PEDAGOGY ENHANCEMENT IN 21ST CENTURY: HARNESSING ACRONYMIC APPROACH TO IMPROVE LEARNING AMONG NIGERIAN MASS COMMUNICATION STUDENTS

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Abstract

Indisputably, the 21st century intensifies the digital age which evolved in the mid-20th century; but its underlying impacts on Nigerian youths critically deserve an attention. Unfortunately, most of youths are already being hypnotized by the impacts of the digital age, few of which are new media; specifically, social media. Consequently, this poses the need for feasible inhibiting strategies which include, among others, review cum enhancement of academic curricula/modules to be made more simplified and reader-friendly. This will make the learning of some profound disciplines, one of which is Mass Communication, less cumbrous for the scholars who are already struggling academically caused by their self-inflicted distractions. Therefore, with constructivism learning and cultivation theories as anchors, this study unraveled, using reviews of literature cum authors' observations cum experiences in canvassing for an acronymic approach to simplify the curriculum deliveries either practically or theoretically. It literarily experimented with the redefinition of few selected mass communication generic terms which are media, law, ethics and book, using an acronymic approach; in order to inform the specificities of what each of the terms is all about. This study will enhance an easier way for students to learn and understand most of the generic terms in mass communication (applicable to other disciplines) and expand their knowledge to counterattack the ever-increasing students' poor reading vulnerability; as their sound mind in the discipline will foster them to be learned professionals. As a result, it will materialize a sane and safe society with well-schooled cum technically-skilled manpower needed to salvage the nation's quivering economy

Keywords: Journalist, Mass Communication, Media, Media Law, Curriculum Enhancement, Pedagogy

Introduction

With the current appalling unemployment rate in the country (Nigeria) which stands at 33.3%, with underemployment at 22.8%, youth unemployment at 42.5% and youth underemployment at 21.0% (National Bureau Statistics, 2022), hence, the need for canvassing effective panaceas cannot be overemphasized. There is no gainsaying that the 21st century era has successfully impacted most of the unsuspecting students in Nigeria (not exempting some other parts of the world) to be hypnotized by the sways and/or abuse of the new media; explicitly, the social media that evolved in the mid-20th century and currently thriving forcefully and persuasively in the 21st century. It is no longer news that the direct impact of the digital age has been speciously allowed by the said students to inhibit their studies or book reading habit; while other students are already finding it difficult to read during and outside seasons of examinations (Areo, 2009; Ihebuzor, *et.al* 2015) relying on well-orchestrated variants of malpractice such as microchips, duplicitous intent, *et.al* during examinations to survive. This signals that the students at tertiary institutions who are expected to graduate and be inoculated into the workforce to fill up various existing lacunas at different industries (worldbank.org, 2022) now detrimentally have robust time for socializing through the new media while others employ the same for businesses cum other unscholarly purposes (Soyemi, et.al. 2015); all at the expense of their technical expertise at various disciplines. Little wonder the unemployment rate in the country (NBS, 2022; tradingeconomics.com, 2022) keeps escalating chronologically. Evidently, with the fast-rising menace of poor reading culture, they are liable to be eroded of the most important virtue (knowledge/technical expertise) necessary for them to thrive diligently, effectively, competently, invulnerably, *et.al* for the economic resuscitation of the country (Nigeria).

Therefore in curtailing this menace among the students, there is an expedient need to refocus and simplify (Wood, 2016) the context of most of the pedagogical approaches used in making the teachings to be lengthily sickening for the students to relate to or apprehend. Consequently, it behooves to imbibe newer techniques that will make the

teachings to be simplified and relatable for the students (Cox, 2019); so as for them to grab as much information as possible anytime they sacrifice the little time for reading whenever the need mandated it (the during season reading pattern of Nigerians).

