

# COMMUNICATION AND MEDIA STUDIES IN THE SECONDARY EDUCATION IN SRI LANKA

**Galagedarage Thushari Madhubhashini**  
*The Open University of Sri Lanka*  
gtmad@ou.ac.lk

## ABSTRACT

Media education was introduced to Sri Lankan secondary education in 2006. The purpose of the study is to examine the challenges and opportunities in media education in the secondary education system in Sri Lanka by using Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge Framework (TPACK) model. The Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and the in-depth interviews were conducted to collect data of the study. The results show that the challenges and opportunities are mainly connected with the curriculum, teaching, assessments, technology and resources which are the main elements of the TPACK model. Moreover, main challenges occurred in media education are heavily concentrated on theoretical knowledge, a lack of practical and skill based contents, medium of teaching mainly in Sinhala language, less training provided for teachers, unavailability of directors for the subject at the zonal and provincial levels, limited resources and infrastructure facilities in schools, less representation of teachers in curriculum development, private tuition becomes more essential for the subject, limited "A" grades etc. On the other hand, availability of qualified school teachers, having fair Z-Score and practical activities such as media workshops, media exhibitions, wallpapers, media days and media weeks, radio services etc. for students and having qualified and experienced academics in curriculum development, evaluation etc. are the opportunities available in media education. Therefore, the responsible authorities should develop curriculum, teaching, assessments, technologies and resources to ensure the quality of the media education in the secondary education system in Sri Lanka.

**Keywords:** *Communication and Media Studies, Secondary education, Media education, Sri Lanka, TPACK framework*

## INTRODUCTION

Grunwald declaration on media education was introduced by the representatives of 19 nations at UNESCO's International Symposium on Media Education at Grunwald, Federal Republic of Germany in 1982 to emphasize the importance of having media education for the pre-school to university level, and in adult education to develop the knowledge, skills and attitudes which encourage the growth of critical awareness (Grunwald declaration on media education of UNESCO, 1982).

Media education was initially introduced to the world in the 1920s by France mainly focusing on film studies. Furthermore, early media education (1920s- 1940s) was mainly based on film and press. In the 1970s, media education was mainly focused on media studies

(Fedorov, 2008). As far as media education in secondary education is concerned, Australia has introduced media education as a compulsory subject from preschool to high school for the first time in world history. In Asia, the Philippine was the first country to introduce media education into formal school education (Kumara, 1999).

When it comes to Sri Lanka, media education was introduced to secondary education in 2006. As a result, the Communication and Media Studies subject was introduced to Grade 10 and Grade 11 in the General Certificate of Education Ordinary Level (G.C.E O/L). Gradually Communication and Media Studies was introduced to the General Certificate of Education Advanced Level (G.C.E A/L) in 2008 (Kagitharan, 2014).

It was a good initiative to introduce media education to school education. But there are several issues in media education in secondary education. Moreover, these issues are mainly connected with the curriculum, teacher's guide books, teaching and learning, assessments etc. (Kagitharan, 2014). Even though several issues connected to media education in Jaffna District, Northern province were identified by Kagitharan, the results are not presented in detail to explain the challenges and opportunities of media education in secondary level. In this context, the main problem is what are the challenges and opportunities of media education in secondary education. Therefore, the study was carried out to examine the challenges and opportunities in media education in secondary education system in Sri Lanka. Since the issues are connected to the curriculum, teaching and learning, assessments etc., Technological pedagogical content knowledge framework (TPACK) was selected as the main theoretical framework of the study.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Media education

Media education is defined by several researchers and scholars in different ways.

"Media education is about teaching and learning with and about media, rather than through media - It involves critical analysis and creative production - It can and should take place in formal and informal settings - It should promote the sense of community and social responsibility, as well as individual self-fulfilment" (Report on recommendations addressed to UNESCO by the Youth Media Education seminar at Seville, 2002 :5). "Media education in the modern world can be described as the process of the development of personality with the help of and on the material of media, aimed at the shaping of culture of interaction with media, the development of creative, communicative skills, critical thinking, perception, interpretation, analysis and evaluation of media texts, teaching different forms of self-expression using media technology. Media literacy, as an outcome of this process, helps a person to actively use opportunities in the information field provided by the television, radio, video, film, press and Internet" (Fedorov, 2008: 8).

