

CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES IN THE USE OF NEW MEDIA FOR TEACHING AND LEARNING HOME ECONOMICS EDUCATION

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Abstract

This paper assays to bring to the fore the challenges and the opportunities available for the use of new media for teaching home economics education. New media is a means of mass communication using digital technologies such as the internet. The emergence of the internet has birth changes in the mode of conceiving ideas and getting things done in different spheres of life including the home, the society, different industries and education. The major areas of Home Economics Education are poised to benefit immensely from the use of the internet with evolution of modern trends that transcends food/nutrition, clothing/textiles and home management. The internet is presented as a driver and a tool for effective information delivery but this is not necessarily the case as the use of the new media is not optimal due to the challenges that accompany this positive development. These challenges range from low internet access affordability and technology utility limitations. Teachers and learners alike are liable to these challenges. On the other hand, the new media presents an array of opportunities that range from accessing simplified teaching and learning strategies to self-development. While there are challenges to overcome, the use of new media in Home Economics Education provides numerous opportunities to enhance learning experiences, promote engagement and facilitate real-world applications of knowledge. By addressing the challenges and leveraging the opportunities, teachers and learners can harness the power of new media to create a more dynamic and inclusive learning environment.

Key words: New Media, Challenges, Opportunities.

Introduction

New media is an all-encompassing term used for various kinds of electronic communication means that can be imagined due to innovation in computer technology. New media is a means of mass communication using digital technologies such as the internet. Unlike the “old media” which is comprised of newspapers, magazines, books, television and other non-interactive media, new media includes websites, online video and audio streams. Other tools of mass media communication include virtual world, social media platforms, online social environments, online communities, electronic mail, blogs, internet telephone calls, online forums, website advertisements, blogs, vlogs and online education (Nagle, 2018). The use of new media in learning is a means of collaboration and interactivity whereby teaching and learning could be interesting and fun filled. Home economics is a culturally dependent and socially determined subject area and as with other subjects has gone through several transformations within the more than a century of its existence (Anyakoha & Eluwa, 1996). These changes have been forged by cultural, globalization, environmental and technological influences. In addition, researchers are beginning to understand and appreciate the learning designs and value that integrating new media tools adds to formal education (Czerkawski, 2016).

The emergence of the internet has birth changes in the mode of conceiving ideas and getting things done in different spheres of life including the home, the society, different industries and education. Emerging innovations are making virtual and remote learning desirable (Martins, & Ungerer, 2015). Technologies like artificial intelligence and social media

are becoming an indispensable part of education both in and out of the classroom. Not only are forms of new media viewed as sources of entertainment but are an excellent form of learning (Nagle, 2018).

Home Economics, being a multi-faceted subject with relevance in almost endeavor may become ineffective if there is no conscious effort to be acquainted with these futuristic realities (Antonio & Tuffley, 2015). The major areas of Home Economics Education are therefore, poised to benefit immensely from the use of the internet together with these innovations and evolution of modernistic trends that transcends food/nutrition, clothing/textiles and home management. Guloba, Wokadala, & Bategeka, (2010) are of the opinion that teaching and learning in the classroom will be effective when the computer and other forms of modern technologies are deployed to teach Home Economics. Hence, the role of the new media in alleviating education systems cannot be overemphasized.

The internet is presented as a driver and a tool for effective information delivery but this is not necessarily the case as the use of the new media is not optimal due to the challenges that accompany this positive development (Ayaga, 2016). These challenges range from low internet access affordability and technology utility limitations. Teachers and learners alike are liable to these challenges. On the other hand, the new media presents an array of opportunities that range from accessing simplified teaching and learning strategies to self-development.