This study hereby delves into how to make the few selected mass communication generic terms well simplified acronymically, since there seems to be universal definition to each of them yet, so that the students could learn more than what they planned to learn within the short period allocated to reading. Acronymic is a derived term of acronym while acronym means a word formed by extracting first letters of the words in a catchphrase; specifically when extraction is used as a name (Collinsdictionary.com, 2022)

John Dewey in Parankimalil, (2012) theorizes education as the process of living through a continuous reconstruction of experience. Dewey's definition seeks to intensify and canvass the facet of education that is a continuous process just as further canvassed by Kibin, (2022). Education which is a purpose-driven activity (Murray, 2019), either formal, informal or non-formal (Eaton, 2011) that occurs and reoccurs in the classroom or classroom-like spaces is primarily targeted at accomplishing specific aims ranging from the development of understanding, transfer of knowledge or fostering skills and character traits, *et.al* (Chasan, 2022). Also while probing into the importance of simplifying pedagogical deliveries, Wood, (2016) posited that simplicity, is an essential benchmark in the design of technological artifacts, and academic knowledge. This implies that for pedagogical roles to be made effectively seamless there is a need for simplifying the pedagogical approach. Therefore this further strengthens the essence cum significance of this study.

Moreover, one of the core goals of education universally is to nurture technically-skilled workforce for the competitive global market (UNESCO, 2014; OECD, 2018). However, the most important thing about education is that it is not static just as Dewey posited; hence, the need for flexibility which avails the imperativeness of review of modules cum curricula from time to time (Ajayi, *et.al.* 2021) in order for them to ply the itinerary of significant factors such as: modern age relevance, technological innovations, professionalism of workforce, intellectual uprightness, ethical values, *et.al* all of which are expected to emanate from the educational exposures.
On the other hand, while probing the significance of curriculum enhancement, Trickey (2021) theorized the significance of an effective curriculum being a viable tool to provide both the educators, learners, school administrators as well as stakeholders with an assessable plan and structure for conveying a quality education. This poses the understanding that an effective curriculum should be flexible and all-encompassing. The flexibility allows it to be revised to absorb newer modifications all in a bid to ensuring its core objectives are achieved.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored by two different theories. They are: the Constructivism Learning Theory (CLT) and Cultivation Theory (CT).

Constructivism Learning Theory

This theory which was promulgated by Jean Piaget in 1972 (Bodner, 1986; posits that learners tend to reflect their individual's experience, scenes and perspective of their immediate environment to develop their own knowledge. What this implies is that learners are said not to rely on whatever they are exposed to passively within the four walls of classroom they are also presumed to scoop from the realities around them in the built environment and add to preexisting knowledge to build a depiction (Schemas). Just as (buffalo.com, 2022) would have us to believe, the following are consequences of constructivism theory. They are:

- Learners learn best when engaged in learning experiences rather passively receiving information.
- Learning is inherently a social process because it is embedded within a social context as students and teachers work together to build knowledge.
- Because knowledge cannot be directly imparted to students, the goal of teaching is to provide experiences that facilitate the construction of knowledge.

  Related to this are the processes of assimilation and accommodation.
- Assimilation refers to the process of taking new information and fitting it into an existing schema.
- Accommodation refers to using newly acquired information to revise and redevelop an existing schema.

Consequently, the relevance of the constructivism theory to this study is the fact that, since the learners combine both the things they are taught in class and mix with the realities in the built environment or experiential contexts to form their knowledge, hence, the need for the educators to be strategic in maximizing some of the terms, scenes, languages, *et.al* that most of the students habitually use, (both inside and outside classroom) in daily conversations to formulate most of the definitions of the terms used in the curricula and modules. This will foster simplicity and for the ever distracted learners to easily relate with and apprehend the contents/contexts of most of the terms. Hence, this study used some terminologies that are commonly used habitually by students to carve out meanings from the mass communication terms which were vividly redefined by being viewed as acronyms. Therefore, this study prides itself in the contextual providence of this theory to postulate acronymic approach for an excellent pedagogical learning in this computer age.