As far as the definitions are concerned, media education should be offered for individual development and social development. Improving creativity, communication skills, critical thinking, perception, interpretation, analysis and evaluation of media texts, teaching different forms of self-expression using media technology, media literacy of individuals are the main purposes of media education. Therefore, media education can be promoted in the formal and informal education.

UNESCO has also emphasized that media education should be mainly given at the secondary, tertiary and, non-formal and lifelong education in a country. Media education is not only learning about media, but also improving journalism skills, creativity, critical and analytical thinking etc. to understand the contemporary and practical scenarios in the media and society as well as to cater to the industrial needs and requirements (Report on recommendations addressed to UNESCO by the Youth Media Education seminar at Seville, 2002).

The Paris agenda also highlights the importance of teaching media education at secondary level to empower the youngsters with knowledge and skills. The main purpose of introducing Paris agenda in 2007 was to give twelve recommendations for the development of media education all over the world. It was highlighted under the first recommendation that the scope of media education in the school curriculum or programmes has been changed within the economic and social environment and the development of information and communication technologies (ICTs). Therefore, media education is challenging with these changes and dynamics. In this context three main concepts of media education were introduced by the Paris agenda. "The objectives are to all media whatever their nature and the technologies used 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" ( Paris agenda, 2007) .

According to the recommendations given by the Grunwald declaration and the Paris agenda on media education, many countries all over the world have introduced media education to secondary education. Australia introduced media education as a compulsory subject from preschool to high school for the first time in world history in the 1990s. (Kumar, 1999). Media education is given in the school curriculum in all the schools in Australia. Media education is mainly taught in senior classes, but the process starts in elementary school by teaching media literacy (Fedorov, 2008). In Asia, media literacy education was introduced to the curriculum in elementary and high schools to improve the skills of the students and protect students from the negative and harmful content of media (Annual report of Ministry of Education in Philippine, 2010).

### **Media education in Secondary level in Sri Lanka**

When it comes to Sri Lanka, the Communication and Media Studies subject was introduced to Grade 10 in General Certificate of Education Ordinary Level (G.C.E O/L) in 2006 for the first time in secondary education. In 2007, the same subject was started to be taught in Grade 11. Gradually, Communication and Media Studies was introduced to the Curriculum in the General Certificate of Education Advanced Level (G.C.E A/L). Moreover, this subject was introduced to grade 12 and 13 in 2008. At the initial stage, Communication and Media Studies was only taught in Sinhala and now this is also taught in Tamil and English medium in several schools throughout the country. Introducing Communication and Media Studies is important in educating school students with required skills, knowledge as well as understanding different media behavior critically and analytically (Kagitharan, 2014).

This shows that it was a major need of introducing Communication and Media Studies subject to the school curriculum to educate students on media education and usage. According to the syllabus for Communication and Media Studies for Grade 10 and 11 by

National Institute of Education in Sri Lanka in 2006, School Mass Media Societies programme was introduced to hundred and twenty five national schools by the Media Education project in National Institution of Education (NIE) to improve the communication skills and talents of school students. Therefore, there was a high demand for the programme among the teachers as well as among the students. The idea of introducing Communication and Media Studies as a school subject was initiated after succeeding the School Mass Media Societies programme. Therefore, a survey was done to see the possibilities of introducing Communication and Media Studies subject to the school curriculum in 2002 by Bandula P. Dayartna, the chief project officer of the Media Education project in NIE. The results of the survey showed that there is a huge demand for introducing Communication and Media Studies subject for the school curriculum. As a result, the NIE has given the approval to introduce Communication and Media Studies subject to the school curriculum. At the initial stage, the Communication and Media Studies subject was only introduced to several schools throughout the country based on the availability of teachers and resources.

The aim and objectives of introducing Communication and Media Studies subject were formulated according to the Grunwald declaration on media education.

“The objectives of introducing Communication and Media Studies are to provide adolescents of today, who would become citizens of the future, with Media & Communication literacy, to develop competencies necessary for active participation in the national development process in adolescent school leavers, development of Media & Communication Competencies necessary for coexistence in an effective family unit and social system, creation of the basis necessary to bestow upon society, through the school, a human individual endowed as a whole, with high communication and Media Competencies”.

