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New Media Literacy Education in Communication Training in Ghana: Evidence from Two Public Universities

ABSTRACT

New media technologies have become important devices that are changing activities in diverse human endeavours. The advent of the Internet has come with many digital technologies, platforms and networks. There is a plethora of new media such as social networking, gaming, blogging, picture sharing, iPhones, iPods, Tik-Tok, Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn, ResearchGate, and Academia, among others, which have become common vernacular across the world. Given the rapid spread of new media, education on the use of these technologies and platforms has become necessary. Key among institutions that could promote new media literacy and the use of these applications and platforms are higher education institutions, especially public universities that provide training in communication and media studies to students. While there has been several studies on new media literacy in the Western context, relatively little has been done on how higher education institutions in Africa especially Ghana have promoted digital media literacy among students. This study addresses this gap by exploring how two communication and media education institutions in Ghana promote new media literacy among students. The study is hinged on the new media literacy framework to discuss how knowledge, skills and attitudes toward new media can encourage students to access, understand and create digital communication using technologies and applications in academic and other activities. Using a qualitative research approach and case study design, this study conducts interviews with lecturers in communication and media studies for data to analyse how the University of Education, Winneba and the Ghana Institute of Journalism are using, teaching and implementing new media literacy programmes in the education and learning of students. The study found that students in the two selected communication and media education institutions are not adequately exposed to course contents that are specifically related to new media literacy and usage among students, even though some courses are related generally to ICT, which are run by the public universities with the aim of promoting new media literacy. It is important for new media literacy instructions to be embedded in the courses that are provided in communication and media education in public universities in Ghana.

KEY WORDS

Communication Education. Ghana. Media. New Media Literacy. Public Universities.

1 Introduction

People traditionally watch television, listen to radio, and view web pages.¹ However, there is the emergence of new forms of communication and media technologies, especially through online platforms with the support of the Internet. With the advent of the Internet and many new media technologies, particularly social media such as *LinkedIn*, *Research Gate*, *Academia*, *Facebook* and *Twitter* that have millions of users across the world, the promotion of networking and interactions has been enhanced.² The receiving and sending of information have also increased as new media technologies and platforms continue to spread. These support the assertions that traditional and old media, new and mobile media have become all embracing, which are now unavoidable in daily lives in the modern world.³ The emergence of digital technologies has enabled the convergence of different forms of media that have democratised information production and circulation.⁴ Individuals now require multiple competencies to be able to succeed in the constantly changing global environment.⁵ Given this, it has become important for media, especially new media literacy education to be provided to help individuals, especially students, to develop competences in new media appropriation to actively participate in the modern world.⁶ This is against the backdrop that the concept of literacy has transformed from spoken and written applications into different and wider contexts and forms of meaning creation including new media literacy.⁷ Media literacy involves developing and possessing the ability by individuals to “access, analyse, evaluate, and communicate” messages in different forms.⁸

Media and the contents of the media influence the beliefs, values, attitudes and behaviours of individuals, as well as democratic processes and participation.⁹ Therefore, learning about such issues is important for individuals across the world. This includes gaining the competences and skills in new media, which is needed by individuals to “understand, appreciate and participate in social life” in the world of technological advancement. The convergence of the media entails the engagement and participation of individuals who create, share and search for new information, form social affiliation, express themselves, collaborate to solve problems and circulate information.¹⁰ New media literacy has become necessary, given the large numbers of people, especially youth’s usage of platforms such as *Facebook*, *Twitter*, *WhatsApp*, *YouTube* and *Instagram*, among others. New media literacy refers to how people access different media, understand the content of the media and create message.¹¹ Key among institutions that promote new media literacy and the use of these applications and platforms are higher education institutions, especially public universities that provide training in communication and media studies to students.

¹ *What Consumers Watch: Nielsen’s Q1 2010 Three Screen Report*. [online]. [2022-09-03]. Available at: <<https://www.nielsen.com/insights/2010/what-consumers-watch-nielsens-q1-2010-three-screen-report/>>.

² ARORA, A. et al.: *Measuring Social Media Influencer Index: Insights from Facebook, Twitter and Instagram*. In *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 2019, Vol. 49, p. 90

³ LUNDBY, K.: *Mediatization as Key*. In LUNDBY, K. (ed.): *Mediatization: Concept, Changes, Consequences*. New York : Peter Lang, 2009, p. 2.

⁴ BATISTUTA, A. P.: *Teaching Media and Information Literacy in Philippine Senior High Schools: Strategies Used and Challenges Faced by Selected Teachers*. In *Asian Journal on Perspectives in Education*, 2021, Vol. 1, No. 2, p. 23.

⁵ BROWN, J.: *Media Literacy Perspectives*. In *Journal of Communication*, 1998, Vol. 48, No. 1, p. 45.

⁶ JENKINS, H.: *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide*. New York: New York University Press, 2006, p. 3.

⁷ SCHMIDT, H. C.: *Media Literacy Education at the University Level*. In *The Journal of Effective Teaching*, 2012, Vol. 12, No. 1, p. 64

⁸ AUFDERHEIDE, P.: *Media Literacy: A Report of the National Leadership Conference on Media Literacy*. Washington, DC : Aspen Institute, 1993, p. 6.

