

## **SEX AND MEDIA EDUCATION IN CATHOLIC SCHOOLS: AN IMPERATIVE FOR CHILD PROTECTION AGAINST SEXUAL ABUSE**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Contemporary society is marked by the prodigious growth of the new information and communication technologies. In the past two decades, we have witnessed the exponential progression of mobile telephony from ‘dumb phones’ to smart phones and the convergence of different media on a single platform. It is a fact that younger people, more than the older generation are at home with the instruments of the Information Age. As digital residents, children and young people easily manipulate and use ICT instruments like mobile phones and other devices like I-pad and video consoles. The use of these means of communication has opened up for children and young people possibilities which are both positive and negative. The digital revolution has enabled children and young people to enter into social areas which hitherto were the special preserve of adults, engendering the phenomenon of adultification of children. The easy availability and access to pornographic materials and other sexual contents on the internet have led to the sexualisation of childhood. There are other manifestations like ‘cwebrities’, i.e. digital voyeurism. This scenario is doubtless a social problem which requires the urgent attention of those engaged in the upbringing of children. The Catholic Church has been very consistent in her drive for a holistic education of children and young people. The questions which this paper addresses are: Should the Catholic Church be proactive in providing the right sexual education or allow children to be fed with obnoxious notions of human sexuality by people with different agenda? How can the Catholic Church support her teachers to provide the right media education to children in our society? This paper is theoretical in nature and adapts the thoughts of scholars to answer the stated research questions. Taking its bearing from the Grunwald Declaration on media education, the paper highlights the fact that the antidote to the negative use of the new media is the appropriate application of media and information education which lead to various literacies including media and information literacy (MIL), digital literacy, visual literacy, transmedia literacy. Children and young people who are adequately literate in these areas are better equipped to avoid the negative elements of the digital age. The paper concludes with a call for the formulation and promulgation of a media education policy for Catholic schools in Nigeria.

Key words: Adultification; Catholic Schools; Digital Literacy; Digital Revolution; Media and Information Education; Media and Information Literacy; New Media; Pornography; Sex Education; Sexualization of childhood; Social Media

## 1. Introduction

The Catholic Church takes the issue of education very seriously. In the Declaration of the Second Vatican Council on Christian Education, *Gravissimum Educationis*, the Council Fathers noted: “Education is, in a very special way, the concern of the Church, not only because the Church must be recognized as a human society capable of imparting education, but especially it has the duty of proclaiming the way of salvation to all men, of revealing the life of Christ to those who believe, and of assisting them with unremitting care so that they may be able to attain to the fullness of that life.” (GE, No. 4)

Among the various organs of education, the school is of outstanding importance. In nurturing the intellectual faculties which is its special mission, it develops a capacity for sound judgement and introduces the pupils to the cultural heritage bequeathed to them by former generations. It fosters a sense of values and prepares them for professional life. The Church thus invests in education as a means of spreading the Good News of salvation.

The story of Bishop Shanahan, the first Catholic Bishop of Eastern Nigeria underscores this investment in education. An official biography noted his conviction that Catholicism would have no permanent foothold in Nigeria until it concentrated on uplifting the people by education. He felt that the best approach to the hearts of the parents would be through the children. In his own words: “I realised suddenly that when the children had been baptised in the schools, they would go back to their pagan homes full of the Life of God. Who could doubt that through these tiny apostles, mothers and fathers would come to know God? Surely they would want their mothers and fathers with them in heaven.”(Congregation of the Holy Ghost, 1996, p. 42)

Education is thus the key to all human and social development. Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI in his post-synodal exhortation, *Africae Munus*, rightly identified ignorance and illiteracy as part of the plagues and pandemics obstructing Africa’s march to full and integral human development (cf. Pope Benedict, 2011, nos. 74-78). For this reason, the Catholic Church in Nigeria has fully gone into education. She has successfully set up schools – nursery, primary, secondary and tertiary institutions. Using the schools, the Church is not only doing the work of evangelisation, but also helping in bringing down the cost of education to meet the challenges of illiteracy and poverty.