(Syllabus for Communication and Media Studies for Grade 12 and 13 by  
National Institute of Education in Sri Lanka, 2006:4)

Currently more than 60,000 students are doing Communication and Media Studies subject in the O/L class and A/L class. In 2020, 27,000 students sat for this subject in the A/L examination. Communication and Media Studies subject is offered as a basket subject in the O/L curriculum and as a compulsory elective subject in the A/L curriculum. More than 2000 teachers engage in teaching this subject in the country, but Communication and Media Studies subject is not offered in several remote schools due to unavailability of qualified teachers and resources. The curricula and the teachers' guides of A/Ls and O/Ls had been revised twice during the last 15 years. But still there are some issues connected to media education at the school level. Therefore, some research and surveys should be conducted to find out the issues connected to media education in a qualitative manner (Statistics of National Institute of Education & Department of Examinations, 2021).

The literature also shows that no research was conducted to examine the challenges and opportunities of media education in Sri Lankan context. In order to fill in this gap and to achieve the purpose of the study, the research was conducted. Technological pedagogical content knowledge framework (TPACK) model is the main theoretical framework of the study to examine the challenges and opportunities of media education in the secondary level in Sri Lanka.

“TPCK was introduced to the educational research field as a theoretical framework for understanding teacher knowledge required for effective technology integration. The TPCK framework acronym was renamed TPACK (pronounced “tee-pack”) for the purpose of making it easier to remember and

to form a more integrated whole for the three kinds of knowledge addressed: technology, pedagogy, and content. TPACK is a framework that introduces the relationships and the complexities between all three basic components of knowledge (technology, pedagogy, and content)". (Schmidt et al, 2009:123)

The model shows that technology, pedagogy and content play a significant role in education. Schmidt et al, (2009) further note that this framework mainly focuses on designing and evaluating teachers' knowledge in pedagogy, content and technology. The combination of Technological knowledge (refers to knowledge about the technological improvements, updates, trends), content knowledge (knowledge about the subject matter) and pedagogical knowledge (refers to the methods and processes of teaching and includes knowledge in classroom management, assessments, lesson plan development, curriculum and student learning) is used to facilitate the learning and teaching process.

The successful learning and teaching process in media education in secondary education also usually depends on the updated curriculum and teachers' guides, inspiring teaching, effective assessments and updated technical and practical knowledge etc. In this context, TPACK is the most appropriate model for the study.

## METHODOLOGY

The study used a qualitative approach to obtain data using an in depth interview method and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs). The purposive sampling was used to select samples for the study. Gill et al (2008) note that interviews provide a deeper understanding of a social phenomenon. Therefore, interviews were conducted with ten teachers in Communication and Media Studies, two NIE officials who handle the subject, one former officer and one current officer, three university academics who have given the leadership for curriculum and teachers' guide developments and evaluations in Communication and Media Studies.

The purpose of conducting personal interviews with school teachers is to have a deeper understanding of opportunities and challenges connected to teachers' guide, curriculum, assessments, resources, technological aspects etc. Since the responsibility of NIE is to design and develop curricula for secondary education including Communication and Media Studies subject and to provide training and guidance for teachers, the interviews were also conducted with two NIE officers who handle Communication and Media Studies subject. The personal interviews were also conducted with three university academics since teachers' guides and curriculum development, paper setting and evaluation of Communication and Media Studies are done by the university academics attached to the state universities in Sri Lanka. The personal interviews were conducted in early January 2021 with the resource persons over the phone due to the pandemic. Mostly open-ended questions were asked to get critical, insightful and informative data.

The students who follow Communication and Media Studies subject in Western province were selected for the FGDs. Since the Communication and Media Studies subject is only offered at the Grade 10 and Grade 11 in the G.C.E O/Ls and Grade 12 and Grade 13 in the Arts stream in the G.C.E A/Ls, the students were only selected from these grades in schools in western province. According to the statistics of the Department of Examinations and the National Institute of Education, the majority of students in Communication and Media Studies are reported from western province in Sri Lanka. Therefore, the students and the teachers in western province were selected for the study. Moreover, the students were selected from Taxila Central College in Kalutara district, Rathnavali Balika Vidyalaya in Gamapaha District and

Nalanada College in Colombo district as the western province consists of three districts: Colombo, Gampaha, and Kalutara.

