**Media Studies - Changing Dynamics in the 21st Century: Scripting a new story**

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**(i) Introduction**

*“In America, the president reigns for four years, and journalism governs forever and ever” Oscar Wilde.*The Merriam-Webster Dictionary describes communication as a transitive verb in grammatical terms and says communication means to pass on knowledge of or information. The dictionary says that communication’s function is to make known facts or a story to the target audience concerned. From this, it can be deduced that communication is an information exchange. Humans are communicating with one another always. The contexts can be myriad including interpersonal and intercultural communication. However, when it is on a large scale, it is called mass communication. But what should also need to be understood is what is the place of communication in culture.

Now culture, originally stemming from ancient Greek and Roman (latin: cultura) is a term that is used extensively in daily speech, academics, and public discourse. With its versatile applications and numerous functions, the contemporary interpretation of this term is shaped by the unique requirements and applications of various fields such as anthropology, sociology, and communication studies.

From the perspective of communication studies, culture can be defined as learned behaviors that individuals share through their interactions. In essence, culture is not a static entity; rather, it is fluid and susceptible to external influences and pressures. These aspects often remain hidden and manifest as schemas and artifacts. Even subcultures can coexist within the broader cultural framework of a society, though they might exhibit distinct characteristics. The concept of society is intricately intertwined with groups of interacting individuals. Distinguishing between culture and society can prove challenging due to their inherent interconnectedness. Now, even as society and culture are understood as two different entities, it is now to see what role does communication play in culture. Both entities are interwoven.

**(ii) Media studies - an interdisciplinary field**

As we delve into the realm of media studies and its evolving dynamics for the 21st century, it becomes crucial to trace the evolution of media studies throughout the decades. Undoubtedly, media studies draw upon conventions from both the social sciences and humanities, with a strong foundation in core disciplines such as mass communication, communication sciences, communication studies, and communication itself.

In examining media's connection to the field of communication, it's essential to comprehend the interdisciplinary nature of such studies. As Clinton Golding emphasizes in his article "Integrating the disciplines: Successful interdisciplinary subjects," tackling intricate issues requires not only disciplinary depth but also what Howard Gardner terms a "synthesizing mind" (2006, p. 3). Investigating complex topics necessitates individuals who can engage in interdisciplinary translation and synthesis, whether as part of multidisciplinary teams or as independent researchers. This approach enables them to develop a more comprehensive understanding compared to one limited by a single disciplinary perspective. As noted by Lyon (1992) and Brew (2008), this practice is not an outlier but a common trajectory in contemporary academia. This suggests that our educational approach should address both disciplinary and interdisciplinary expertise. Interdisciplinary education should complement traditional disciplinary instruction, allowing students to navigate challenges that transcend single fields, collaborate across multiple disciplines, and chart research paths that diverge from conventional disciplinary trajectories.

When discussing the interdisciplinary nature of studies, three key aspects come to the forefront. Firstly, it arises from multiple origins, reflecting its evolution. Secondly, its diversity encompasses a wide range of areas and scopes. Lastly, there exists a degree of skepticism regarding its utility, particularly in terms of professionalism and employability.

The foundation of media studies can be traced back to the exploration of the connection between media and culture, with its early origins dating back to the 1920s. During this period, mass media forms such as radio networks, widely circulated newspapers, and magazines gained significant prominence. The introduction of television in the mid-1930s further solidified the emergence of media studies. However, it's important to note that the initial focus on media studies was heavily influenced by Eurocentric perspectives, particularly centered around the notion of "the best that has been said and thought" within high culture. The media of that era were primarily seen as representatives of European culture, often disregarding the broader global context. Prominent news agencies like Reuters and BBC were at the forefront of shaping these perspectives.

The discipline of media studies initially evolved from subjects like Sociology and English. Sociology contributed by emphasizing patterns of social production and consumption, along with their intersections with power dynamics and ideologies. This perspective also involved empirical research skills. On the other hand, the influence of English studies brought attention to skills and methods of textual analysis (Thornham & O’Sullivan, 2004).

During its early stages, media studies faced skepticism within sociological research circles, as media was considered to lack the substantive content needed to warrant dedicated study. Instead, more conventional social issues like crime, poverty, race relations, and family dynamics took precedence (McQuail, 2002, p. 6). However, the significance of media studies gained prominence with the advent of television. The rise of soap operas and horror shows on TV prompted unfavorable responses in Europe and America, which in turn began impacting society. Educational psychology experts sounded alarms about TV's potential negative effects on child-rearing and family relationships. This raised concerns about television's role as a deterrent to healthy family dynamics.

As a result, sociologists redirected their attention towards exploring the intricate relationship between media and society, marking a turning point for the growth of media studies as a distinct field of inquiry.