The objectives of the Church which are in line with the National Policy on Education (NPE, 2004, p. 51) include to:

- i) Develop, access and improve educational programmes
- ii) Enhance teaching and improve the competence of teachers
- iii) Make learning experiences more meaningful for children
- iv) Make education more cost effective
- v) Promote in-service education and
- vi) Develop and promote effective use of innovative materials in schools.

Each epoch in human history is confronted with peculiar problems which have implications for the educational institutions. This paper examined the current information age from the prism of children and young people and the challenges posed to the educational sector, especially to Catholic schools. At the end, we will proffer adequate sex media education as the panacea to these challenges.

## **2. Information and Communication Technologies: An overview**

Information technology simply refers to the use of computer software in managing information (Longley & Shain, 2012) It is the convergence of multi-media facilities which are used to transfer, record and retrieve knowledge. This implies that a wide range of technological equipment such as computers, mobile telephones, storage devices, file transfer protocols, listserves, satellite, the world wide web, are all included. There is also the concept of multi-media application which refers to teaching and learning devices. These include a combination of data manipulators like videos, CD Roms, Flash drives, etc. (Aneke & Ibik, 2006; Akubilo & Obayi, 2007).

Information Technology does not only refer to the technique, but also to the process as well as the structure concerned with systematic, accurate and speedy organization and controlling of relevant signals, data or messages from different parts, through appropriate collection and editing. It therefore involves six components namely: the user, the information, the processor, the display, the facilities and auxiliary equipment – software and hardware, procedures, services and resources (Ige, 2002).

The principal features of IT as identified by Drucker (1991, p. 3) are as follows:

- Integration of the main data files so that information can be linked easily;
- One entry of each item of data so that basic records are entered once and are accessible to everyone who needs them;
- Elimination of duplication recording and processing;
- Instant updating of files by those operating the routine processes;
- Ability of the system to provide operational managers with regular control and monitoring reports on their areas of responsibility.

The new information and communication technologies or the new media are made possible by digitization, that is, the process by which all contents of information and communication can be reduced to a binary code and can share the same process of production, distribution and storage.

McQuail (2011) identified five main categories of ‘new media’ which share certain similarities and are approximately differentiated by types of use, content and context.

<b>Category of new media</b>	<b>Channel</b>	<b>Types of use and content</b>	<b>Context of use</b>
Interpersonal communication media	Telephone (mobile telephone, Email	In general, content is private and perishable	Primarily for work, but becoming more personal. Relationship established and reinforced may be more important than the information conveyed
Interactive play media	Computer-based and video-games as well as virtual reality devices	Content is for entertainment	The main innovation lies in the interactivity and perhaps the dominance of process over use gratifications
Information and search media	The internet and the World Wide Web	Library and data source of unprecedented size, actuality and accessibility	The search machine and mobile telephones in information retrieval
Collective participatory media	Social networking sites, Computer-mediated-communication	Exchanging information, ideas, and experiences and developing active (compute-mediated) personal relationships	Uses range from the purely instrumental to affective and emotional
Substitution of broadcast media	Media convergence	Use of media to receive or download content that in the past was typically broadcast or distributed by other similar methods	Watching films and television programmes, listening to radio and music

Social media can be defined as the facilities and tools that reduce the world to a global village; websites and applications that enables users to create, share contents and participate in social networking. The social media platform provides opportunities for users to create online communities to share ideas, information, personal messages, etc. Some of the social media applications include Facebook, Instagram, You-tube, My Space, Twitter, Skype, LinkedIn, etc.

### **3. Children and young people in the digital age**

All over the world, young people are actively engaged with the instrument of the digital age. They are the digital natives and are more adept in manipulating these instruments than the older generation. The mobile telephone, especially, has become an essential ingredient in the daily lives of boys and girls, but distinctly more so for girls. They use the instruments to keep contacts with family and friends and engage in various forms of social networking. young people have more options of media technology used and the content available than older generations.

Because the technologies driving the digital age are mostly screen-based – televisions, smart phones, tablets and computers, Sonia Livingstone (2009) described contemporary children and young people as living in a ‘screen-rich bedroom’ culture (p. 21). I will call the them ‘the screen-generation’, in addition to other appellations such as the digital natives, the Millennials, the iGens or the Gen Z.