Cultivation Theory

Cultivation theory, propounded by George Gerbner in the 1960s, suggests that recurrent exposure to media steadily influences viewers' perceptions of social reality. This theory is most frequently applied to exposure to television viewing and suggests that frequent television viewers' perceptions is influenced easily by the fictional contexts of the television. Relating it to the study, students' overexposure to television which is one of the mainstream media for mass communication has been exposing them to some fictional realities which has been skewing their perspectives and making some of the youths to have a quick-rich mentality. The portrayal of different Nollywood movies of how a rich man lives and how to fast-track becoming rich through ritual and other immoral means. Ofcourse, it is pertinent to note that the television of this age has moved from the conventional box like shape to all the variants of online movie watching platforms such as YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, *et.al.* hence, this theory is still relevant to the recent happenings in the society; about 62 years after the theory was propounded.
Therefore, this study is anchored by this theory as a result of the effects of the overexposure of Nigerian youths to both mainstream and new media on the which has made them both nonchalant to academic activities and having less interest in reading and prompting the during season book reading syndrome.

2.0 Methodology:

This study being exploratory research maximized the use of literature review as well as observations and authors' experiences to redefine the few selected generic terms in mass communication which are: Media, Law, Ethics and Book. The few selected terms are scooped from lots of mass communication terminologies.

Existing Definitions of Selected Terms

The past years have witnessed media law, media ethics, journalist, news writing, broadcasting, narrowcasting, and other mass communication terms defined and redefined by several authors for seamless pedagogical impacts. The following submissions inform how the few selected terms have been defined and redefined over time. Thus:

What is Law?

Without controversy in this era, there is barely a single community, society, nation, organization, group, *et.al* in existence that has materialized without the employment of some species of precepts and their enforcement to regulate members' affairs. Laws either natural/divine or man-made (criminal or civil) all tend to shape society aright and promote coexistence; by maintaining orderliness. While probing into the definition of law, (Merriam-webster.com ND; Njiri, 2020; Dictionary.com, ND; Dictionary.cambridge.com, ND;Toppr.com, ND; Legalpaathshala.com, 2020; Nios.ac.in, ND) and other definitions all view law to be a legal order, requisite custom or practice of a municipal**:** a rule of mien or deeds legally prescribed and formally recognized as binding or enforced by a controlling authority. The definition above views law as a legally-backed precept enforced to put certain people in check and for maintaining orderliness within a municipal. The key terms in the summary of all the definitions reviewed are: legal, order, enforce and authority.

Law is also referred to as the stem of rules, precepts, regulations, *et.al* which a particular country or community recognizes as regulating the actions of its members and which can be enforced by the imposition of penalties. Law is also a body of rules and standards issued by a government, or to be applied by courts and similar authorities. A law forestalls orderliness within the jurisdiction where such law(s) exist(s).

What is Media?

The term is the plural form of medium and could be referred to as the means or channels of general communication, information, or entertainment in society. While examining the definition of media, (Techopedia, 2020; Soyemi, Oloruntoba & Okafor, 2015); Marketbusinessnews.com, ND; Igi-global.com, ND; Techterms.com, ND) and other various literature defined media as the elements of the mass media communications industry, ranging from the news media, publishing print media, photography, on-air broadcasting (radio and television), advertising as well as digital media used to store and deliver information or data. Other definitions of media see it as a means for purveying information and forms of communication

What is Ethics?

The term, ethics, premised its existence in the Greek term: *Ethos* which is translated to mean character or what it is to have a good character (Oyebade, *et.al.* 2018)

Ethics is perceived as a pivotal tool used in installing morals and values that further help to retain civility cum peacekeeping in society. In furtherance, Velasquez, *et.al.* (2010) believe ethics is situated on well-established precepts that depict right and wrong with the aim of guiding people to know what they ought to do right both in fairness and service to humanity

Ethics could be defined as the branch of knowledge that deals with socially acceptable conduct, moral fundamental assumptions or guidelines that exist in an organization, institution, group of persons and/or individual. Ethics also manifests itself to be the systematic approach of defending, and recommending the understanding the extent of right and wrong behavior. Ethics are also the rules of conduct accepted in respect to a particular class of human actions or a particular group or culture. When persons develop the resolution to become a part of the media world, they must be sure to operate with a certain degree of uprightness and morality. Ethics could also be understood as a system of well-crafted principles by which individual or societal activities and ideas may be adjudicated right or wrong (Macquarie Dictionary of Australian English).

