Learning Community: **15**(01): 53-62, June 2024
DOI: 10.30954/2231-458X.01.2024.5
Peer Reviewed Journal

Media Pedagogy in Multidisciplinary Conventional and Distance Education: Theories, Practices, and Cross-Sectoral Implications

Satyendra Kumar[1]* and Amiteshwar Ratra[2]

[1]PhD Research Scholar, Staff Training and Research Institute of Distance Education, Indira Gandhi National Open University, New Delhi, India
[2]Professor of Distance Education, Staff Training and Research Institute of Distance Education, Indira Gandhi National Open University, New Delhi, India

*Corresponding author: satyendra.iimc@gmail.com

Received: 23 Mar., 2024 **Revised:** 24 May, 2024 **Accepted:** 04 June, 2024

ABSTRACT

Media pedagogy has emerged as a pivotal intellectual and practical domain at the intersection of communication studies, educational technology, and curriculum theory. This chapter examines the theoretical foundations and applied dimensions of media pedagogy across multidisciplinary contexts, drawing on empirical evidence from both conventional face-to-face and distance education systems. It argues that effective media-pedagogical integration requires more than technological adoption; it necessitates epistemological repositioning within disciplines as diverse as medicine, law, engineering, the humanities, and the social sciences. Through a critical synthesis of contemporary scholarship, the chapter analyses instructional design frameworks, learner engagement models, and institutional policy landscapes that shape media pedagogical outcomes in synchronous and asynchronous educational environments. Key themes include digital literacy as a disciplinary competency, the role of socio-cultural context in mediating technology acceptance, and the pedagogical implications of immersive and algorithmic media. The chapter concludes by advancing an integrative framework—the Multidisciplinary Media Pedagogy Continuum (MMPC)—that bridges conventional and distance modalities, offering actionable directions for educators, curriculum designers, and institutional policymakers.

Keywords: Media pedagogy, distance education, digital literacy, multidisciplinary learning, educational technology, instructional design, open and distance learning

How to cite this article: Kumar, S. and Ratra, A. (2024). Media Pedagogy in Multidisciplinary Conventional and Distance Education: Theories, Practices, and Cross-Sectoral Implications. *Learning Community,* **15**(01): 53-62.
Source of Support: None; **Conflict of Interest:** None

The widespread embedding of digital media in current practices has transformed the epistemological foundations of modern education systems across the globe. Not only limited to disseminating information through printed texts and physical classrooms, modern education is carried out using an increasingly complex network of platforms, interfaces, and forms of representation that enhance yet also hinder pedagogic efforts. Media pedagogy, which can be defined as the research and practice concerning teaching with, through, and about media, has gained new scholarly and institutional significance in this context (Buckingham, 2019; Kellner & Share, 2019).

However, beyond merely accommodating new technologies, the role of contemporary educators demands a rethinking of foundational concepts. Traditionally separate epistemologies, such as law, engineering, medicine, arts, and the social sciences, must now consider media's influence on knowledge creation in their respective fields, as well as the ways in which media-saturated students generate meanings in them (Mihailidis, 2018). The relationship between media and interdisciplinary pedagogy has been highlighted, especially in the context of distance learning, where media serves as the central tool for delivering information and forming both social presence and personal identity (Anderson & Dron, 2011).

These are the three interrelated research questions that will be discussed in this chapter: (1) What is the development in theoretical models of media pedagogy, which incorporates multidisciplinary teaching-learning situations? (2) What are the differences in pedagogic models between traditional and distance education media? (3) What are the factors that shape the success of media pedagogy? Peer-reviewed articles from 2010 to 2024, including seminal works, and empirical findings from North America, Europe, Africa, and Asia will be used in the analysis of literature.

The chapter is structured in the following manner. The next section will explore the historical development of media pedagogy theory. The third section will focus on disciplinary application in traditional education. The fourth section will look into the distinctive pedagogical dynamics of distance education. The fifth section will consolidate cross-modal convergences and divergences. The sixth section will introduce the MMPC model. Finally, the seventh section will provide policy recommendations and future research directions.