⁹ *Core Principles of Media Literacy Education in the United States*. [online]. [2022-08-28]. Available at: <<https://namle.net/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Namle-Core-Principles-of-MLE-in-the-United-States.pdf>>.

¹⁰ SCHMIDT, H. C.: *Media Literacy Education at the University Level*. In *The Journal of Effective Teaching*, 2012, Vol. 12, No. 1, p. 65.

¹¹ BUCKINGHAM, D. et al.: *The Media Literacy of Children and Young People*. London: Ofcom, 2005, p. 6.

These new media are socio-cultural platforms that provide users the opportunity to create and share contents. As Moore and Redmond noted, in the current competition, it is no longer sufficient for individuals just to learn reading and writing.¹² However, people need to be empowered with the knowledge and understanding of media and information systems to produce and consume them responsibly.¹³ To be able to make use of new media, individuals require some skills referred to as new media literacy that involves technical and critical thinking competences.¹⁴ Despite the significance of new media literacy, research on the education and empowerment of individuals with new media literacy skills, especially in the context of Ghana, is limited. While there have been some studies on new media literacy in the Western context, relatively little has been done on how higher education institutions in African countries such as Ghana have promoted digital and new media literacy among students. For example, the few studies in the area that have been conducted have focused on media literacy and education,¹⁵ as well as new media practices,¹⁶ among others, who found that new media are used for different purposes despite its limited access in Ghana.

However, no studies have examined how new media literacy education in public communication and media training universities in Ghana are providing students with the skills to appropriate these new technologies and platforms. Given this, it has become necessary to study new media literacy and its concomitant issues associated with communication and media studies in Ghana to address this gap by exploring how two of its public universities promote, teach and implement new media literacy programmes. The study is hinged on the new media literacy theory to discuss how knowledge and skills provided by lecturers could influence the attitudes of students toward new media to access, understand and create digital communication content using new media technologies and applications in academic and other activities. The study conducted qualitative interviews with participants at the University of Education, Winneba and the Ghana Institute of Journalism to report how lecturers in these institutions are imparting knowledge and skills in new media literacy in the training of students in communication and media studies. To achieve the purpose of this study, the following objectives are addressed:

Research Objectives

1. To describe the current state of new media literacy education in communication and media studies in the selected public universities in Ghana.
2. To interrogate the instructional strategies and materials used in teaching and implementing new media literacy programmes in communication and media education in the selected public universities in Ghana.
3. To identify the challenges to new media literacy education in communication and media studies in the selected public universities in Ghana.

Research Questions

1. What is the current state of new media literacy education in communication and media studies in the selected public universities in Ghana?
2. What are the new media instructional strategies and materials used in teaching and implementing new media literacy programmes in communication and media education in the selected public universities?
3. What are the challenges to new media literacy education in communication and media studies in the selected public universities in Ghana?

¹² MOORE, D., C., REDMOND, T.: Media at the Core: How Media Literacy Strategies Strengthen Teaching with Common Core. In *Voices from the Middle*, 2014, Vol. 4, p. 10.

¹³ BATISTUTA, A. P.: Teaching Media and Information Literacy in Philippine Senior High Schools: Strategies Used and Challenges Faced by Selected Teachers. In *Asian Journal on Perspectives in Education*, 2021, Vol. 1, No. 2, p. 23.

¹⁴ CELIK, I. et al.: A Model for Understanding New Media Literacy: Epistemological Beliefs and Social Media Use. In *Library and Information Science Research*, 2021, Vol. 43, p. 1.

¹⁵ DIEDONG, A. L., TUUROSONG, D.: Establishing the Rationale for Media Education for Students in Ghana. In *Journal of Communication, Media and Society*, 2018, Vol. 5, No. 1, p. 84.

¹⁶ SEY, A.: New Media Practices. In *International Journal of Communications*, 2011, Vol. 5, p. 382.

2 Literature Review

2.1 Media Literacy

The advent of the Internet and its proliferation have generated debates on how to use digital technologies and new media applications for teaching and learning activities, resulting in several studies on how these platforms provide opportunities not only to teachers but also students at various levels of education.¹⁷ As part of these studies, research has focused on how people make use of new media technologies.¹⁸ There have been various approaches for spearheading the teaching and usage of these new media applications and platforms by educators and students in academic institutions. However, Graber and Mendoza cite several reasons for the failure of the new media technologies to transform education, which among others include the lack of adequate infrastructure, training of teachers and technical support, strict adherence to traditional methods of instruction, lack of time and excessive focus on drill and practice programmes.¹⁹ Oppenheimer suggests that educational institutions need to change their systems and transform students from becoming passive viewers into active participants in the interactive culture.²⁰

The changing digital environment has changed ideas about the best ways to teach and educate students about new media technologies and applications. As many people are already using new media, it has become necessary for institutions and educators to teach young people including students in universities to make proficient use of these new communication tools and platforms. This is especially important as Jenkins, Purushotma, Clinton, Weigel and Robison reiterate the need for educating students by providing media literacy and social skills that are required for the participation of individuals in the new world of consumption, production and participation including simulation, play, appropriation, performance, multitasking, collective intelligence, judgement, networking, negotiation, distributed cognition and trans-media navigation, among others.²¹ Considering the skills for participation, an important goal of media education should be to promote and encourage young people to reflect about their use and ethical values as they participate and communicate and the effects they have in the process.²²