CHARACTERISTICS OF NEW MEDIA

The following characteristics below describe the features of new media:

i. It is interactive

Old media was usually a one-way occurrence, with professionally produced content being broadcast to audience or users who, for the most part, could do little else other than passively consume it as they were merely viewers or spectators. New media on the other hand, is a much more interactive form of communication in comparison. People can participate, engage and interact with the media as active audiences, customize it, and produce their own content. Members of the new media audience are able to directly change the images or texts they desire to access. Many websites now rely almost entirely on user-generated content and as such tend to only suggest user preferences.

ii. It is hypertextual

Hypertext, which may also be referred to as links, is a common feature of the internet that allows users more ease and freedom over how they browse different sources of information. This is in contrast with old media, which is inflexible.

iii. It is globally networked

The world wide-web, corporate intra-nets, virtual worlds, social network sites, e-mail distribution lists, blog networks and online forums are all networks of different scales. They are connected in a vast, dense and global network. New media has led to cultural globalization, people can now interact with others globally and form connections virtually rather than locally. This network is no longer necessarily accessed at fixed desktop work stations, but also in wireless and mobile forms whereby individuals are always on the move with them like the smart phones, laptops, personal digital assistants (PDAs) and GPS devices. This feature gives credence to the saying that “the world is a global village”. These wider networks enable collective intelligence in that they allow people to share and combine resources, data, skills and information for any given purpose of their interest and in real time too.

iv. It is virtual

New media presents a very different reality than our daily, physical reality. It comprises a virtual environment constructed with computer graphics and digital video. Welch, Napoleon, Hill & Rommell, (2014) opine that, users have control over their experience in the world but

are also subject to many different types of information, opinions, interactions and products that they would not come across in reality.

v. It is simulated

Simulations surpass the virtual nature of new media and create an immersive, artificial life. Welch, *et al.*, 2014 opines that this may be well experienced in computer games, which provide opportunities for users to experience a 'virtual life' that is simulated through digital technology. Examples include online role-playing games, driving, flight and ship-steering simulations.

vi. It is digital

Digital media technologies do not represent a complete break with traditional analogue media but they are rather a continuation and extension of a principle or technique that was already in place. In a digital media process, the physical properties of the input data, light and sound waves are converted into numbers or codes (1 or 0). Manca and Ranieri, (2016) observed that digitalization has also resulted in technological convergence, i.e., merging different forms of information (text, audio and visual) into one single but entirely new converged system. The after-effects of shifting from the old media's analogue to new media's digital form are that media texts are now separated from their physical form such as books and prints and can now be compressed into small spaces and carried about. An entire library building full of books can be compressed into a single flash drive. They can be readily accessed at high speeds in real time and can be manipulated far more easily than in their analogue state.

Majumder (2017); Manca & Ranieri (2016); Ranieri, Rosa & Manca (2016); Pangrazio (2016); Jenkins (2008); Hong & Joan (2006); Dan & Haoda (2001) and Xioning (2001);

Significance of Research

In higher institutions of learning, especially in developing countries, there has been the introduction of various forms of policies to facilitate the integration of new technologies in teaching and administration of new curricula. The people who teach Home Economics may imagine that the course has adequate hands-on experiences as a result of the number of practical activities coupled with the in-class and after classroom project component imbedded in the curricula. They may therefore not see the need to include new media as a necessary academic practice. Whilst technology is not the elixir to education, it can aid and increase the scope of teaching and learning through activities which offer new and interesting ways of developing skills (Pangrazio, 2016). New media encourages the creative use of modern information technologies to construct learning environments which are rich, varied and facilitate the development of student-centered learning practices (Kimmerle, Moskaliuk, Oeberst, & Cress, 2015).

Life in contemporary society is almost at all times influenced by media. Affordable personal computers and mobile phones are technologies that have facilitated new types of communication. As people existing in an increasingly advanced world, with technology promoting globalization, there are high chances of utilizing new media daily to keep in touch with family and associates, keep abreast with latest happenings in the world while engaging in and discovering new interests. It is not out of place that people engaged in education as teachers or learners may use it to study for academic purposes.