Theoretical Foundations of Media Pedagogy

From Mass Communication to Critical Media Literacy

Media pedagogy's intellectual heritage can be traced back from mid-twentieth century mass communication theories to critical digital literacy scholarship today. Lasswell's (1948) seminal communication model of "who says what, through which channel, to whom, with what effect" provided the basis for an instrumentalist approach that became predominant in educational uses of media in the early years. McLuhan's (1964) iconic assertion that "the medium is the message" subverted content in favor of medium itself, as a powerful force of cognition and social organization, laying the groundwork for Postman's (1985) concept of technopoly, which is defined as cultural subordination to technological power.

Critical perspectives on mass culture developed by the Frankfurt School (Adorno & Horkheimer, 1944/2002) injected a new direction into the analysis of media that rejected their instrumental use and viewed them as ideological apparatuses rather than neutral means of education. Critical media pedagogy drew from this tradition through Freire's (1970) influential concept of dialogic education in which learners are not mere recipients of mediated information but should question its very existence and construction process. The critical media literacy perspective has roots in Freire's educational philosophy (Kellner & Share, 2019; Share, 2015).

Constructivism, Connectivism, and Digital Learning Theories

In socio-cultural constructivism by Vygotsky (1978), media pedagogy receives strong theoretical support through the assertion that learning is intrinsically social, mediated by tools of culture. For the digital age, learning through media can be seen as the semiotic tool for extending cognition and creating zone of proximal development experiences within the physical and virtual realms (Warschauer, 2011). Problem-based learning and inquiry-based learning – two educational models popular for instruction – rest on constructivist theories and employ media artifacts as authentic learning resources (Jonassen, 2000).

Connectivism by Siemens (2005) is another theoretical basis for media pedagogy which views learning as the process of navigating and establishing connections amongst nodes – people, resources and platforms – in which knowledge is situated. Criticized extensively for lack of scope and theoretical rigour (Verhagen, 2006), connectivism remains a generative theoretical approach to media pedagogy in distance education and MOOCs where networked learning is the prevailing learning style (Downes, 2012). Collectively, these frameworks indicate that media pedagogy should not be seen in any single light but rather a theoretically plural practice.

Media Pedagogy in Conventional Multidisciplinary Education

Disciplinary Integration and Curriculum Design

Within the traditional classroom setting characterized by physical presence, media pedagogy emerges through disciplinary-specific and interdisciplinary curricular methods. For example, Hobbs (2017) discusses two forms of media pedagogy: media education and media literacy infusion, where the latter refers to the integration of media critical competencies within other academic disciplines. Infusion models are the most prevalent models at the tertiary level with several disciplines including journalism, public health, and engineering education having designed media literacy-infused curricula.

Medical education is another field that has seen dramatic changes in instruction through the adoption of simulation technologies and multimedia cases. As noted by Cook *et al.* (2013), technology-based simulation has been shown to produce better outcomes in learning clinical skills as opposed to no-intervention control groups among a number of institutions examined. Media learning environments designed in medical training draw on cognitive theory of multimedia learning developed by Mayer (2009) where learners process information better when presented with words and pictures rather than words alone.

The humanities and social sciences have integrated digital storytelling, data journalism, and visual ethnography among others in order to develop media competencies and promote disciplinary inquiry. These approaches reflect the growing recognition that twenty-first-century disciplinary literacy is inseparable from multimodal literacy—the capacity to read and produce meaning across textual, visual, auditory, and digital modes (Cope & Kalantzis, 2009).

Learner Engagement and Critical Outcomes

The empirical evidence about the influence of media-pedagogical methods in traditional learning spaces is mostly positive. According to Means et al., who conducted a meta-analysis of more than fifty comparative studies, students studying in a mixed mode of classroom teaching and technologically-mediated education performed better than the students attending classes only in a traditional manner. The authors concluded, however, that variations in the results could be attributed to the design of teaching rather than the implementation of technology.

It is evident that active and participatory media pedagogy can positively affect the development of higher-level thinking abilities. Jenkins *et al.* described a participatory culture as one where there are low barriers to entry, strong support for creation and circulation, and opportunities for informal mentoring. Creating such a culture of participatory media in schools and universities can promote the development of skills including critical thinking, collaboration, and creativity (Buckingham, 2019). Unfortunately, however, the existence of digital divides related to socioeconomic factors, disabilities, and language barriers prevents equal opportunity for all students (van Dijk, 2020).