However, few training institutions provide new (media) literacy in the subject contents in communication and media studies.²³ Educators including lecturers in higher education institutions in media literacy use formal and informal approaches based on their individual expertise. Some of these teachers are given skills through workshops, consultations, partnerships, mentoring and seminars, among others, which are supported by collaboration and networking among educators who are interested in media literacy education.²⁴ In many cases, the teaching of new (media) is driven by passion rather than expertise with individuals teaching the subject as a hobby.²⁵ Several approaches including self-taught, staff development training, curriculum based approaches, university course work, mentoring and partnerships are used for educating teachers of media literacy to equip them with the competences and competencies to impart knowledge

¹⁷ GRABER, D., MENDOZA, K.: New Media Literacy Education: A Developmental Approach. In *Journal of Media Literacy Education*, 2012, Vol. 4, No. 1, p. 83.

¹⁸ OHLER, J.: *Digital Community. Digital Citizen*. Thousand Oaks, California : Corwin, 2010, p. 19.

¹⁹ GRABER, D., MENDOZA, K.: New Media Literacy Education: A Developmental Approach. In *Journal of Media Literacy Education*, 2012, Vol. 4, No. 1, p. 83.

²⁰ OPPENHEIMER, T.: *The Flickering Mind: The False Promise of Technology in the Classroom and How Learners Can Be Saved*. New York : Random House, 2003, p. 25.

²¹ JENKINS, H. et al.: *Confronting the Challenges of Participatory Culture: Media Education for the 21st Century*. [online]. [2022-08-18]. Available at: <https://www.macfound.org/media/article_pdfs/jenkins_white_paper.pdf>.

²² Ibidem.

²³ HOBBS, R.: *Digital and Media Literacy: A Plan of Action*. Washington, DC: Aspen Institute, 2010, p. 21.

²⁴ HOBBS, R.: *Reading the Media: Media Literacy in High School English*. New York : Teachers College Press, 2007, p. 130.

²⁵ HOBBS, R. et al.: How Media Educators Reclaimed Copyright and Fair Use. In *International Journal of Learning and Media*, 2009, Vol. 1, No. 3, p. 34.

to students.²⁶ While some educators who teach and implement media literacy programmes are self-taught and have no formal educational training in the area and subject but have read books and taught themselves about media studies and literacy to deliver courses to students.

Staff development training is a dominant practice used in empowering educators in media literacy through workshops, short courses and other development programmes to introduce them to media literacy and the various approaches to analysing and producing media content.²⁷ In mentoring and partnership programmes, scholars and advocates who have interests in media literacy are involved in long-term collaborations to enable teachers to acquire skills in teaching new media literacy with in-class support from experienced partners and mentors.²⁸ Given the interdisciplinary nature of communication, media and education, media literacy has struggled to establish itself in higher education. Until recently, only a few universities across the world, particularly in Africa including Ghana offered formal undergraduate and postgraduate level coursework in the area of media literacy. However, there are rising numbers of courses in media literacy in communication and media studies, as well as education programmes.²⁹ In line with this, Diedong and Tuurosong noted that there have been several efforts to impart digital and new media skills in media education in Ghana through various courses run by institutions.³⁰ Curriculum based approaches have also been adopted, where educators are given curriculum materials, audios, videos and other resources that are used in media literacy education.³¹ In the curriculum based approach, curricula with models for use by educators can be adopted in the teaching and implementation of new media literacy programmes, where students could be made to conduct projects and interviews, write scripts and produce videos, among other tasks.³² The selection of any of the approaches is dependent on the availability of expertise, which makes the teaching and implementation of new media literacy programmes uneven around the world.³³ According to Hobbs, the effects of media literacy education are several, which include the promotion of increased motivation and engagements, quality of teacher-student relationships, comprehension and analysis of texts and citizenship skills,³⁴ among others.

2.2 New Media Literacy

This study is underpinned by the new media literacy framework. As noted by Buckingham, media literacy entails how people access, understand and create media content.³⁵ While traditional media literacy focuses on individual habits in the use and consumption of media content, it

²⁶ HOBBS, R. et al.: How Media Educators Reclaimed Copyright and Fair Use. In *International Journal of Learning and Media*, 2009, Vol. 1, No. 3, p. 43.

²⁷ HOBBS, R.: *Digital and Media Literacy: A Plan of Action*. Washington, DC : Aspen Institute, 2010, p. 37.

²⁸ HOBBS, R. et al.: How Media Educators Reclaimed Copyright and Fair Use. In *International Journal of Learning and Media*, 2009, Vol. 1, No. 3, p. 35.

²⁹ KEEN, V.: Media Literacy for Teachers: Motivation and Methods. In CRAWFORD, C., PRICE, J., WEBER, R. (eds.): *Society for Information Technology & Teacher Education International Conference*. Waynesville, NC USA : Association for the Advancement of Computing in Education, 2003, p. 1929.

³⁰ DIEDONG, A. L., TUUROSONG, D.: Establishing the Rationale for Media Education for Students in Ghana. In *Journal of Communication, Media and Society*, 2018, Vol. 5, No. 1, p. 81.

³¹ HOBBS, R. et al.: How Media Educators Reclaimed Copyright and Fair Use. In *International Journal of Learning and Media*, 2009, Vol. 1, No. 3, p. 35.