Definition of Book

While probing the definition of a book, it became requisite to be aware that a book is defined with respect to the specificity of the exposure, needs, purpose, field, perception, *et.al.* of the person defining it. This means that book is viewed differently and defined in variant approaches. A book is viewed by a pupil, student or scholar as a cogent substance for documenting or receiving information, knowledge, expositions, postulations, empirical facts, *et.al.* aimed at shaping and sharpening their minds or for memoir preservation (in the case of a diary or a journal). To a legal practitioner, a book might be viewed as the necessary substance used in analyzing various criminal cum civic laws; among others. Furthermore, the book, originated from the Latin word "Liber" which means "**A thin layer of substance found between wood and tree bark**" (onlinefullform.com).

3.0 Findings and Discussions

Acronymic Approach to redefining the few selected Terms

Concept of Acronymic Approach

To understand what the acronymic approach is all about, it behooves to understand the source of the term acronymic. Acronymic actually is a term that takes its root in acronym. Therefore, what is acronym? Acronym manifests itself to be an abbreviation formed from the initial letters of other words and pronounced as a word (Google's English Dictionary, 2022). This definition posits acronym as shortened words or combination of letters formulated by combining the first letters of each word. For example, BCOS is an acronym for Broadcasting Corporation of Oyo State while OAU is also a shortened form (acronym) for: Obafemi Awolowo University or the brief name for Organization of African Unity (now called African Union AU). From the given samples, what is notable is how the long words are put into few letters with the primary effect of simplifying the long terms and as a result, enhancing the understanding of what is supposed to too voluminous to psyche.

Consequently, what this approach seeks to achieve is to posit a more simplified tactic through which most of the media terms and other terms could be defined and understood in order to enhance pedagogical processes in Nigerian

schools; especially for the benefit of the ever distracted teenagers, young adults cum youths whose reading time and interest have been impaired by the impacts of the digital age. Therefore, in this context, all the few selected terms would be seen as acronyms, hence, the justification to have them in uppercase is hereby maintained.

Acronymic Definitions of the few selected Terms:

Law

The variants of probed definitions of law, both cited/referenced/ or not, would be responsible to inform more simplified redefined exposition of what a law is. The term law has meaning within itself, law is connotatively an acronym for: Legally Averting War (LAW). How does the three terms relate to the discourse and meaning of law? Of course (as narrated in 3.1.1.), law is viewed as legal (lexico.com, 2022; merriam-webster.com, 2022). When you say something is legal, it means it is legitimate, allowed, permitted, statutory, established, *et.al*. On the other hand, to avert means to stop, prevent, avert, forestall, deter, and avoid, *et.al.* all of which infer an action to put an end to something. So, what exactly is pertinent to legally avert? The answer is War (from the third letter). Of course, war means disorderliness, conflict, fight, combat, warfare, etc. Talking about war is talking about restlessness, hostility, terrorism, brutality, et.al which usually occurs when coordination or coexistence is displaced or ridiculed.
In redefining law, it can also be said to be an acronym for **Legally Authorized Words** (LAW). Legally here means officially or formally. Authorized (thesaurus.com) means established, implemented. While Words here could be written or unwritten instructions, guidelines, precepts, rules, constitution, etc. which validate the fact that constitution could be written and/or unwritten. Hence, this acronymic approach views law as:

i. Legally Authorized Words (LAW).
ii. Legally Averting War (LAW)

While the first definition views law from the meaning perspective, the second acronymic postulation defines law from the functions or effects of law enforcement.