Media Pedagogy in Distance Education

Historical Trajectory and Generational Change

Distance education has seen a revolution from its beginnings in correspondence learning in the nineteenth century. Anderson and Dron (2011) outline the evolution of distance education by categorizing it into three generations, based on their media technologies – print correspondence, interactive multimedia, and networked digital media. These generations of distance education shed light on the restructuring of pedagogy in each phase due to changes in media technology.

With the introduction of web-based distance education in the 1990s and early 2000s, there was an expansion of the scope of distance education through the use of interactivity and multimedia in instructions (Moore & Kearsley, 2012). With the rise of MOOCs from 2012 with the launch of Coursera, edX, and Udacity, distance education became more globalized but exposed the weaknesses of broadcast-only distance pedagogy without interaction and feedback (Liyanagunawardena *et al.,* 2013).

Media Affordances and Pedagogical Design in Distance Contexts

In this context, the idea of affordances, proposed originally by Gibson (1979) in the field of ecological

psychology, and later applied to educational technology research, seems especially valuable. Affordances are considered the possibilities for actions offered to the person depending on their intentions and capabilities due to a certain medium or technology. Synchronous video conferencing allows creating dialogic interaction between people and non-verbal communication; asynchronous discussions help to engage into prolonged discourse and form communities of inquiry; podcasts enable engaging in on-demand learning of expert knowledge; interactive simulations are effective means of experiential learning in science, medicine, and engineering areas (Laurillard, 2012).

The most frequently validated theoretical approach used to analyze pedagogical practices in online distance education is Community of Inquiry (CoI), proposed by Garrison, Anderson, and Archer (2000). The three types of presences that contribute to the creation of an educational community, in which deep learning can take place, are identified: cognitive presence, social presence, and teaching presence. It is empirically proved that pedagogical designs, promoting all three presences, are the most efficient in terms of learning outcomes, learner satisfaction, and retention rates (Garrison, 2017). The challenge for media pedagogy in distance education is to design media-rich learning environments that sustain these presences across diverse disciplinary contexts and across varied learner digital literacies.

Open Educational Resources and Equity Considerations

The OER movement is one such notable phenomenon at the juncture of media pedagogy and distance education, especially in the Global South. According to the OER Recommendation by UNESCO (2019), open licenses on educational materials (books, multimedia, and software) can significantly contribute to improving access and enhancing the quality of education in settings with scarce resources. Examples of cases where institutions, like the Indira Gandhi National Open University in India, the Open University of Tanzania, and the South African Institute for Distance Education, have leveraged OER-based media pedagogy to improve access while highlighting issues related to cultural relevance, linguistic justice, and digital colonization since most content is produced by Global North organizations (Czerniewicz *et al.* 2017).

Convergences and Divergences Across Educational Modalities

An analysis comparing media pedagogy in traditional and online learning shows that there are both similarities and differences between them. Traditional and online education are currently driven by the same media ecology, which includes social media platforms, streaming services, artificial intelligence (AI) content, and immersive media technologies, which are ubiquitous within students' personal experiences. Media literacy in and beyond school must be used positively for pedagogic purposes while guiding students through new media forms in their discipline (Livingstone & Sefton-Green, 2016).

One major area of overlap between traditional and online education is the adoption of the flipped classroom approach, which requires students to view videos and multimedia presentations outside the classroom (online sessions). Research on various disciplines such as engineering (Bishop & Verleger, 2013), nursing (Betihavas *et al.* 2016), and language education (Lo & Hew, 2017) shows that this

pedagogy yields significantly greater conceptual knowledge and learner satisfaction when appropriate pedagogic support is provided. Differences, however, are no less enlightening. Traditional education enjoys the advantages of embodied sociality, unplanned interactions among peers, and the spatial and material aspects of campus socialization into academic disciplines. On the other hand, distance education offers more flexibility, scalability, and accessibility for students who are either working, taking care of dependents, or living in remote locations. Given their respective profiles of affordances, these two forms of instruction demand different approaches to media use: while traditional educators should utilize media to enhance dialogue, distance educators have to supplement the lack of physical presence with intentional community building and multimodal communication designs.