The FGD is a structured discussion used to obtain in-depth information (qualitative data-insight) from a group of people about a particular topic. In FGDs, it is good to have 8-12 individuals to obtain more in-depth information (Omar, 2018). Therefore, it was decided to have 12 students in each FGD. Altogether there were three FGDs with 36 school students from grade 10 to grade 13. The FGD was conducted with the support of three experienced moderators/ facilitators. Mostly open-ended questions were asked to get critical, insightful and informative data on the given issue/ topic. The location and the samples of this study were selected based on the above-mentioned criteria, statistics, facts and justifications to examine the challenges and opportunities in media education at the school level. The qualitative data were analyzed thematically.

Some limitations are caused in the study due to geographical and subjective reasons. The teachers and students were only selected from western province. But the population and sample size can be expanded and more research areas can be covered in order to find more practical findings in a future study in a systematic and methodical manner.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results are mainly presented focusing on the main components of the TPACK framework such as technological knowledge (refers to knowledge about the technological updates, trends), content knowledge (knowledge about the subject matter) and pedagogical knowledge (refers to the methods and processes of teaching and includes knowledge in classroom management, assessments, lesson plan development, curriculum and student learning) related to the Communication and Media Studies subject in the G.C.E O/Ls and G.C.E A/Ls.

The findings show that, at the initial stage, the curriculum and teachers' guides for grade 10 to grade 13 were introduced from 2006 to 2008 by the NIE with support of an expert panel which consists of university academics in Communication and Media Studies. Again the curriculum and the teachers' guide for grade 10 and 11 were revised in 2015- 2016 while both documents were revised for grade 12 and grade 13 in 2017. But finally the curriculum and the teachers' guide for A/Ls were canceled since the majority of the school and university teachers were not satisfied with the content. Finally the curriculum and the teachers' guide were again revised after considering the requests made by the teachers and academics in 2018-2019. A senior teacher in Communication and Media Studies stated that,

"It is important to improve the communication skills and knowledge of school students to cater to the contemporary societal needs and to deal with day to day issues and needs. Therefore, the NIE had taken a great initiative to introduce Communication and Media Studies subject to secondary education. But we as the school teachers cannot be completely happy with the content of the curriculum or teachers' guide. The curriculum is mainly prepared based on conceptual and theoretical knowledge. We as teachers believe that both theoretical knowledge and the practical exercises and activities should be included into the curriculum and to the teachers' guide. The text books are only provided for students in grade 10 and 11 while the teachers' guide is only provided for teachers for A/Ls. The content is too complex for school students as the content of both curriculum and teachers' guide are advanced. We also learnt these complex theories and concepts in the first and second years of our

undergraduate studies. The first lesson of grade 10 starts with complex communication models. Though the curriculum which was introduced in 2017 was rejected due to the complexity of the content, still I feel that all three curricula are too much for school students and these do not help students to improve both practical and theoretical knowledge in a systematic manner. The other thing is that there are some repetitions, errors, wrong interpretations, difficult terms etc. in the text books and teachers' guide. Therefore, the representation and the involvement of school teachers in curriculum development should be encouraged. There are no directors for Communication and Media Studies subject at the zonal or provincial levels to seriously consider our issues".

The results show that the content of the curriculum is advanced to the students as only the theoretical aspects are addressed in the content. A student in Taxila Central College also highlighted that,

"I selected Communication and Media Subject as one of the A/L subjects. Because I am good at announcing, creative writing and photography. Though now I am in Grade 13, I have not properly improved the expected skills and knowledge by following this subject from grade 10 to grade 13. I got A grade for O/L examination and Communication subject was also selected for A/Ls as the Z score average is comparatively good for this subject in the Arts stream in the A/L examination. I mostly learn theories and concepts in Communication subject rather than improving my skills or familiarising with practical scenarios and examples. Even compared to the other subjects, the content of this subject is complex. Rather than just learning theories, we need something which is useful for our day to day life and for skill development. It is also very difficult to remember and understand some Sinhala terms such as "*Athathya (Virtual in English)*" and so on in the subject".