³² HOBBS, R.: *Reading the Media: Media Literacy in High School English*. New York : Teachers College Press, 2007, p. 51.

³³ HOBBS, R.: A Review of School-Based Initiatives in Media Literacy Education. In *The American Behavioural Scientist*, 2004, Vol. 48, No. 1, p. 44.

³⁴ HOBBS, R.: Understanding Teachers' Experiences with New Media Literacy in the Classroom. In DUNCAN, B., TYNER, K. (eds.): *Visions/Revisions: Moving Forward with Media Education*. Madison, Wisconsin: National Telemedia Council, 2003, p. 107.

³⁵ BUCKINGHAM, D.: Media Education Goes Digital: An Introduction. In *Learning, Media and Technology*, 2007, Vol. 32, No. 2, p. 111.

is limited in terms of active production and sharing of media content.³⁶ However, new media literacy focuses on how individuals produce contents instead of concentrating largely on consumption. Given this, new media literacy has been used as a theoretical framework by several scholars including Lin, Li, Deng and Lee to explain how individuals have become producers and consumers of content through digital and new media technologies and applications.³⁷ As there are no generally accepted standard guidelines of which kinds of proficiencies individuals need to possess to become new media literate, various scholars such as Koc and Barat, Lin, Jadallah, Anderson, Baker, Nguyen-Jahiel, Kim, Kuo, Miller, Dong and Wu (2015), and Tugtekin and Koc have conceptualised new media literacy skills that individuals should have to be able to function and participate in the digital era.³⁸ Using new media literacy as the framework for participatory culture, Lin et al. enumerated various competences promoted by the applications such as understanding and consuming skills, which include the technical skills and ability of individuals to grasp the consumption of media content.³⁹

The indicators also include synthesis and analysis skills, which consist of the ability to deconstruct, reconstruct and remix the content of media with the integration of diverse viewpoints.⁴⁰ Others include evaluation, which is the ability of individuals to criticise and assess the trustworthiness of the contents of media, as well as the prosuming, distribution, production and time of playing games or having fun.⁴¹ The use of new media in education has attracted the attention of researchers who consider these applications and platforms as relevant and useful for students and teachers.⁴² This framework guides this study in exploring and reporting how teaching and implementing new media literacy programmes in higher education are encouraging students of communication and media studies at the University of Education, Winneba and Ghana Institute of Journalism to use, produce content and consume new media for different purposes in their academic activities and other endeavours.

3 Methodology

This study adopted a qualitative approach to achieve the objectives and address research questions. Qualitative research entails collecting and analysing non-numerical data to understand the experiences and opinions of people.⁴³ The qualitative approach as a form of social inquiry enabled this study to conduct interviews with participants to understand the attitudes, behaviours and experiences of individuals by collecting in-depth information about a particular phenomenon (new media literacy) to make meaning through interpretation. Qualitative research methods

³⁶ KARA, N. et al.: Social Media Habits Through a New Media Literacy Perspective: A Case of Gifted Students. In *Athens Journal of Mass Media and Communication*, 2020, Vol. 6, p. 192.

³⁷ LIN, T. et al.: Understanding New Media Literacy: An Explorative Theoretical Framework. In *Educational Technology and Society*, 2013, Vol. 16, No. 4, p. 165.

³⁸ See: KOC, M., BARAT, E.: Development and Validation of New Media Literacy Scale for University Students. In *Computers in Human Behaviour*, 2016, Vol. 63, p. 835; See also: TUGTEKIN, E. B., KOC, M.: Understanding the Relationship Between New Literacy, Communication Skills and Democratic Tendency: Model Development and Testing. In *New Media and Society*, 2020, Vol. 22, No. 10, p. 4.

³⁹ LIN, T. et al.: Understanding New Media Literacy: An Explorative Theoretical Framework. In *Educational Technology and Society*, 2013, Vol. 16, No. 4, p. 164.

⁴⁰ LIN, T. et al.: Less is More: Teachers' Influence During Peer Collaboration. In *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 2015, Vol. 107, No. 2, p. 612.

⁴¹ TUGTEKIN, E. B., KOC, M.: Understanding the Relationship Between New Literacy, Communication Skills and Democratic Tendency: Model Development and Testing. In *New Media and Society*, 2020, Vol. 22, No. 10, p. 2.

⁴² CELIK, I. et al.: A Model for Understanding New Media Literacy: Epistemological Beliefs and Social Media Use. In *Library and Information Science Research*, 2021, Vol. 43, No. 4, p. 2.

⁴³ CRESWELL, J. W.: *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design Choosing Among Five Approaches*. Thousand Oaks, California : Sage, 2013, p. 39.

include interviews, focus group discussions, observation and secondary data research.⁴⁴ This study adopted a case study design to gather in-depth and multifaceted understanding of complex issues in their real life contexts through interviews with lecturers in communication and media studies on new media literacy education in public universities in Ghana. A case study involves the detailed study of a particular subject, organisation, phenomenon, group or event.⁴⁵ Given this, this study focuses on the University of Education, Winneba and the Ghana Institute of Journalism to collect data for analysis. The study used the University of Education, Winneba and the Ghana Institute of Journalism as a case study of public universities that provide training in communication and media studies in Ghana. Participants in the two selected institutions were purposively sampled to provide responses to research questions through in-depth interviews for analysis.