The COVID-19 crisis created an unexpected experiment of emergency remote learning, blurring the line between conventional and distance learning and revealing significant unpreparedness for the shift on both sides. Conducted over six continents throughout 2020-2021, studies of the global health crisis highlighted the problem of disengagement, digital fatigue, and inequality, while at the same time fostering innovations in pedagogies of hybrid and HyFlex models of delivery (Hodges *et al.* 2020; Beatty, 2021).

The Multidisciplinary Media Pedagogy Continuum (MMPC): An Integrative Framework

Building on the synthesis of theory and research outlined above, this chapter suggests using the Multidisciplinary Media Pedagogy Continuum (MMPC) as the organising structure for practitioners and researchers alike. The MMPC is based on the following four interrelated dimensions.

Firstly, there is Epistemological Responsiveness, which holds that any media pedagogy should reflect the epistemology of the particular discipline, with its rules regarding authoritative data, argumentation, and representation. For instance, what counts as proof in clinical medicine does not coincide with what can be considered evidence in literary studies. Therefore, media pedagogy must be discipline-specific, rather than universal. Secondly, there is Contextual Modality, acknowledging that media pedagogy methods lie along a continuum from strictly face-to-face communication to purely asynchronous web-mediated instruction, as well as a whole range of hybrid models between the two extremes.

The third dimension is Learner Agency and Participation, informed by participatory culture theory (Jenkins *et al.* 2006) and self-determination theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000), which holds that media-pedagogical settings must afford maximal conditions for learner agency, choice, and collaborative knowledge creation rather than simply passive consumption of media. The relevance of this dimension is especially important in distance learning, where the learner's motivation and autonomy are primary factors in learner success.

Critical Media Reflexivity is the fourth dimension, which insists that learners across all academic disciplines develop a skill for questioning the media through which learning takes place including its commercial nature, algorithms that curate content, and political representation. Given that we live in the time of synthetic media, misinformation, filter bubbles, and echo chambers, graduate-level media literacy should include reflexive thinking about the media (Kellner & Share, 2019; Buckingham, 2019).

By proposing all of these dimensions, the MMPC model posits that sustainable media-based teaching requires addressing all four dimensions simultaneously, tailored to the specifics of the particular learning context. It therefore addresses shortcomings of technocentric approaches that prioritize technologies themselves over instructional purposes and provides a theoretically robust but still pragmatic framework for media pedagogy and curriculum design.

Policy Implications and Future Directions

The conclusions drawn from the literature synthesized in this chapter have a number of important implications for educational policy makers, institutional management, and relevant professional associations. Firstly, digital literacy needs to be understood as more than just technical know-how and should be acknowledged as an interdisciplinary graduate attribute and not the sole responsibility of media and communication departments (UNESCO, 2013). This point must be reflected in national qualification frameworks and the accreditation process.

Secondly, professional development of staff is essential. The main challenge in implementing an effective media pedagogy in the classroom does not lie in technical feasibility but rather in instructors' confidence, pedagogical skills, and institutional capacity (Ertmer & Ottenbreit-Leftwich, 2010). Universities and open learning institutes need to ensure that there are established communities of practice, faculty observation programs, and sabbaticals in support of media pedagogy innovation.

Third, the explosion of educational technologies based on AI, including generative AI technologies like large language models, adaptive learning, and automated assessment technologies, calls for immediate regulation and pedagogical reflection. This is because the integration of such technologies modifies the labour of learning in ways not yet fully understood but which have serious consequences for issues of academic integrity, cognitive development, and justice (Holmes *et al.* 2022). Media pedagogy scholarship can provide invaluable theoretical tools to evaluate and implement AI technologies in education.

Fourth, collaboration between formal educational institutions and media education initiatives from outside academia, including libraries, community media centres, and public media producers, promises an innovative model of expanding the scope of media pedagogy, especially for adult learning through distance and open education. The partnership model responds to media literacy as an ecology embedded in communities rather than a skill confined to formal schooling settings (Hobbs, 2017).

