

The Diversity of Contexts within Which Adolescents Engage with Digital Media: Contributing to More Challenging Tasks for Parents and a Need for Third Party Mediation

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Abstract : Digital media has been integrated into the social and entertainment life of young children, and as such, the impact of digital media appears to affect young people of all ages and it is believed that this will continue to shape the world of young children. Since, technological advancement of digital media presents adolescents with diverse contexts, platforms and avenues to engage with digital media outside the home environment and from parents' supervision, a wide range of new challenges has further complicated the already difficult tasks for parents and altered the landscape of parenting. Despite the fact that adolescents now have access to a wide range of digital media technologies both at home and in the learning environment, parenting practices such as active, restrictive, co-use, participatory and technical mediations are important in mitigating of online risks adolescents may encounter as a result of digital media use. However, these mediation practices only focus on the home environment including digital media present in the home and may not necessarily transcend outside the home and other learning environments where adolescents use digital media for school work and other activities. This poses the question of who mediates adolescent's digital media use outside the home environment. The learning environment could be a "loose platform" where an adolescent can maximise digital media use considering the fact that there is no restriction in terms of content and time allotted to using digital media during school hours. That is to say that an adolescent can play the "bad boy" online in school because there is little or no restriction of digital media use and be exposed to online risks and play the "good boy" at home because of "heavy" parental mediation. This is the reason why parent mediation practices have been ineffective because a parent may not be able to track adolescents digital media use considering the diversity of contexts, platforms and avenues adolescents use digital media. This study argues that due to the diverse nature of digital media technology, parents may not be able to monitor the 'whereabouts' of their children in the digital space. This is because adolescent digital media usage may not only be confined to the home environment but other learning environments like schools. This calls for urgent attention on the part of teachers to understand the intricacies of how digital media continue to shape the world in which young children are developing and learning. It is, therefore, imperative for parents to liaise with the schools of their children to mediate digital media use during school hours. The implication of parents- teachers mediation practices are discussed. The article concludes by suggesting that third party mediation by teachers in schools and other learning environments should be encouraged and future research needs to consider the emergent strategy of teacher-children mediation approach and the implication for policy for both the home and learning environments.

Keywords : digital media, digital age, parent mediation, third party mediation

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