The participants in this study were recruited from the Schools and Departments of Communication and Media Studies at the University of Education, Winneba and the Ghana Institute of Journalism. These two public universities are among the leading institutions in Ghana that train students in communication and media studies, which could be teaching new media literacy as part of their programmes and courses. Data was collected from interviews with lecturers in communication and media studies who were purposively selected from the two public universities and analysed through the lens of new media literacy education. The participants include lecturers in the various programmes in communication and media studies at undergraduate and postgraduate levels at the University of Education, Winneba and the Ghana Institute of Journalism. Eight participants were selected from the two public universities: four from the University of Education, Winneba and the Ghana Institute of Journalism, respectively. The selected participants are lecturers who have extensive experience in teaching in higher education with different backgrounds and degrees (Master of Philosophy and Doctor of Philosophy) in communication, media, culture, journalism, arts, public relations and advertising, among others.

Using an interview guide, the study collected primary data for the study through in-depth interviews with the eight participants selected from the two public universities in Ghana for this research. While the first section of the interviews focused on the profile of selected respondents, the following part deals with their basic knowledge and understanding of new media literacy education. This includes the concept and definitions of new media literacy and competencies that students need to acquire from the perspectives of respondents. The study also questioned interviewees on strategies and methods employed in educating students on new media literacy. The challenges in their efforts to make students new media literate are also explored to understand how they cope with situations.

Data collected from respondents were analysed thematically. As Braun and Clarke note, thematic analysis is a method of systematically identifying, organising and providing insight into the patterns of meanings (themes) across data.⁴⁶ In other words, thematic analysis is a way of identifying things that are common to the way topics are written or talked about, and making sense of the common themes.⁴⁷ The thematic analysis is conducted to obtain answers to research question to achieve objectives. Thematic analysis is conducted using six approaches which include: becoming familiarised with the data; generating initial codes; searching for themes; reviewing potential themes; defining and naming themes; and producing

⁴⁴ CRESWELL, J. W., POTH, C.: *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches*. London: Sage, 2017, p. 133.

⁴⁵ YIN, R. K.: *Case Study Research Design Method*. London : Sage, 2009, p. 3.

⁴⁶ BRAUN, V., CLARKE, V.: Thematic Analysis. In COOPER, H., CAMIC, P. M. (eds.): *APA Handbook of Research Methods in Psychology. Vol. 2: Research Designs: Quantitative, Qualitative, Neuropsychological, and Biological*. Washington, DC : American Psychological Association, 2012, p. 58.

⁴⁷ BRAUN, V., CLARKE, V.: Using Thematic Analysis in Psychology. In *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 2006, Vol. 3, No. 2, p. 58.

the report.⁴⁸ In conducting the thematic analysis, this study organised the data collected from the interviews and immersed into the data through extensive interviews with respondents to have a wider and better understanding of the responses, as well as thorough reading of interview transcripts several times. The study generated initial codes to the data for recurring themes and categories to be defined, which allowed the researcher to make interpretations and understanding, and report findings.

4 Findings and Discussion

The purpose of this study was to investigate how lecturers in communication and media studies educate and implement new media literacy programmes in two selected public universities in Ghana. Three key themes were evident as they recurred in the data collected and analysed. These themes include: the state of new media literacy education; the strategies and materials deployed in new media literacy education; and the challenges encountered in new media literacy education in communication and media studies in public universities in Ghana, which are analysed in details in the subsequent sections.

4.1 State of New Media Literacy Education

New media literacy education in communication and media studies in public universities in Ghana is steadily growing, especially with the emergence of many different technologies and platforms. Public universities such as the University of Education, Winneba and the Ghana Institute of Journalism, among others, have been investing in the provision of technological infrastructure to promote access to the Internet and other equipment as a way of encouraging students to take advantage of the numerous new media technologies and platforms available, as well as the opportunities they present. In addition to improving access to technology, efforts at new media literacy education are also present in the pedagogies of the public universities at different levels. Generally, all undergraduate students at the University of Education, Winneba and the Ghana Institute of Journalism are offered courses in information and communication technology (ICT), which encompasses new media as forms of technology. For example, participant 2 expressed that *“at the School of Communication and Media Studies in the University of Education, Winneba, our undergraduate students are educated on these new forms of media by offering courses such as Introduction to Information Technology, which generally introduce students to new communication tools and platforms”*. This assertion is not different from participant 6, who also reported that there is a *“similar course in Information and Communication Technology at the Ghana Institute of Journalism that introduces all students in the undergraduate programmes to these new media and communication technologies so that they can use them in their daily activities”*.

These findings are consistent with the assertion by Diedong and Tuurosong that courses such as Information and Communication Technology (ICT) are provided by universities with the aim of promoting new media literacy.⁴⁹ These courses in Information and Communication Technology (ICT) according to the participants in the study are offered to undergraduate students to provide them with the basic knowledge and skills to use information and communication

⁴⁸ BRAUN, V., CLARKE, V.: Thematic Analysis. In COOPER, H., CAMIC, P. M. (eds.): *APA Handbook of Research Methods in Psychology. Vol. 2: Research Designs: Quantitative, Qualitative, Neuropsychological, and Biological*. Washington, DC : American Psychological Association, 2012, p. 60.