Ethics

In the same way it has been revealed that law is an acronym carrying its definition within, ethics also has been researched to see if it can also be explained in an acronymic approach. Even with the fact that ethics has more letters than the 3 letters term (law) above. However, while probing into the acronymic translation of ethics, the reviewed literature on the term articulate that ethics is also a term that can be acronymically explained; seamlessly.
While carrying out this study, findings informed the fact that ethics also has in it various virtues and values required for sustaining coexistence and those qualities of the mind that make people to understand and differentiate between the societal activities considered right or wrong. Therefore, ethics is put forward in this study as an acronym for: Excellence, Trustworthy, Harmony, Integrity, Comportment and Service. Looking at the qualities unveiled in the acronymic definition of ethics, they are different qualities put forward by authors as determining factors that are instrumental for ethics to thrive without any iota of threat.

The first letter of ethics is put forward to stand for Excellence (Mukhi, 2018; theintactone.com, 2019). Justifiably, excellence is a state of mind that gives no room for mediocrities otherwise referred to as ordinariness. This implies that there is no way a state of the mind can know what is right or wrong when it is bereft of excellent thoughts, understanding, retentive memory, self-awareness, *et.al.* Hence, ethics thrives when the people are in the right state of mind that oozes excellence; bereft of envy, hatred, guilt, and other variants of mediocre thoughts. For example, a state of mind that has poisonous sentiment against peaceful coexistence, will never subscribe to any peacekeeping motive pivotal for ethics to subsist. And that will not allow ethics to thrive in whatever society or group such a person is.
Similarly, the second letter of ethics is credited as Trustworthy (Willinger, 2022). Truly, to be trustworthy means someone is reliable and upright. Here, ethics is still laying emphasis on the uprightness of thought-process of people gathered in a society, group, organization, *et.al*; expected to know what they ought to do or not and the mandate to know the right from the wrong.

The third letter also stands for harmony. Ethics is perceived to be fostered among members, societies, groups, etc. where harmony thrives (Sharma, 2021). This third virtue focuses more on the role of ethics while the other first 2 letters focus on values. Ethics is of no gainsaying requisite for public cum organizational coexistence.

Then Integrity (Lotich, 2019; Polowczyk, 2017), Comportment (Hardin, 2018) and Service (Babbar, 2005) of members of a specific group, society, association, organization, *et.al.* are the 4th, 5th and 6th components identified in the acronymic definition of ethics. All of which are right values instrumental for ethics to thrive and consequently they are features to look out for when considering what ethics is all about or in common or private cronies where ethics is expected to thrive seamlessly. One of the

Book

Acronymically, book is put forward in this study as a short form for: **B**earer of **O**utstanding and **O**racular **K**nowledge (BOOK). This is another startling way of recounting what a book is without having to cram and undergo any mental difficulty. The four major components divulged in the acronymic definition of book are really fundamental to the understanding of roles and the crucial components of a book. The following explanations reveal more on the four components. Thus:

a) **Bearer:** In this context of explaining what a bearer is, the synonymous terms relevant to the interpretation are: carrier, bringer, deliverer, conveyor, conveyer, transporter, porter and holder. Hence, what this implies is that a book is viewed as a tool used in conveying something from one place to another. The context of the book being a conveyor intensified the aspect of cultural diffusion where people are able to understand the norms, culture and tradition of another society without having to live there. A book carries information from one place to another to enlighten and improve the wellbeing of the citizenry of any nation which brings about national development (Ihebuzor, *et.al.* 2021). Oso, *et.al.* quotes Tuchman (1980) not exempting Ihwa and Adikpo, (2009:4) all in Galadima, (2013), believe a book to be a tool used for the circulation and distribution of knowledge.

b) **Outstanding:** This facet of the book tells on the quality of contents therein what a bearer carries from one person to another. What this implies is that a book, being a bearer does not just carry anyhow information or piece of knowledge. It rather carries outstanding information which must have been subjected to the drilling facet of a book publishing made possible by the midwife if the publishing process (the editor). Therefore, in this context a book that is considered to carry outstanding information cum piece of knowledge is the book published and/or produced by a well-established publisher that has every facet of the publishing process complete; starting from conception writer) to consumption (reader). That is from Author - Editor - Prepress (Typesetting/Graphics) - Press (Printers) –Postpress – Marketing/Distribution – Consumer/Reader (Ihebuzor, N.D.).

