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RESEARCH ARTICLE

ASSESSING THE RELEVANCE OF MEDIA STUDIES INTEGRATION INTO THE GENERAL STUDIES CURRICULUM OF NIGERIAN COLLEGES OF EDUCATION

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Abstract

The increasing penetration of media technologies into all aspects of social, political, economic, and educational life has made media literacy an essential competence for citizens in the 21st century. In Nigeria, Colleges of Education are tasked with training teachers who will, in turn, shape the intellectual and civic capacities of future generations. The General Studies Education (GSE) programme is designed to provide students with broad-based knowledge and transferable skills beyond their areas of specialization. However, despite the growing influence of traditional and digital media, Media Studies has not been fully institutionalized within the GSE curriculum of many Nigerian Colleges of Education. This paper examines the relevance of introducing Media Studies into the General Studies curriculum of Nigerian Colleges of Education. Drawing on theoretical perspectives of media literacy, democratic participation, and critical pedagogy, the paper reviews relevant literature, analyzes the Nigerian educational context, and discusses the potential academic, social, and professional benefits of Media Studies integration. The study adopts a qualitative desk-based approach, relying on policy documents, scholarly literature, and empirical studies. The paper argues that integrating Media Studies into GSE would enhance students' critical thinking, digital literacy, civic awareness, and employability, while also aligning teacher education with global best practices. The paper concludes with recommendations for curriculum development, policy implementation, and future research.

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Introduction:-

Education systems globally are undergoing rapid transformation due to technological advancements and the pervasive influence of media in contemporary society. Media, in its various forms—print, broadcast, digital, and social—has become a dominant source of information, socialization, and cultural transmission. As a result, the ability to critically access, analyze, evaluate, and create media messages, commonly referred to as media literacy, has emerged as a core competence for modern learners (Hobbs, 2020). In many countries, Media Studies has been introduced at different levels of education to equip learners with these essential skills. In Nigeria, Colleges of Education occupy a strategic position in the educational landscape, as they are responsible for training teachers for the basic education sector. The General Studies Education (GSE) programme, which is compulsory for all students

in these institutions, is intended to foster holistic development by exposing students to interdisciplinary knowledge, civic education, communication skills, and moral values (National Commission for Colleges of Education [NCCE], 2020). Despite these objectives, the current GSE curriculum pays limited attention to structured Media Studies, even though Nigerian society is increasingly shaped by media content, misinformation, digital activism, and online learning platforms. The absence or marginalization of Media Studies within the GSE curriculum raises concerns about the preparedness of future teachers to navigate and teach in a media-saturated environment. Teachers who lack media literacy skills may struggle to guide learners in critically engaging with media content, identifying misinformation, and using digital tools responsibly. This paper, therefore, seeks to assess the relevance of introducing Media Studies into the General Studies curriculum of Nigerian Colleges of Education. Specifically, it examines the conceptual foundations of Media Studies, reviews existing literature, analyzes the Nigerian context, and highlights the potential benefits and challenges of such integration.

Conceptual Clarifications:-

Media Studies and Media Literacy:-

Media Studies is an interdisciplinary field that examines the production, distribution, content, and effects of media in society. It draws from disciplines such as communication studies, sociology, cultural studies, education, and political science (Silverblatt, 2018). Media literacy, a central component of Media Studies, refers to the ability to access, analyze, evaluate, and create media messages in a variety of forms (Hobbs, 2020). In the educational context, Media Studies goes beyond technical skills to include critical understanding of media ownership, representation, ideology, and power relations. It encourages learners to question whose voices are represented in media, whose interests are served, and how media shapes perceptions of reality. These competencies are particularly relevant in multicultural and democratic societies such as Nigeria, where media plays a significant role in political mobilization, social cohesion, and conflict resolution.

Theoretical Perspectives:-

This paper is anchored on three major theoretical perspectives: Critical Pedagogy, Media Ecology Theory, and Democratic Participation Theory.

Critical Pedagogy Theory:-

Critical Pedagogy, as advanced by Freire (1970), emphasizes education as a tool for empowerment and social transformation. From this perspective, Media Studies enables learners to critically interrogate dominant media narratives and resist manipulation. It also enables them to appropriate the power of the media to assert their rights in the society.