⁴⁹ DIEDONG, A. L., TUUROSONG, D.: Establishing the Rationale for Media Education for Students in Ghana. In *Journal of Communication, Media and Society*, 2018, Vol. 5, No. 1, p. 81.

technologies, which include new media applications and platforms. Buttressing these assertions, participants 2, 4 and 5 added that Information and Communication Technology (ICT) as a course of study is offered by their respective universities to students in undergraduate programmes in all disciplines to equip them with the knowledge and ability to use new technologies. In addition to these general courses in information and communication technology that are run in the two universities, undergraduate students who specialise in communication and media studies are offered New Media as a course to promote literacy in the use of the applications of these technologies and their appropriation among students. For example, participant 8 indicated that *“because we are a communication and media training school, we provide a particular course in Winneba, that is, New Media and Technology in our undergraduate programmes to expose students to digital technologies and new media”*. This is similar to what participants 2 and 5 reported, who indicated that there is a course titled *“Online and Digital Journalism”* that is offered to undergraduate students who are specialising in journalism and media studies at the University of Education, Winneba.

However, the situation with respect to postgraduate studies is different in the two universities selected for this study. There were no specific courses in new media literacy in the postgraduate programmes in communication and media studies at the University of Education, Winneba and the Ghana Institute of Journalism. However, graduate students in the communication and media programmes at the University of Education, Winneba are offered courses in Computer Applications in Education and Instructional Technology, which aim at promoting new media literacy and equipping students with some knowledge and skills to engage with new forms of digital and communication technologies. In respect of this finding, participant 1 explained: *“At the Ghana Institute of Journalism we do not have any particular course(s) in new media literacy for our graduate students, but they come into discussions in other courses that we teach them in our communication and media programmes at that level. Sometimes, we direct and refer these (new) media technologies and platforms to students to look for information from there, or submit their assignments through those applications and platforms. We also use them in our research and teaching to promote learning activities, and deliver messages, while students also use them to connect and share knowledge and information among themselves.”*

The respondent asserts that his institution does not provide specialised education in new media literacy at the postgraduate level, but lecturers encourage students to make use of new media technologies by integrating them in teaching, learning and assessing students. On the other hand, participant 8 said: *“For us here at the School of Communication and Media Studies in the University of Education, Winneba, we make sure that our students use new media by encouraging them to access our teaching and learning materials, among others on new media and especially ITS, which allows students to use these platforms to undertake many activities, such as registering for courses, accessing assignments from lecturers and checking examination results. By doing so, our graduate students are challenged and compelled to be new media literate because they will be lagging behind if they do not learn how to work with these new media technologies, applications and platforms to access any information they may require from lecturers and the university.”*

The assertions by the different respondents indicate that the University of Education, Winneba and the Ghana Institute of Journalism, as well as lecturers in communication and media recognise the importance of digital and new media literacy in teaching and learning activities in their programmes at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels. Given this, both universities in Ghana run some courses as an attempt to impart students with some competences and competencies in new media literacy to be able to appropriate these applications and platforms for their individual purposes.

4.2 Strategies and Materials Deployed in New Media Literacy Education

The study found that lecturers in communication and media studies in the two selected public universities used different instructional strategies in educating and implementing new media literacy programmes to students. These include the use of small group discussions; whole group; critical thinking; and production. These are consistent with the strategies provided by Lin et al., Tugtekin and Koc, and Lin, Jadallah, Anderson, Baker, Nguyen-Jahiel, Kim, Kuo, Miller, Dong and Wu, who recommended several proficiencies and skills in literature as useful in promoting new (media) literacy.⁵⁰ Despite this, the common strategy mentioned in the responses provided by participants in this study highlighted the whole group instruction. The whole group instruction involved the use of lectures and discussions, which were mostly used by lecturers in communication and media studies for imparting knowledge and skills to undergraduate students. To make new media literacy interesting to students, lecturers mixed practical activities with lectures and discussions about the subject. In the two public universities, that is, the University of Education, Winneba and the Ghana Institute of Journalism, all the participants concurred that whole group instruction was appropriate in educating students about new media for literacy because of the large numbers of students in undergraduate programmes and classes. For example, Participants 1 and 3 indicated that they educated their students on new media technologies (platforms) in their traditional lectures, especially in New Media and Technology, as well as Information and Communication Technology (ICT), and Online and Digital Journalism courses. *“Though undergraduate classes are bigger, we try to deliver the lectures by engaging with students in discussions to make it interactive and interesting for students to follow, learn and use new media literacy skills in the process”*, participant 3 said.

In addition to giving lectures to whole groups, small group discussions were other strategies that lecturers used in new media literacy education. Students in large groups are also grouped into smaller groups to brainstorm and discuss topics in new media that are assigned to them to make presentations to their peers as part of assessing them for grades in these courses. This is especially evident in postgraduate studies as many of the lectures in the advanced programmes have smaller classes compared to the undergraduate programmes. Participants 2 and 5 indicated that they deliberately put their assignments on new media technologies and platforms, and encourage postgraduate students to conduct further research to make *PowerPoint* presentations of the ideas that they put together about a topic regarding new media technologies and applications. Participant 5 stressed: *“I refer my students to readings and other materials on new media and online platforms to provide them with information and contents for presentations in class.”* On the other hand, participants 2, 4 and 5 who teach in the graduate programmes said they used seminars and round table discussions in educating students about new media technologies, which enable the students to engage in critical thinking and articulate their divergent views on the topic(s) under discussion. This also allowed students to answer research questions and discuss their opinions on various aspects of new media with their peers. In addition to these strategies which seek to improve critical thinking and new media literacy, postgraduate and undergraduate students are made to experiment, produce and share content as a way of making them to practice with these tools, applications and platforms.