Children and young people undertake many activities on the internet such as to research an essay, acquire new skills, find an expert, watch a video clip, or contribute a blog post. The use of these means of communication has opened up for children and young people possibilities which are both positive and negative.

Although no accurate census figures exist in Nigeria, but it is generally accepted that over half of the population is under 30 years of age and are the ones more frequent on the Internet.

Year	Internet Users**	Penetration (% of Pop)	Total Population	Non-Users (Internetless)	1Y User Change	1Y User Change	Population Change
2018 (May)	103,000,000						
2017	98,391,486						
2016*	<b>86,219,965</b>	46.1 %	186,987,563	100,767,598	5 %	4,124,967	2.63 %
2015*	<b>82,094,998</b>	45.1 %	182,201,962	100,106,964	8.4 %	6,348,247	2.66 %
2014	<b>75,746,751</b>	42.7 %	177,475,986	101,729,235	15.3 %	10,076,474	2.7 %
2013	<b>65,670,276</b>	38 %	172,816,517	107,146,241	19 %	10,487,424	2.72 %
2012	<b>55,182,852</b>	32.8 %	168,240,403	113,057,551	18.5 %	8,622,851	2.73 %
2011	<b>46,560,001</b>	28.4 %	163,770,669	117,210,668	21.7 %	8,298,063	2.73 %
2010	<b>38,261,938</b>	24 %	159,424,742	121,162,804	23.3 %	7,220,509	2.72 %
2009	<b>31,041,429</b>	20 %	155,207,145	124,165,716	29.5 %	7,074,482	2.71 %
2008	<b>23,966,947</b>	15.9 %	151,115,683	127,148,736	140.6 %	14,004,723	2.69 %
2007	<b>9,962,224</b>	6.8 %	147,152,502	137,190,278	25.4 %	2,015,189	2.68 %
2006	<b>7,947,035</b>	5.5 %	143,318,011	135,370,976	60.4 %	2,992,013	2.66 %
2005	<b>4,955,023</b>	3.5 %	139,611,303	134,656,280	183.2 %	3,205,447	2.63 %
2004	<b>1,749,576</b>	1.3 %	136,033,321	134,283,745	136.2 %	1,009,007	2.6 %
2003	<b>740,569</b>	0.6 %	132,581,484	131,840,915	78.8 %	326,383	2.58 %
2002	<b>414,185</b>	0.3 %	129,246,283	128,832,098	265.6 %	300,896	2.56 %
2001	<b>113,289</b>	0.1 %	126,014,935	125,901,646	43.9 %	34,549	2.55 %
2000	<b>78,740</b>	0.1 %	122,876,723	122,797,983	60.1 %	29,565	2.55 %

Source: *Internet Live Stats* ([www.InternetLiveStats.com](http://www.InternetLiveStats.com)) Elaboration of data by *International Telecommunication Union (ITU)*, *World Bank*, and *United Nations Population Division*.

The top ten social media platforms mostly used by Nigerians are as follows:

Rank	Social Network
1	WhatsApp
2	Facebook
3	Instagram
4	YouTube
5	Facebook Messenger
6	Google Plus
7	Twitter
8	Snapchat
9	Skype
10	LinkedIn

Source <https://www.naija.ng/1169202-statistics-social-media-users-nigeria.html#1169202>

The Nigerian Internet Registration Association (2017), drawing insight from several studies which have been conducted on the effects of social media on youths outlined some of the positive and negative effects:

The various social platforms provide the youths with:

- Great communication Tools to connect with loved ones and old friends irrespective of locations.
- Access to positive and free information being shared on Social Media.
- Opportunities to promote their businesses to a larger and wider audience.

- Social Capital.
- An avenue to contribute to emotional wellbeing of others by offering positive advices.
- Opportunities to launch businesses online
- Opportunities to market businesses online at little or no cost.
- Real time sharing of information for businesses through paid and unpaid advertising.