Media Ecology Theory:-

Media Ecology theory, associated with McLuhan (1964), views media as environments that shape human perception, cognition, and social organization. The relevance of the theory is underscored by the fact that the society would be better off once the power of emancipation inherent in education, is juxtaposed with that of the media. Integrating Media Studies into GSE acknowledges the media environment as a powerful educational force that must be understood and managed.

Democratic Participation Theory:-

Democratic Participation theory highlights the role of informed citizens in sustaining democracy. Media literacy equips learners with the skills needed to participate meaningfully in public discourse and democratic processes (Kellner & Share, 2019). Thus media literacy would provide an enabling environment by equipping the learner with necessary skills to appropriate media tools for effective democratic participation.

Overview Of General Studies Education In Nigerian Colleges Of Education:-

General Studies Education was introduced in Nigerian tertiary institutions to provide students with broad knowledge and skills that complement their specialized training. In Colleges of Education, GSE typically includes courses in Use of English, Nigerian peoples and culture, philosophy, entrepreneurship, ICT, and civic education (NCCE, 2020). The programme aims to produce well-rounded teachers who are intellectually competent, morally upright, and socially responsible. Despite the inclusion of ICT-related courses, GSE has been criticized for being overly theoretical and insufficiently responsive to contemporary societal challenges (Adeyemi & Uko-Aviomoh, 2021). Many courses focus on basic computer appreciation without addressing critical media engagement, digital citizenship, or media ethics. As Nigerian students increasingly consume information through social media platforms

such as Facebook, X (formerly Twitter), WhatsApp, and TikTok, the lack of formal Media Studies education becomes more pronounced.

Literature Review:-

Global Perspectives on Media Studies in Teacher Education:-

Internationally, Media Studies and media literacy education have gained recognition as essential components of teacher education. Studies in Europe and North America indicate that teachers trained in media literacy are better equipped to integrate digital tools into teaching and to foster critical thinking among learners (Hobbs & Coiro, 2019). UNESCO (2021) has consistently advocated for Media and Information Literacy (MIL) as a key pillar of education for sustainable development and global citizenship. Research shows that integrating Media Studies into general education curricula enhances students' analytical skills, civic engagement, and awareness of media influence (Bulger & Davison, 2018). Teacher education programmes that include Media Studies also report increased confidence among trainee teachers in addressing misinformation and promoting responsible media use in classrooms (Tiede et al., 2020).

Media Studies And Education In Nigeria:-

In Nigeria, scholarly attention to Media Studies has largely focused on mass communication programmes in universities, with limited emphasis on teacher education. Studies by Okunna (2019) and Ojebuyi and Salawu (2020) highlight the growing impact of digital media on Nigerian youth, including issues of fake news, hate speech, and cyberbullying. These studies underscore the need for media literacy education at all levels of schooling. Empirical studies suggest that Nigerian teachers often lack adequate training in media literacy, which affects their ability to guide students in critical media consumption (Akinwale & Ojebode, 2022). Adebola and Alabi (2023) argue that incorporating Media Studies into general education programmes would help bridge this skills gap and align Nigerian education with global standards.

Rationale For Introducing Media Studies Into Gse:-

Enhancing Critical Thinking and Information Literacy :-

One of the strongest arguments for integrating Media Studies into GSE is its potential to enhance critical thinking and information literacy. In an era characterized by information overload and misinformation, students must learn how to evaluate sources, verify information, and recognize bias. Media Studies provides structured frameworks for analyzing media texts and understanding persuasive techniques (Hobbs, 2020).

Promoting Civic And Democratic Engagement:-

Media plays a central role in shaping political opinions and civic participation in Nigeria. Social media platforms have been used for political mobilization, activism, and advocacy, as seen during movements such as #EndSARS. Media Studies can help students understand the ethical and civic implications of media use and encourage responsible participation in democratic processes (Kellner & Share, 2019).

Improving Teacher Professional Competence:-

As future teachers, students in Colleges of Education must be prepared to teach learners who are already immersed in digital media. Integrating Media Studies into GSE would equip trainee teachers with pedagogical strategies for incorporating media into teaching and addressing media-related challenges in schools. This aligns with the competency-based approach advocated by the NCCE (2020).

