. The State of Media Literacy. *Journal of Broadcasting and Electronic Media*. (54: 4 p. 675-696). Retrieved on 15 August, 2014 from <http://mysite.disu.edu.ph/faculty/marianog/publish/potter.pdf>
- Potter, W. J. and Byrne, S. 2007. What are media literacy effects? In S. R. Mazzarella (Ed.), *20 Questions about Youth and the Media*. New York: Peter Lang.
- Premium Times June, 2014. Nigeria's Child Rights Act non-functional, activists say. *Times*. Retrieved from <https://m.premuimtimes.com/news/161510-nigerias-child-rights-act-non-functional-activists-say.html#>
- Ramasubramanian, S., and Oliver, M. B. 2007. Activating and suppressing hostile and benevolent racism: Evidence for comparative media stereotyping. *Media Psychology*. 9(3), 623–646.
- Rideout, V. J., Foehr, U. G., Roberts, D. F., and Brodie, M. 1999. *Kids and Media at the New Millennium*. Menlo Park, CA: Kaiser Foundation.
- Rubin, A. 1998. Editor's Note: Media Literacy. *Journal of Communication*, 48: 3-4
- Rumble, J. Sept., 2011. Ofcom's media literacy work. In Sonia Livingston (Ed.) *Media Literacy: Ambitions, Policies and Measures*. Retrieved on 5 August, 2014 from http://www.cntv.cl/prontus_cntv/site/artic/20120410/asocfile/20120410190800/medialiteracy_sonialivingston_pdf
- Silverblatt, A. and Eliceiri, E. M. 1997. *Dictionary of Media Literacy*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press.
- Silverblatt, A. September, 2000. *Media Literacy in the Digital Age*. Accessed on 7 August, 2014 from http://www.readingonline.org/newliteracies/lit_index.asp?HREF=/newliteracies/silverblatt/index.html
- Slone, M., & Shoshani, A. 2006. Evaluation of preparatory measures for coping with anxiety raised by media coverage of terrorism. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*. 53(4), 535–542.

**A Discourse on Child Media Literacy – Allen Nnanwuba Adum, Ojinime Ebelechukwu Ojiakor,
Winnie Ugochi Opara**

- United Nations Human Rights 2014. Convention on the Rights of the Child. Accessed on 1 September, 2014 from <http://www.uohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/crc.aspx>
- Valkenburg, P. M., Krcmar, M., Peeters, A. L., and Marseille, N. M. 1999. Instructive mediation, restrictive mediation and social coviewing. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, 43(1), 52–66.
- von Feilitzen, Cecilia and Bucht, Catharina 2001. Outlooks on Children and Media: Child Rights, Media Trends, Media Research, Media Literacy, Child Participation, Declarations. *Children and Media Violence Yearbook*. Retrieved on 23 August, 2014 from <http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED462146.pdf>
- World Computer Exchange 2010. A media institute for children and youths in Nigeria. Accessed on 29 august, 2014 from <http://www.worldcomputerexchange.org/media-institute-children-and-youth-nigeria>
- Zhang, H. and Zhu, C. 2014. A review of media literacy education: How is it integrate into curriculum? Accessed on 2 September, 2014 from <http://www.eera-ecer.de/ecer-programmes/conference/6/contribution/16669/>