Research must focus on longitudinal methodologies for studying how media pedagogical interventions affect disciplinary knowledge acquisition, employability, and civic participation over time. Comparative international research is especially necessary to investigate how media pedagogical practices vary across cultures, languages, and infrastructure within the Global North-South gap. Additionally, the intersection of media pedagogy with inclusive education—addressing learners with disabilities, language minorities, and economically marginalised communities—remains a critically under-researched domain.

CONCLUSION

Pedagogy related to the media in conventional and distance learning through a multidisciplinary perspective is arguably one of the most important areas of study in the field of education in the current century. The complexities, immersiveness, and algorithmic mediation of media environments have made the task of training individuals for critical thinking and action within the disciplines even more challenging. This chapter has made the case that there needs to be a departure from instrumentalist approaches in order to engage in media pedagogy with theoretical sophistication.

The proposed model of the Multidisciplinary Media Pedagogy Continuum offers such an approach through the linkage of epistemologically sensitive, modally aware, learner-informed, and critical reflection on the media as means of fostering meaningful learning outcomes. The implementation of this model necessitates collaboration among educators, curriculum developers, policymakers, and the learners themselves. Given the mediating roles played by digital media concerning knowledge and education in particular, the importance of media pedagogy can hardly be overstated.

REFERENCES

1. Adorno, T.W. and Horkheimer, M. 2002. *Dialectic of enlightenment: Philosophical fragments* (E. Jephcott, Trans.). Stanford University Press. (Original work published 1944)

2. Anderson, T. and Dron, J. 2011. Three generations of distance education pedagogy. *International Review of Research in Open and Distributed Learning,* **12**(3): 80–97. https://doi.org/10.19173/irrodl.v12i3.890

3. Beatty, B.J. 2021. *Hybrid-flexible course design: Implementing student-directed hybrid classes* (2nd ed.). EdTech Books. https://doi.org/10.59668/411

4. Betihavas, V., Bridgman, H., Kornhaber, R. and Cross, M. 2016. The evidence for "flipping out": A systematic review of the flipped classroom in nursing education. *Nurse Education Today,* **38**: 15–21.

5. Bishop, J.L. and Verleger, M.A. 2013. The flipped classroom: A survey of the research. *Proceedings of the ASEE Annual Conference & Exposition,* 6219. https://doi.org/10.18260/1-2--22585

6. Buckingham, D. 2019. *The media education manifesto.* Polity Press.

7. Cook, D.A., Hamstra, S.J., Brydges, R., Zendejas, B., Szostek, J.H., Wang, A.T., Erwin, P.J. and Hatala, R. 2013. Comparative effectiveness of instructional design features in simulation-based education. *Medical Teacher,* **35**(1):

8. Cope, B. and Kalantzis, M. (Eds.). 2009. *Ubiquitous learning*. University of Illinois Press.

9. Couldry, N. 2008. Mediatization or mediation? Alternative understandings of the emergent space of digital storytelling. *New Media & Society,* **10**(3): 373–391.

10. Czerniewicz, L., Deacon, A., Glover, M. and Walji, S. 2017. MOOC-making and open educational practices. *Journal of Computing in Higher Education,* **29**(1): 81–97.

11. Downes, S. 2012. *Connectivism and connective knowledge: Essays on meaning and learning networks.* National Research Council Canada.

12. Ertmer, P.A. and Ottenbreit-Leftwich, A.T. 2010. Teacher technology change: How knowledge, confidence, beliefs, and culture intersect. *Journal of Research on Technology in Education,* **42**(3): 255–284.

13. Freire, P. 1970. *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. Herder and Herder.

14. Garrison, D.R. 2017. *E-learning in the 21st century: A community of inquiry framework for research and practice* (3rd ed.). Routledge.

15. Garrison, D.R., Anderson, T. and Archer, W. 2000. Critical inquiry in a text-based environment: Computer conferencing in higher education. *The Internet and Higher Education,* **2**(2–3): 87–105.