c) **Oracular Knowledge:** This term means the act of foretelling otherwise can be further explained as giving forth utterances or decisions as if by special inspiration or authority. A few synonyms for this word are: foretell, forecast, predict, et.al (thesaurus.yourdictionary.com, N.D.). The connection between a book and the ability to foretell has to do with the impact of the outstanding piece of information cum knowledge that one will be exposed to through reading viable books. The ability to foretell is not actually common; it takes an excellent mind and a mind having inspiration and/or high intellectual quotient to foretell things. From another perspective, a book is a foreteller in its entirety. It has a way of foretelling what whoever or a nation/continent that prioritizes it will become in the far and near future. This is evident as currently the African continent is rated underdeveloped as a result of its inability to place value on books reading and their publishing. This is evident as a study established that Africa is responsible for 2% of books published worldwide; while other continents are responsible for the 98%. Then in Africa, the rate at which each of the African countries values book can be determined by the rate of growth and development in such country. On the other hand, in other continents, how they share the 98% can also be determined by the growth and development existentially evident in such country which is predetermined by the value each of the countries (size notwithstanding) in them places on books reading and publishing. Therefore, a book's oracular feat is in its original context while the book is also a viable tool that transmits oracular dexterities to its readers.

Media

This is another generic term that carries itself alongside its acronymic translations. Hence, acronymically this term is put forward in this study as the short form (acronym) for:
Medium of Exchanging Dialogue, Information and Acquaintances. This is really true as the following expositions further explain why the terms are cogent in simplifying the translation of the term.

Medium: among all the perused definitions of a medium, that of yourdictiionary.com is hereby most suitable for the context of this study. A medium is demystified as a substance through which the transmission of energy from one location to another, especially through waves, is made possible (yourdictionary.com). This definition has a contextual facet that reflects more of the digital components therein. Since that is what is obtainable in this era and it behooves every explanation tend toward the direction of current realities. Hence, a medium is viewed as a channel, platform, means, *et.al* through which exchanging dialogue, information and meeting acquaintances are all made possible. For example, the mediums through which the dialogue is made possible could range from: television, email, text message, one-on-one meeting, facebook, telegram, whatsapp, twitter, and radio, among others.

However, while the other 3 components in the acronymic definition (Exchanging Dialogue Information) are self-explanatory, the need to explain acquaintances in this context is imperative. The beauty of the definition is fully detailed having captured the reality of the current digital age through which social media emerged. The acquaintances facet of the definition hereby covers the friends, contacts, colleagues, associates, etc. we meet or create through social media and other technologically influenced means.

4.0. Conclusion and Recommendation

As the population of this country increases, the lacuna for the need for intellectually sound professionals in mass communication and other disciplines is hereby foreseeable. Hence, the need to insure the transfer of knowledge and needed skills to the generation that seems to be distracted by the new age technologies is of utmost importance. Consequently, this study has put in perspective, a simplified approach to enhancing pedagogical activities in tertiary education. This study has redefined a few selected mass communication terms: Media, Law, Ethics and Book which most authors believe generating a generally accepted definition for them will be difficult. Just as Galadima, (2013) postulated while defining a book.

Therefore, in simplifying the definitions of the generic terms, this exploratory study has successfully simplified their definitions using acronymic approach; making the definitions now easier to relate with for students for whom this study intended to help while the postulated approach can also be imbibed by faculty magnates in enhancing their pedagogical activities. However, the faculty may explore more relatable words in defining the selected terms and other terms acronymically. The use of terms that the students are most familiar with should be used more often than not. The question is how can a faculty member know which terms each of the students is familiar with? Then, in answering that, by having to give the student class activity to acronymically define one or two term(s), the educator can be familiar with those words, and those words can actually be explored to demystify some generic terms in mass communication.

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