During the 1950s and 1960s, the television media landscape in Europe and America witnessed the emergence of horror shows and soap operas. Educational psychology scholars raised concerns about the negative impact of TV on child-rearing and family values. As a response to this, sociologists began to direct their attention toward exploring the intricate relationship between media and society. This shift gave rise to the development of a functionalist empirical study model, which portrayed society as "voluntaristic and self-directed" rather than being "manipulated and controlled by media." This model essentially defended the role of mass media and resisted the idea of excluding media from domestic use.

However, media studies diverged from traditional sociology by emphasizing the significance of acknowledging the centrality of texts and various modes of cultural representation (Thornham & O’Sullivan, 2004, p. 719). It wasn't until the 1960s that media studies began to receive increased scholarly attention.

Subsequently, with the emergence of cultural studies in the 1970s, media became a subject of academic exploration within the broader realm of English Studies programs. Notably, the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies at the University of Birmingham played a significant role in this development in 1964. Here, cultural studies incorporated media alongside literary studies, and this interdisciplinary approach expanded to encompass various areas such as sociology, anthropology, postcolonial studies, gender studies, race studies, ethnicity studies, and more. This inclusive approach sought alternative perspectives for scholarly investigations into socio-cultural issues. As the study of cultural phenomena gained traction, the 1960s marked the dominance of pop culture as a prominent strand within media studies.

**(iii) Media studies & 21st century challenge**

Media studies have undergone a gradual evolution over the years, transitioning from its origins in sociology and English streams to becoming a distinct academic discipline. Postmodernism, in particular, underscores the contemporary reality where identities are shaped by the rapid dissemination of information (Kafle, 2009). This perspective recognizes the role of mass media in fostering connections by erasing spatial and temporal boundaries and acknowledges the influence of various technologies in expanding possibilities.

With the advent of the 21st century, as new media emerged, Carl Eric Rosengren observed that while new communication media have arisen, the old ones have also evolved into specialized forms, without being entirely replaced. This indicates that media studies, as a broad field, continuously amalgamate societal changes and developments in media technologies.

To comprehend how media studies are reshaping dynamics in the 21st century, it's important to examine their evolution as a subject. Although determining when a subject becomes an academic discipline isn't straightforward, certain criteria exist. A critical aspect is the establishment of a robust theoretical foundation, derived from reasoning, experience, and conceptualization spanning decades. This theoretical legacy accumulates knowledge from the past, providing a foundation for future exploration.

Furthermore, a subject's growth may involve the development of related sciences and scholarship, encompassing not only the subject matter but also human-related aspects such as ideas and actions. This principle holds true for media studies, which involve the examination of technological tools alongside their societal implications. The readiness of academic institutions to formally teach the subject on their campuses is another crucial determinant. For a subject to integrate into mainstream education, an adequate supply of qualified teachers is essential.

Media studies emerged through collaborative efforts between political scientists, psychologists, and sociologists. These experts brought media studies to the forefront by collaborating with journalism schools, imparting the discipline as a vocational pursuit and effectively integrating it into the public domain.

Media studies have evolved into a rich amalgamation of interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary elements, encompassing various domains. While English studies and cultural constructs serve as its primary foundations, media studies now incorporate hands-on training in both established and emerging technologies, including the realm of new media. As Hemraj Kafle notes, media studies draw from a diverse range of fields.

In today's media landscape, digital media holds a more prominent role than ever before. Social media, digital advertising, and increased internet accessibility are shaping contemporary media trends. These trends encompass novel tools like mobile video, virtual reality (VR), augmented reality (AR), and data analytics, all influencing the trajectory of digital media and its academic future.

However, traditional media studies haven't lost their significance. They continue to delve into cultural facets, examining forms and effects, and fostering critical inquiry. Another facet that has emerged is convergent media, where theory and practical aspects blend seamlessly. This format encompasses a wide spectrum and emphasizes producing skilled media graduates capable of working across various media platforms. Convergent media represents the modern format of media studies and offers the potential for ongoing adaptation.

Furthermore, media studies programs also prepare educators for different educational levels, enabling them to train aspiring media entrepreneurs. These skilled media educators can play a pivotal role in cultivating the talents of emerging media professionals, ultimately contributing to employment generation in low-income economies and developing nations.

**(iv) Conclusion**It can be concluded that as media is a form of human communication, it will remain that but with increasing technology there will be more of it. There will be more research on the processes of media with a huge focus on computerization communication methods. Developments in technology will make computerized data more feasible which will be shared through digital libraries. The future is also that students trained in convergent media studies will be far more employable after studying media.

**(v) References**

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