Available Opportunities in the Use of New Media

Technology has played role in the way domesticity has changed in the last two centuries. There have been great advances in sciences that, through their application the amount of time and the extent of labor required for many domestic tasks have greatly reduced. The most innovative technology that has appeared in the last 20 years is undoubtedly the internet. The internet has birthed skills that range from writing, oral communication to coding. The skills also provide opportunities to enhance the process of teaching and learning home economics education. The

following are opportunities available in the use of new media for teaching and learning home economics education:

1. Access to information: The internet makes it very simple and easy to access a wide range of information on practically every topic, from everyday issues to academic research. People can find information online regardless of their location and sometimes for free, this makes new media a very valuable source of information (Antonio & Tuffley, 2015). Home Economics educators and students may access information on nutrition topics, current clothing practices/patterns and management guides with practical demonstrations on websites like YouTube, Pin-interest, Instagram, Facebook and various other search engines.

2. Enhanced Learning Resources: New media offers a wide range of multimedia resources that can enhance the learning experience (Kimmerle, *et al.*, 2015). Students can access interactive simulations, virtual labs, video tutorials, and online databases, providing a more dynamic and comprehensive understanding of home economics concepts such as food cookery and service, diversification in food utilization, recipe development, food storage, processing and preservation. Other concepts that could be made clearer by utilizing new media include: basic and decorative stitches, clothing designs, body measurements, clothing construction and modification and ward robe planning and money management.

3. Personalized Learning: new media optimized platforms can provide personalized learning experiences by adapting media content and activities based on students' individual needs and progress (Pimmer, Mateescu, & Gröbhiel, 2016). This allows students to learn at their own pace and receive tailored feedback, thereby fostering a more effective and personalized learning experience.

4. Collaboration and Communication: New media tools enable collaboration and communication amongst students, teachers, and subject experts beyond the confines of the classroom. The global internet makes it easier for individuals to make connections that would not be possible at the local level or through traditional (old) media (Dron, & Anderson, 2014). New media channels such as social networks also make it easier than ever for people to stay in contact with their mentors and team mates anywhere in the world, not just through messaging but by video calling, and online meetings. Students can engage in online discussions, work on group projects remotely, and connect with professionals in the field, thereby expanding their learning networks (Hu, Gu, Liu, & Huang, 2017).

5. Real-World Application: New media can facilitate real-world application of home economics education. Students can explore and interact with practical examples, such as virtual cooking demonstrations, budgeting simulations, pattern drafting or sustainability projects, bridging the gap between theory and practice (Czerkawski, 2016).

6. Lifelong Learning Opportunities: Online platforms and resources offer opportunities for lifelong learning in home economics. Students can access educational content beyond the classroom, engage in self-paced learning, and stay updated on emerging trends and research in the field seeing that knowledge and information is constantly evolving (Czerkawski, 2016).

Potential Challenges Involved in the Use of New Media

The use of new media, such as digital technology and online platforms, also presents challenges in the field of teaching and learning home economics education. Some of these challenges include but are not limited to:

1. Access and Equity: One of the primary challenges teachers and students of home economics education would face is ensuring equal access to new media tools and resources for all students

(Bilandzic, & Foth, 2013). Not all students may have access to reliable high speed internet connections, computers, or mobile devices, which can create a digital divide and limit their ability to engage in online learning. There are a lot of activities requiring the attention of the resources available to the students and the teachers as well. Optimal use of new media may only be possible if there are subsidized data access plans and rates for campus vicinities or free internet facility within the campus.

2. Digital Literacy: Both students and teachers need to develop digital literacy skills to effectively navigate and utilize new media tools. Some individuals may struggle with using technology, which can hinder their ability to fully participate in online learning activities (Ashiona, Mwoma, & Murungi, (2018). It is not uncommon for both teachers and learners to struggle to adapt to new digital technologies. Learning new digital platforms, where to find certain information or who to ask for assistance may contribute to reducing participation or create confusion (Nagle, 2018). It could be overwhelming to the teachers and the learners and may make the academic process less interesting.