These findings show that the strategies adopted by lecturers in making students new media literate fit into the perspectives of constructivists because all the participants from the two selected public universities in Ghana for this study see new media literacy education as an active process, which enabled students at different levels to derive meanings from their experiences with these technologies and platforms. Different materials were used in teaching, learning and delivering new media literacy programmes and appropriation among students.

⁵⁰ TUGTEKIN, E. B., KOC, M.: Understanding the Relationship Between New Literacy, Communication Skills and Democratic Tendency. Model Development and Testing. In *New Media and Society*, 2020, Vol. 22, p. 4.

Lecturers used *PowerPoint* presentations, books, hand-outs and journal articles in new media literacy education. Some of the books used in promoting new media literacy education are found in the libraries of the selected universities, while others could be obtained from the Internet. Undergraduate students were in many cases given books and hand-outs, as well as *PowerPoint* presentations by lecturers to students in making the subject more practical and conversant with discussions of new media in the classroom. On the other hand, graduate students were in most cases given journal articles on the subject of new media to read. Lecturers referred students to websites, databases and repositories where they could find information about topics on new media for presentations, which are supplemented with books in some cases.

The choice of materials for educating students on new media literacy was at the discretion of individual lecturers who determine what they think students need to know about new media, as there are no standard guidelines in public universities on the kinds of proficiencies students need to possess to become literate and skilful in the use of new media. For example, participants 8 and 3 highlighted that they preferred to use new media and online sources because books on new media literacy were not easily available in the libraries of their universities. However, participants 1, 4 and 5 relied on particular new media literacy books that they believed could be easy for students to understand, which according to lecturers could be aligned with national and international requirements. Other participants also referred to the Internet for materials to use in teaching and delivering new media literacy programmes even though some were unable to identify the specific online sources and sites of materials that they relied upon. Other lecturers obtained materials from colleagues in other institutions because they had difficulties looking for and finding relevant reference materials. Given this, lecturers could be trained and guided to identify materials and websites that provide resources and information to help them improve the competences and competencies in new media literacy education for students in communication and media studies in public universities in Ghana.

4.3 Challenges in New Media Literacy Education

Several challenges were discussed by participants in the education and implementation of new media literacy programmes in the two selected public universities. These challenges include issues regarding curriculum and materials for teaching new media literacy, among others. Curriculum issues depended on the knowledge and competency of lecturers. Three participants pointed out their difficulty in teaching and implementing new media literacy programmes because they were not familiar with these new forms of communication technologies, as well as the required content prescribed in the curriculum design for new media literacy at higher education institutions in Ghana. Participant 3 indicated: *"We know that students need skills for content creation, text construction and deconstruction, and online safety, among others. However, the challenge is that some of us are not too abreast with these new media technologies and applications. I have not had so many encounters with these new tools and platforms, so I find it difficult trying to educate or promote and integrate them into the teaching and learning activities in my classes. As you may know it is not easy to promote or teach subjects that someone is not very familiar with the content."*

Two participants highlighted their challenges with respect to the curriculum and support. Participant 7, for example, described new media literacy education as difficult especially without adequate guidance on the curriculum provided for the task. This concretises the assertion by Hobbs that educators in new (media) literacy require certain skills so that the various approaches discussed in literature can effectively impart new (media) knowledge and skills into students, especially in communication and media studies.⁵¹ Participant 2 opined that since there is no

⁵¹ HOBBS, R.: *Reading the Media: Media Literacy in High School English*. New York : Teachers College Press, 2007, p. 130.

standard curriculum provided for new media literacy in public universities in Ghana, it makes it challenging to understand and promote new media literacy, especially for lecturers who teach or seek to promote the subject for the first time or perhaps are not very conversant with the knowledge and skills in new media usage. Participants 4, 6 and 8 lamented the lack of resources including personnel to guide lecturers on how to educate and implement new media literacy programmes. This contrasts with the notion by Hobbs that educators and teachers in new (media) literacy need to be equipped with the competences and competencies to be able to effectively impart knowledge and skills into students to enable them to appropriate these new technologies in their academic and other activities.⁵² *“It is easier if you are trained, and there are available resources and experts to support you in your efforts to make your students new media literate”*, participant 8 stressed.

The participants in the study also highlighted the need for the public universities to identify themselves and recruit persons with the right qualifications and competence to teach and implement new media literacy programmes and training. Participant 6 narrated: *“I think if lecturers who have no enough knowledge, understanding and skills in new media literacy are assigned to teach or train students in this regard; it is likely they cannot deliver effectively. Therefore, it is important for the universities to provide proper and enough training to lecturers to grasp these new technologies and their literacy to be able to educate and empower students in communication and media studies with their knowledge and expertise in this area.”*

Participants 3, 5 and 7 concurred on the need to carefully identify lecturers who are eligible to handle new media and promote literacy among students. In line with this, participant 8 opined that only lecturers with communication and media background should be allowed to teach new media literacy in the public universities in Ghana. This was coupled with the challenges in the conceptualisation of new media literacy strategies and activities to achieve objectives and impart such skills to students. For example, participants 2 and 5 lamented the difficulty in developing relevant and appropriate tasks or activities for students to enhance their new media literacy skills that will make them competent in the use of these new forms of communication technologies, applications and platforms. There is the need for more exposure to develop extensive understanding of the various strategies and instructional materials that could be used by lecturers while educating and implementing new media literacy programmes in universities in Ghana.