16. Gibson, J.J. 1979. *The ecological approach to visual perception.* Houghton Mifflin.

17. Hobbs, R. 2017. *Create to learn: Introduction to digital literacy.* Wiley-Blackwell.

18. Hodges, C., Moore, S., Lockee, B., Trust, T. and Bond, A. 2020. *The difference between emergency remote teaching and online learning.* EDUCAUSE Review. https://er.educause.edu/articles/2020/3/the-difference-between-emergency-remote-teaching-and-online-learning

19. Holmes, W., Porayska-Pomsta, K., Holstein, K., Sutherland, E., Baker, T., Shum, S.B., Santos, O.C., Rodrigo, M.T., Cukurova, M., Bittencourt, I.I. and Koedinger, K.R. 2022. Ethics of AI in education: Towards a community-wide framework. *International Journal of Artificial Intelligence in Education,* **32**(2): 504–526.

20. Jenkins, H., Clinton, K., Purushotma, R., Robison, A.J. and Weigel, M. 2006. *Confronting the challenges of participatory culture: Media education for the 21st century*. MacArthur Foundation.

21. Jonassen, D.H. 2000. *Computers as mindtools for schools: Engaging critical thinking* (2nd ed.). Prentice Hall.

22. Kellner, D. and Share, J. 2019. *The critical media literacy guide: Engaging media and transforming education*. Brill/Sense.

23. Lambert, J. 2013. *Digital storytelling: Capturing lives, creating community* (4th ed.). Routledge.

24. Lasswell, H.D. 1948. The structure and function of communication in society. *In* L. Bryson (Ed.), The communication of ideas (pp. 37–51). Harper & Row.

25. Laurillard, D. 2012. *Teaching as a design science: Building pedagogical patterns for learning and technology.* Routledge.

26. Liyanagunawardena, T.R., Adams, A.A. and Williams, S.A. 2013. MOOCs: A systematic study of the published literature 2008–2012. *International Review of Research in Open and Distributed Learning,* **14**(3): 202–227.

27. Livingstone, S. and Sefton-Green, J. 2016. *The class: Living and learning in the digital age.* New York University Press.

28. Lo, C.K. and Hew, K.F. 2017. A critical review of flipped classroom challenges in K-12 education: Possible solutions and recommendations for future research. *Research and Practice in Technology Enhanced Learning,* **12**(1): 4.

29. Mayer, R.E. 2009. *Multimedia learning* (2nd ed.). Cambridge University Press.

30. McLuhan, M. 1964. *Understanding media: The extensions of man*. McGraw-Hill.

31. Means, B., Toyama, Y., Murphy, R. and Baki, M. 2013. The effectiveness of online and blended learning: A meta-analysis of the empirical literature. *Teachers College Record,* **115**(3): 1–47.

32. Mihailidis, P. 2018. *Civic media literacies: Re-imagining human connection in an age of digital abundance.* Routledge.

33. Moore, M.G. and Kearsley, G. 2012. *Distance education: A systems view of online learning* (3rd ed.). Wadsworth/ Cengage Learning.

34. Postman, N. 1985. *Amusing ourselves to death: Public discourse in the age of show business.* Penguin Books.

35. Ryan, R.M. and Deci, E.L. 2000. Self-determination theory and the facilitation of intrinsic motivation, social development, and well-being. *American Psychologist,* **55**(1): 68–78.

36. Share, J. 2015. *Media literacy is elementary: Teaching youth to critically read and create media* (2nd ed.). Peter Lang.

37. Siemens, G. 2005. Connectivism: A learning theory for the digital age. *International Journal of Instructional Technology and Distance Learning,* **2**(1): 3–10.

38. UNESCO. 2013. Global media and information literacy assessment framework: Country readiness and competencies. UNESCO. https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000224655

39. UNESCO. 2019. Recommendation on open educational resources (OER). UNESCO. https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000373755

40. van Dijk, J.A.G.M. 2020. *The digital divide.* Polity Press.

41. Verhagen, P. 2006. *Connectivism: A new learning theory?* Surf e-learning themasite. https://www.surf.nl/en

42. Vygotsky, L.S. 1978. *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes.* Harvard University Press.

43. Warschauer, M. 2011. *Learning in the cloud: How (and why) to transform schools with digital media.* Teachers College Press.