The negative effects of Social Media on youths cannot be overlooked and can be overwhelming. It can have harmful effects on the youths if not controlled. Some of these effects include:

- Lack of control of and over personal information: Youths post private information online without realising the associated risks.
- Cyber bullying
- Mental Health issues
- Lack of Morals
- Spread and ability to amplify Fake News
- Exposure to adult information
- Indirect encouragement of high rate of scam on social media
- Poor grades from the academic pursuits
- Long hours on Social Media platforms
- Peer pressure
- Addiction to social media

Our special interest to this presentation are the effects which are of a sexual nature. The easy availability and access to pornographic materials and other sexual contents on the internet is well-known. The media, especially social media have also been implicated in the sexualisation of childhood. There are other manifestations like ‘cwebrities’, i.e. digital voyeurism. At the root of these sexual effects is the fact that the digital revolution has enabled children and young people to enter into social areas which hitherto were the special preserve of adults, engendering the phenomenon of adultification of children.

### **3.1.New Media and ‘adultification’ of children:**

‘Adultification’ is the process whereby children take on adult roles and responsibilities before they are developmentally ready to do so. It could also be the manifestation of “precocious knowledge,” in which children gain knowledge typically associated with older people.

Poverty has been identified as one of the factors which generate adultification, as children from poor families assume adult responsibilities early in life. The new information and communication technologies have also been implicated in the process of child adultification, that is, children manifesting behaviours which are incongruent with their biological age.

In 2015, we conducted a study among parents in Port Harcourt to ascertain the role of new media in the process of adultification of children. We sought to find out from the parents their children's relationship with the new media and behaviours which their children manifest which are different from their own childhood period. Excerpts of some responses from the study are presented below:

My eight-year old boy is exposed to so much information that makes him reason and talk so maturely and with so much confidence that gets me surprised. His learning speed is amazing. During our childhood, we never on their own sought for information on any issues except the ones given them by their teachers and parents.  
Interview with parents of children

I have three male children between the ages of 5 and 10. Honestly those boys run all the technological devices at home. They handle my laptop, play games on my iPad, switch from all the cartoon channels on Dstv, they manipulate my phone as they wish and nothing is impossible with them when it comes to devices. The other day my 8 year old son told me he had put all my pictures in different folders in the laptop, I was wondering who taught him that. The youngest of them all has a penchant for playing games with mobile phones. What baffles me is, whenever we have a visitor or anyone around who has a mobile phone, next thing you see him fiddling with it and next you will not hear his voice again, he is playing games. No matter the kind of phone you have, that boy will search for where your game applications are and explore them.

There is a wide gap between this generation and ours on how we related to the media and the impact it had on us. The only media available was just the television, radio and newspaper, but now the numbers are so numerous. Growing up, we depended on peer groups for information, influence and fun; but today a child will rather play with his games, chat with friends on social network, watch films and play with his/her laptop. Curiosity in children has grown and many of this new media don't have restrictions and if care is not taken children can really see and read what they are not supposed to and thereby affecting them because now through the help of the new media, information is becoming increasingly available and on time.

They have become so bold than ever before. When I was at the same age of my children, I don't stand to look at the face of my father while he is shouting at me; but now my children stand boldly and look at my face without being afraid. Yes, these children behave this way because they see those actions in the DVD that they watch.

My children ages 10 and 6 are growing so fast. Sometimes I feel that I can't keep up any more. They snap pictures with phones and camera and transfer to my laptop. My daughters prefer gadgets as birthday gifts. They play a game on my phone that has to do with make-up and dress-up which I don't even know how it got into my phone. They try to dress themselves up just like they saw on that game. My daughter of 10 years goggles everything, including spellings. Sometimes I fear that she can't spell for real. She is vast in knowledge as a 10 year old. Her manner of talking, walking and eating changes each day and I wonder what I will do.

My 10 year daughter has become so materialistic. After going through the internet, she knows exactly the kind of shoe, dress, and even colour she wants and how to combine them and her sister is following her footsteps. Most times I want to stop them but am discouraged from stopping them, when she gives me information that I know nothing about, or teach me how to use some gadgets. When I see sketches of the dresses she wants me to make for her, am actually encouraged to let them explore the internet. New media for real has strong impact on my girls.