3. Quality of Information and Information Overload: The internet provides a vast amount of information, but not all of it is accurate or reliable. With the abundance of content available on new media platforms, users often face information overload. Content creators compete for visibility, potentially compromising the quality and depth of their work to garner immediate attention. Differentiating between credible and unreliable sources becomes challenging, leading to the spread of misinformation and fake news. Students need to develop critical thinking skills to evaluate and discern credible sources of information from misinformation or biased content. Alagbela, (2022) is of the opinion that the increased variety of media delivery systems, particularly digital television, has led to a decline in the standards of media produced. Many website and information channels are filled with generic, cheaply produced data heavily laden with unnecessary advertisements which may be distracting and constitute a nuisance culture devoid of creativity or uniqueness. According to Martins and Ungerer, (2015) the democratized nature of the internet can harm the quality of media content. For instance, Wikipedia, a public-produced website, can sometimes be filled with poorly written, uninformed, or false information

4. Engagement and Motivation: Maintaining student engagement and motivation can be a challenge when using new media for teaching and learning. The fast-paced nature of new media can lead to shortened attention spans among users (Czerkawski, 2016). On line platforms and digital resources need to be designed in a way that captures students' interest and encourages active participation while disabling distractions. With an endless stream of content available at their fingertips, individuals may quickly move on to the next piece of information, making it challenging for creators to capture and retain their audience's interest for extended periods (Yar, 2018).

5. Commercialization and surveillance: The commercialization of the internet has caused considerable privacy concerns. Many companies that sell products and services on the internet now also sell their customers' data by engaging in consumer surveillance (Wall, 2018). New digital technologies, e.g., in the form of cookies, can track and monitor data generated by users to further target potential audiences, thereby enhancing the company's profits (Pelton, 2018). As new media thrives on data collection and user interactions, privacy and security concerns have become paramount. Instances of data breaches, hacking, and unauthorized access to personal information have raised questions about the safety of online platforms (Zuboff, 2015). Educators and students must be cautious about sharing sensitive data, while content creators and businesses must prioritize data protection to maintain trust with their audiences.

6. The lack of regulation: Some sociologists believe that new media, particularly the internet, should be regulated by the state. Since all views, opinions and content can be freely expressed and accessed on the internet, measures should be taken to combat potentially harmful content e.g., racist and terrorism-inciting comments and websites (Wall, 2018). Additionally, malicious actors may exploit new media to disseminate misleading or harmful content, compromising the credibility of the entire medium (Yar, 2018). For campus use, it would be suitable to regulate free internet services to block distracting social media, porn sites and online dating site.

Recommendations for Effective Utilization of New Media

The effective utilization of new media to enhance Home Economics Education could benefit both teachers and students of the course. The following recommendations may be helpful for effectively using new media:

1. The teacher or student should have clearly defined goals and objectives about what they intend to achieve through new media. Whether it's sourcing for educational materials or current pattern draft trends or building a community by networking with likeminded peers, having clear goals would guide the strategy to be used.
2. It is important that the teacher understands and can connect with their student's level of knowledge assimilation. This would help the teacher to tailor their new media content and lesson approach to resonate with the students and choose the right platforms where they are most active.
3. There are numerous new media platforms available, such as social media, blogs, podcasts and video streaming platforms. It would be beneficial for the teacher to choose the platforms that align with their goals and where the students are likely to interact more.
4. It would be necessary to create high-quality content as "content is king" in new media. Produce high-quality, relevant, and engaging content that adds value and which the students can relate with. The teacher may use a combination of formats such as videos, infographics, articles, and interactive content to keep the students engaged.
6. Home Economics teachers may engage with their students online: New media provides an opportunity for two-way communication and interaction with one's audience. The teacher may respond to comments, messages, and feedback promptly. The teacher may also encourage discussions, ask questions and involve the student audience in conversations that would help boost their understanding of lesson concepts.

Conclusion

The use of new media is beneficial to every individual irrespective of purpose of use. While there are challenges to overcome, the use of new media in Home Economics Education provides numerous opportunities to enhance learning experiences, promote engagement and facilitate real-world applications of knowledge. Education has the chance to monitor and improve its own practices. Home Economics educators are afforded new ways to connect with students and, also importantly, a means to monitor and intervene in student learning so as to increase the efficacy of both teaching and learning. Students on the other hand are privileged to have a means to have ways to find, retrieve and share their learning products and opportunities. By addressing the challenges and leveraging the opportunities, teachers and learners can harness the power of new media to create a more dynamic and inclusive learning environment.

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