The issue of time was also another issue in the findings of the study given that lecturers need to prepare well to educate and implement new media literacy programmes because there are many topics in the courses that need to be covered in the classroom. Against this backdrop, participants 1 and 5 complained that it was not possible for them to deal with all the new media technologies and learning competencies if lecturers have to make the teaching and learning activities student-centred. For example, participant 6 stated that she could not finish the discussion of topics in the subject of new media because there are many of them which could not be covered within the time provided for the duration of classes. The participants in the study stressed that in addition to struggling with time, it was also challenging for them to use instructional materials as some of them do not align with the content of the curriculum on new media literacy for students. There are no standard text books for new media literacy education and delivery in the public universities, and therefore teaching does not follow any set of recommended guidelines (participant 4 and 8). Three participants shared that in their attempts to ensure that their students are on par with other students in other communication and media education institutions regarding new media literacy, lecturers consult their colleagues in other universities to analyse their course outlines and content of new media literacy programmes to edit their offerings to ensure that their students acquire similar knowledge and skills in uniform contexts of teaching and learning (participants 2, 7, and 3).

⁵² HOBBS, R.: *Reading the Media: Media Literacy in High School English*. New York : Teachers College Press, 2007, p. 130.

Participants were also not happy about the limited instructional materials and technologies for promoting new media literacy education and delivery of programmes. For example, participants 4, 5 and 6 noted that though there are many new media literacy materials on the Internet, such materials have not been prepared and designed for Ghanaian students and the local context. Therefore, lecturers in communication and media studies in public universities in Ghana have to try as much as possible to locate and search for materials that could be suitable for the Ghanaian context. Most of the participants in the study situated new media literacy in Information and Communication Technology (ICT), as they indicated that new media literacy is promoted using computers and other technologies such as mobile phones, among others. Participants acknowledged that technology is important in the teaching and promotion of new media literacy because many computer related topics are also taught in new media literacy, which is consistent with the assertion by Diedong and Tuurosong that courses such as Information and Communication Technology seek to promote new media literacy in higher education in Ghana.⁵³

5 Conclusions

This study sought to explore how lecturers promote new media literacy and implement programmes in communication and media education in public universities in Ghana. From the findings of this study, the participants in the study require additional training on the pedagogy of new media literacy as an important subject in communication and media education, and generally in other disciplines in public universities. There is a lack of adequate materials for media literacy education in communication and media studies in Ghana. As a result of inadequate materials including digital infrastructure, applications and books, among others, lecturers are challenged in new media literacy education and programme implementation in public universities. This has compelled lecturers in communication and media in public universities to rely on the Internet to search for materials as there are no standardised prescriptions of how new media literacy programmes, content and practices in higher education institutions such as the University of Education, Winneba and the Ghana Institute of Journalism could be promoted.

Lecturers in communication and media studies in the public universities used traditional strategies in teaching and implementing new media literacy programmes, such as lectures, practicum and group assignments, among others to encourage the development of collaborative skills that are necessary for participation in the digital economy. Despite the many instructional strategies in new media literacy education, participants only identified a few pedagogical approaches to imparting knowledge and skills regarding these new forms of communication technologies. Other challenges faced by lecturers in new media literacy education in communication and media training institutions include lack of competency to teach and implement new media literacy programmes. Despite the lack of competence and adequate skills, lecturers were still willing and open to educate and implement new media programmes. This indicates the recognition of the relevance and significance of such new media literacy skills for communication and media students when adequate materials and adequate training and support are provided for teaching new media and its concomitant skills in public universities in Ghana.

The findings of this study showed that although lecturers in communication and media studies were aware of the needs of students in new media literacy, which include skills for content creation, text deconstruction and online safety, among others, many of them have not grasped the appropriation of the new media phenomenon in the teaching of students at both

⁵³ DIEDONG, A. L., TUUROSONG, D.: Establishing the Rationale for Media Education for Students in Ghana. In *Journal of Communication, Media and Society*, 2018, Vol. 5, No. 1, p. 81.

undergraduate and postgraduate levels in communication and media studies in the public universities. The provision of communication and media training in public universities in Ghana should be reviewed to ensure that their curricula prioritise and improve new media literacy education to enable students to use these technologies and applications for their purposes in academic activities and other endeavours. However, the findings suggest that students in the two selected communication and media training institutions (University of Education, Winneba and the Ghana Institute of Journalism) are not adequately exposed to more course contents that are related to new media literacy and production among students in the public universities, even though some course contents are generally related to Information and Communication Technology, which are run by the universities with the aim of promoting new media usage among students. Given this, it is important for new media literacy instructions to be embedded in the programmes and courses that are provided in communication and media education in public universities in Ghana.

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