My kids are crazy about phones. As young as they are, they can tell you the series of all the phones available and their differences. Their dad and I wonder how they get all this information. They speak polished English since their dad downloaded audio dictionary in their laptop... Although there are many positive aspects of social media, the negative effects on my children are also numerous. When they lose a game or want something they saw on the internet or with their friends and you can't give them, it affects their mental health.

They select cloths and attire based on the image they see on internet. They think I don't qualify in buying things for young girls. One time in December 2013, I wanted to buy them dresses for their school Christmas party. My girls called me into their room and showed me exactly what they wanted from one site that I don't even know about. After I managed to get something similar, they refused to wear it and cried all night because they thought it wasn't exactly the colours they wanted and that it was a size bigger. My daughter of then 9 years old told me that the dress was made for 10 to 12 years. She showed me a tag to prove it and she was right. I had to change it.

Even though my mum thought I was smart as a child, my kids are obviously smarter than I was at their age. The kind of words they say, I wouldn't have thought of them at their age. Their arguments are smart and most times I wonder what goes through that young minds of theirs. The difference between my childhood and my kids has everything to do with their exposure to new media.

My parents did not consider my opinion in whatever decision they needed to make concerning me. While i negotiate with my children to make most decisions about them, my parents gave orders that must be obeyed to the letter without questioning.

What emerged from the study is that through the encounter with new media, children and young people today are bolder, more inquisitive, more informed and move at a faster pace than their parents and the older generation. These attitudes accentuate the concerns that have

been raised about the ‘sexualization of childhood’. As Gunter (2014) noted, these concerns “... are grounded in a belief that environmental factors can conspire to introduce sexualized themes into a child’s life too early. In effect, there is an intervention that might change the natural rate of sexual maturation for most children. Thus, children’s attention is drawn unnecessarily to sexual themes, inviting them to adopt adult-like styles of appearance and behaviour before they have matured sufficiently in a physical and psychological sense to be able to cope with social pressures and risks that might follow on from this intervention” (pp.1-2)

These trends have serious implications for education and challenges parents and teachers, especially those involved with the moral upbringing of children. In the face of these challenges, many parents and educators re-echo the words of the audience of the first kerygma preached by Peter: “What shall we do brethren?” (Acts 2:37) This paper proffers two lines of action – education in the true meaning of sexuality and media education

#### **4.1. Sex Education in Catholic Teaching**

The Church’s Magisterium has over the years presented a clear teaching on sexuality and the manner in which children and young people are to be introduced into this human reality. At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, both Pope Pius XI and Pope Pius XII had issued encyclical letters on the Catholic Education and the education of young people. The documents of the Second Vatican Council on Education and the Church in the modern world also touched on this teaching tradition. Popes Paul VI, John Paul II and Benedict XVI have also outlined in various documents this teaching

The document, ‘The truth and meaning of human sexuality: Guidelines for education within the family’ issued by the Pontifical Council for the Family in 1996, is described as one of the growing list of outstanding teaching documents produced by modern papacy. Kenneth Whitehead (1996) calls it the definitive treatment on the vexed contemporary question of sex education. The document amplified the earlier teachings and provided a practical guideline for Catholics.

Drawing inspiration from these documents, we can delineate some areas of contrasts between modern and the Church’s teaching on sex education:

S/N	Secular notion of sex education	Catholic teaching on sex education
1.	<p>The secular notion is animated by a culture that largely reduces human sexuality to the level of something commonplace, since it interprets and lives it in a reductive and impoverished way by linking it solely with the body and with selfish pleasure,</p>	<p>Human sexuality is a sacred mystery and must be presented according to the doctrinal and moral teaching of the Church, always bearing in mind the effects of original sin.</p> <p>Informed by Christian reverence and realism, this <i>doctrinal principle</i> must guide every moment of education for love. In an age when the mystery has been taken from human sexuality, parents must take care to avoid trivializing human sexuality, in their teaching and in the help offered by others. In particular, profound respect must be maintained for the difference between man and woman which reflects the love and fruitfulness of God himself.(TMHS, no. 122. 1.</p>
	<p>Sex Education can be taught like other educational subjects</p>	<p>For the Church, the educational service of parents must aim firmly at a training in the area of sex that is truly and fully personal: for sexuality is an enrichment of the whole person — body, emotions and soul — and it manifests its inmost meaning in leading the person to the gift of self in love. (FC, No. 37)</p>
2.	<p>Secular notion of sex education encourages the explicit presentation of sexual matters to children and young people in school</p>	<p>Sex education, which is a basic right and duty of parents, must always be carried out under their attentive guidance whether at home or in educational centers chosen and controlled by them. In this regard, the church reaffirms the law of subsidiarity, which the school is bound to observe when it cooperates in sex education, by entering into the same spirit that animates the parents.</p> <p>No material of an erotic nature should be presented to children or young people of any age, individually or in a group.</p> <p>This <i>principle of decency</i> must safeguard the virtue of Christian chastity (TMHS, 126. 3.</p>
	<p>Include minute descriptions of every type of modern contraceptive. Modern contraception, of course, along with the availability of abortion,</p> <p>Another abuse occurs whenever <i>sex education</i> is given to children by teaching them all the intimate details of genital relationships, even in a graphic way. Today this is often motivated by wanting to provide education for "safe sex", above all in relation to the spread of AIDS. (TMHS, 139.</p>	<p>Only information proportionate to each phase of their individual development should be presented to children and young people.</p> <p>This principle of timing has already been presented in the study of the various phases of the development of children and young people. Parents and all who help them should be sensitive: (a) to the different phases of development, in particular, the "years of innocence" and puberty, (b) to the way each child or young person experiences the various stages of life, (c) to particular problems associated with these stage 124. 2.</p>
	<p>makes the very idea of sex without</p>	<p>In this context education for chastity is absolutely</p>

	consequences possible —	<p>essential, for it is a virtue that develops a person's authentic maturity and makes him or her capable of respecting and fostering the 'nuptial meaning' of the body. Indeed Christian parents, discerning the signs of God's call, will devote special attention and care to education in virginity or celibacy as the supreme form of that self-giving that constitutes the very meaning of human sexuality.</p> <p><i>Human sexuality is thus a good</i>, part of that created gift which God saw as being "very good", when he created the human person in his image and likeness, and "male and female he created them" (<i>Genesis 1:27</i>). Insofar as it is a way of relating and being open to others, sexuality has love as its intrinsic end, more precisely, love as donation and acceptance, love as giving and receiving. (TMHS, No 11.</p>
	they are also heavily into descriptions of today's alternative lifestyles;	<p>(b) <i>Homosexuality</i> should not be discussed before adolescence unless a specific serious problem has arisen in a particular situation. This subject must be presented only in terms of chastity, health and "the truth about human sexuality in its relationship to the family as taught by the Church".</p> <p>(c) <i>Sexual perversions</i> that are relatively rare should not be dealt with except through individual counselling, as the parents' response to genuine problems</p> <p>THMS No 125</p>
	With the aim of only providing information. Sometimes this really leads to the deformation of consciences.	<p>56. <i>The practice of decency and modesty</i> in speech, action and dress is very important for creating an atmosphere suitable to the growth of chastity, but this must be well motivated by respect for one's own body and the dignity of others. Parents, as we have said, should be watchful so that certain immoral fashions and attitudes do not violate the integrity of the home, especially through misuse of the <i>mass media</i>.</p> <p>Respect for <i>privacy</i> must be considered in close connection with decency and modesty, which spontaneously defend a person who refuses to be considered and treated like an object of pleasure instead of being respected and loved for himself or herself.</p>
	<i>secularized and anti-natalist sex education</i> , which puts God at the margin of life and regards the birth of a child as a threat. This sex education is spread by large organizations and international associations that promote abortion, sterilization and contraception. These organizations want to impose a false lifestyle against the truth of human sexuality. Working at national or state levels, these organizations try to arouse the fear of the "threat of over-population" among children and young people to promote the contraceptive mentality, that is, the "anti- life" mentality.	Sex education incorporates the Church's radical stance for pro-life

From the foregoing, we can deduce that the Church teaches that sex education is the prerogative of parents and should be taught in the privacy of their homes or in educational centres which they have approved.