Enhancing Employability And Lifelong Learning:-

Media literacy skills are increasingly valued in the labour market, particularly in fields related to education, communication, and digital content creation. By introducing Media Studies into GSE, Colleges of Education can enhance graduates' employability and adaptability in a rapidly changing job market (Adebola & Alabi, 2023).

Review of Related Empirical Studies:-

In a study: "Impact of Media and Information Literacy in Nigerian Colleges of Education Curriculum", Nasir and Ciroma (2023) examined the effectiveness of integrating media and information literacy into the curriculum of Nigerian Colleges of Education, particularly in developing students' ability to detect fake news. The study adopted a quasi-experimental design involving 384 students drawn from six colleges of education across northern Nigeria. Findings revealed that a significant proportion of students lacked the practical skills required to critically evaluate media content, with less than 30% demonstrating competence in verifying different forms of media messages.

The study concluded that despite the growing importance of media literacy in the digital age, its current inclusion in the curriculum is insufficiently practical and skill-oriented. It recommended a stronger integration of hands-on media studies components to enhance students' critical thinking and media analysis skills. This finding underscores the relevance of incorporating comprehensive media studies into teacher education programmes in Nigeria, as it directly impacts students' preparedness for navigating contemporary information environments.

Also, in a study "Instructional media in the effective teaching and learning of history and policy of education in colleges of education in Ogun State", Saliu (n.d.) investigated the role of instructional media in enhancing teaching and learning in Colleges of Education in Ogun State, Nigeria. Using a survey research design, the study sampled students across selected colleges to evaluate how instructional media supports curriculum delivery. The findings revealed that the use of media-based instructional resources significantly improved students' understanding and engagement with course content. The study further established that inadequate integration of media tools and technologies in teaching limits the effectiveness of curriculum implementation. It recommended increased emphasis on media-based instruction and training for educators in media utilization. These studies provide empirical support for the argument that incorporating media studies into the curriculum is not only relevant but necessary for improving pedagogical outcomes in Colleges of Education.

Methodology:-

This paper adopts a qualitative desk-based research approach. Data were drawn from secondary sources, including academic journal articles, books, policy documents, and reports from international organizations such as United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, UNESCO. Relevant literature published between 2018 and 2024 was prioritized to ensure currency. Thematic analysis was used to identify key issues related to Media Studies, GSE, and teacher education in Nigeria.

Discussion:-

The analysis indicates that integrating Media Studies into the General Studies curriculum of Nigerian Colleges of Education is both timely and necessary. The current GSE curriculum addresses some aspects of ICT and communication skills but falls short of providing comprehensive media literacy education. Media Studies would complement existing courses by focusing on critical engagement rather than mere technical competence. However, challenges to implementation include curriculum overload, lack of trained personnel, and inadequate infrastructural facilities. Addressing these challenges requires strategic planning, capacity building, and policy support from regulatory bodies such as the NCCE. Pilot programmes and phased implementation could help mitigate potential obstacles.

Recommendations:-

1. The NCCE should review the GSE curriculum to formally increase the credit load of Media and Information Literacy to cater for practical aspect of the course.
2. Colleges of Education should invest in training and retraining lecturers in media literacy and Media Studies pedagogy.
3. Government and institutional stakeholders should improve media and ICT infrastructure to support effective teaching and learning.
4. Further empirical research should be conducted to assess students' and lecturers' perceptions of Media Studies integration and its impact on learning outcomes. The above recommendations can be made possible through consistent support from both public and private partnership. Again, the federal government, through TETFund can also set aside resources for infrastructural development in the Colleges of Education subsector.

Conclusion:-

This Paper Has Examined The Relevance Of Introducing Media Studies Into The General Studies:-

Education curriculum of Nigerian Colleges of Education. It argues that Media Studies is essential for developing critical, informed, and responsible teachers capable of navigating a media-saturated society. Integrating Media Studies into GSE would enhance critical thinking, civic engagement, professional competence, and employability among students, while aligning teacher education in Nigeria with global best practices.

Ethics Declaration:-

Ethical Approval This study is a desk-based research using secondary sources. No human participants or primary data were involved, hence ethical approval wasn't required.

Consent For Publication:-

Not applicable. The study used publically available secondary data.

Competing Interests:-

Author has declared that no competing interests exist.

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