Therefore, in passing on sexual information in the context of education for love, the instruction must always be "*positive and prudent*" and "*clear and delicate*". These four words used by the Catholic Church exclude every form of *unacceptable content in sexual education*.

#### **4.2. Media Education**

In his Message for the celebration of the 41<sup>st</sup> World Communications Day, 2007, Pope Emeritus, Benedict XVI noted that the relationship of children, media, and education can be considered from two perspectives: the formation of children by the media; and the formation of children to respond appropriately to the media. The formation of children to respond appropriately to the media is the kernel of media education.

Media education is the provision of the skills which enable effective usage of the means of social communications. It also goes by the title 'Educommunication, that is, learning the alphabets of the media, enabling the users of the media to acquire the ability to 'read' and 'write' with the media effectively. The objective of educommunication is to foster awareness about the media which impact on social, cultural and political life. Apart from learning how the media functions, educommunication also trains students to express themselves through media productions.

An inclusive concept of media education has three main objectives :

- to give access to all kinds of media that are potential tools to understand society and to participate in democratic life;
- to develop skills for the critical analysis of messages, whether in news or entertainment, in order to strengthen the capacities of autonomous individuals and active users;
- to encourage production, creativity and interactivity in the different fields of media communication.

According to Pope Benedict XVI, media education should be positive. Children exposed to what is aesthetically and morally excellent are helped to develop appreciation. Like education in general, media education requires formation in the exercise of freedom. Freedom is not an insatiable quest for novelty but a call to choose all that is good, true and beautiful. The right exercise of freedom is most needed in the digital age with the availability of multiple media tools and content.

The Pope goes on: “Media education entails wisdom and discernment in the use of the media particularly called for on the part of communications professionals, parents and educators, for their decisions greatly affect children and young people for whom they are responsible, and who are ultimately the future of society. ... Communication in any form must always be inspired by the ethical criterion of respect for the truth and for the dignity of the human person. ... Even very young children should be taught important lessons about the media: That they are produced by people anxious to communicate messages; that these are often messages to do something – buy a product, to engage in dubious behaviour – that is not in the child’s best interest or in accord with the moral truth; that the child should not uncritically accept or imitate what they find in the media”

Media education or educommunication leads to media literacy, that is, the ability to access, analyse, evaluate and produce various forms of communication. Media literacy entails critical thinking, analytical skills and the ability to express oneself in different ways. Ancillary skills which emerge from media education are Information literacy and Technology literacy

The following reasons taken from the presentation of Lens Masterman show why media literacy is important

1. Media Education leads to the empowerment of individuals, especially minorities, and the strengthening of society's democratic structures.
2. Media Education helps the users to understand that the media do not reflect but re-present the world. The media, that is, are symbolic sign systems that must be decoded.
3. Media Education aims to foster not simply critical intelligence, but critical autonomy.
4. Media Education is investigative. It does not seek to impose specific cultural or political values.
5. Media Education is topical and opportunistic. It seeks to illuminate the life-situations of learners. In doing so it may place the "here-and-now" in the context of wider historic and ideological issues.

6. Indeed, Media Education attempts to change the relationship between teacher and taught by offering both objects for reflection and dialogue.
7. Media Education carries out its investigations via dialogue rather than just discussion.
8. Media Education is essentially active and participatory, fostering the development of more open and democratic pedagogies. It encourages students to take more responsibility for and control over their own learning, to engage in joint planning of the syllabus, and to take longer-term perspectives on their own learning.
9. Media Education is much more about new ways of working in the classroom than it is about the introduction of a new subject area.
10. Media Education involves collaborative learning. It is group focused. It assumes that individual learning is enhanced not through competition but through access to the insights and resources of the whole group.
11. Media Education consists of both practical criticism and critical practice. It affirms the primacy of cultural criticism over cultural reproduction.
12. Media Education is a holistic process. Ideally it means forging relationships with parents, media professionals and teacher-colleagues.
13. Media Education is committed to the principle of continuous change. It must develop in tandem with a continuously changing reality.
14. Underlying Media Education is a distinctive epistemology: Existing knowledge is not simply transmitted by teachers or "discovered" by students. It is not an end but a beginning. It is the subject of critical investigations and dialogue out of which new knowledge is actively created by students and teachers.

## **5. Integration of sex and media education in Catholic schools**

The Grundwald Declaration (1982) rightly noted: ‘Media education will be most effective when parents, teachers, media personnel and decision-makers all acknowledge they have a role to play in developing greater critical awareness among listeners, viewers and readers. The greater integration of educational and communications systems would undoubtedly be an important step towards more effective education.

In the age of the social media, it is indispensable that the Catholic Church in Nigeria and the Managers of her schools must devise means of integrating sex and media education into the curriculum. The Grundwald Declaration made a call for a comprehensive media education

programs - from pre-school to university level, and inadult education - the purpose of which is to develop the knowledge, skills and attitudes which willencourage the growth of critical awareness and, consequently, of greater competence among the usersof electronic and print media.

Furthermore, the Declaration called for the development of training courses for teachers and intermediaries both to increase their knowledge and understanding of the media and train them in appropriate teaching methods, which would take intoaccount the already considerable but fragmented acquaintance with media already possessed by manystudents.

Further recommendations issued by the Paris Declaration on media education are also pertinent for Catholic Schools in Nigeria:

#### I. Development of comprehensive media education programs at all education levels

Recommendation 1: To adopt an inclusive definition of media education

Recommendation 2: To strengthen the links between media education, cultural diversity and respect for human rights.

Recommendation 3: To define basic skills and evaluation systems According to these principles, the basic skills and knowledge to be acquired are both transversaland interdisciplinary and should be specified for each level of the school system.

#### II. Teacher training and awareness raising of the other stakeholders in the social sphere

Recommendation 4: To integrate media education in the initial training of teachers Initial training of teachers is a key element of the system and must include theoretical dimensionsand practical skills; it needs to be based on a good knowledge of young people's media uses. Intimes of rapid change, this training must rely on institutional actions and self-training, usingteaching aids that have been tested and validated by teachers and students.

Recommendation 5: To develop appropriate and evolving pedagogical methods The main purpose is to set up new "active" methods that are incompatible with ready-to-teach recipes and require an evolution of the teacher's role, a greater participation by students and alsocloser relations between school and the outside world. Teaching materials and tools, either freestudents, whatever their formats, covering the whole range from printed manuals to digitalspaces of collaborative work.

Recommendation 6: To mobilize all the stakeholders within the education system. The integration of media education in the education system has to mobilize all stakeholders. Theawareness of curricula managers, school directors, chief education officers, etc., must be increasedin order for them to assume the responsibilities that legitimize these actions. In the

framework of regional and national missions, experts could be at the disposal of official education authorities to launch awareness raising initiatives.

Recommendation 7: To mobilize the other stakeholders of the social sphere Media education cannot be limited to the school environment; it is also the concern of families, associations and media professionals. Parents and families along with civil society associations must contribute to it in the schools and outside the schools, in non-formal locations, if media education is to move from the experimentation phase to widespread innovative implementation.

Recommendation 8: To place media education within the framework of lifelong learning. Media education is not only for young people but also for adults whose main information and knowledge sources are media. In this context, media education is a process of quality lifelong learning. The continuous training and self-training of adults have to be implemented at the local level with the support of civil society associations, NGOs and experts.

## **6. Conclusion**

The digital revolution has far reaching consequences for every facet of modern life. In this Paper, we have highlighted the fact that the antidote to the negative use of the new media is the appropriate application of media and information education which lead to various literacies including media and information literacy (MIL), digital literacy, visual literacy, transmedia literacy. Children and young people who are adequately literate in these areas are better equipped to avoid the negative elements of the digital age. The integration of sex and media education will provide the adequate forum for teaching the delicate and sensitive topic of human sexuality in Catholic schools.

It becomes imperative that the relevant agencies managing Catholic schools should set up a think-tank of experts who will work out a new policy of sex and media education for Nigerian Catholic schools. The Church is called to be proactive rather than reactive to the outcomes of the use of new media by children and young people.

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