As far as the results are concerned, it is obvious that the curriculum is also complex to the students as more theoretical contents are included in the curriculum. Therefore, the expected outcomes or skill and knowledge development are not achieved by following the subject. Since the expertises and the leadership were mainly given to develop the curriculum and the teachers' guide by the university academics with support of NIE, the personal interviews were also conducted with the university academics and with NIE regarding the curriculum development. An university teacher who involved in curriculum development stated that,

"The main purpose of introducing this subject was to provide basic theoretical knowledge to the students and to apply those theoretical concepts to the practical scenarios as well as to improve media literacy. The school teachers are also not that sound in practical aspects, skills and knowledge to achieve the objectives of the current curriculum. Therefore, I also think that the NIE should provide proper training to the teachers".

This shows that more practical inputs and training are needed for Communication subject. According to the information provided by the NIE, all the necessary training sessions and awareness sessions were conducted for the school teachers before and after introducing the subject. Moreover, several sessions were conducted to facilitate, train and guide teachers in subject related matters.

Taking all results into consideration, the curriculum needs some revisions to address the expected outcome of the subject. Moreover, both theoretical and practical inputs should be included into the curriculum to provide the knowledge, media literacy as well as to improve the skills of school students. Unlike the university level education, more knowledge should be given to understand what is happening in the society due to the contemporary behavior of media and its effects. The other important factor is to encourage and facilitate students for skill development in communication studies to deal with the real world issues connected to education, health, environment, mental peace, personalities etc. Fedorov (2008) also notes that in many countries in the world, media Literacy and Information literacy and communication skills development subjects were introduced to the school curriculum from primary education to secondary education to mainly improve media literacy. Apart from that, the significance of using communication for real world issues and skill development are the other objectives of having Information and Media literacy subject. The complex theories and concepts can be mainly taught in the university level education to provide a more philosophical aspect of media education.

According to the results, some issues in the curriculum are identified such as advanced theoretical input is given without improving the communication skills which help for day to day life and without facilitating students to critically analyze the content of the contemporary media. On the other hand, there are also several opportunities in having the Communication subject in secondary education such as providing a teachers' guide to the teachers, providing textbooks for O/L students etc. to guide and facilitate both parties.

Therefore, it is important to teach subjects like media literacy, information literacy and communication skills development at the primary level and secondary level education without making it so complex for both school students and teachers. The best solution is to offer Communication Studies or Media Studies or related education at the university level in a border manner. In Sri Lanka also both students and teachers complain that the Communication and Media Studies subject is so complex in secondary education. Therefore, the practical training and more awareness sessions should be given to the school teachers to facilitate the students. Moreover, it is also important to take the support from all the stakeholders such as university teachers, school teachers, media industry, education specialists etc. in curriculum development. Appointing separate directors for Communication and Media Studies subject at the zonal level and provincial level is also important to limit the communication gap between the teachers and the authority to sort out issues connected to the subject.

The TPACK framework also highlights that technological knowledge, resources and innovations are also important same as the curriculum, assessments and teaching. Therefore, the training should be given to improve the practical knowledge, skills including the technical skills and capacities of teachers. While giving training to the teachers, it is important to provide infrastructure facilities and resources to the schools to facilitate students to actively engage in the practical work related to Communication and Media Studies. A senior teacher also stated that

“The schools have a few multimedia projectors, digital classrooms and digital boards to teach the practical components and to interact and facilitate the students in the learning process of all the subjects. The teachers in the Communication and Media Studies rarely get opportunities to use the resources for the teaching and learning process. One or two cameras are only available in schools though one lesson is mainly on photography in the O/L curriculum. We



requested several times to give training on photography as all the teachers are not good in photography. So, without proper training, infrastructure and resources, it is not reasonable to blame teachers for the issues connected to the subject. The teachers make arrangements to conduct practical sessions on photography, audio-visual, creative writing, communication skills etc. by using experts and media persons in the industry and arrange field visits to media institutions and outdoor productions etc. to facilitate the students. The societies such as Media society, Photography society, Radio society etc. are established in schools, but unfortunately students who are doing Communication and Media Studies are not actively involved in these societies while the other students are actively involved”.

The students also highlighted that the teachers encourage students to do competitions, wall newspapers, exhibitions etc. The findings also show that the students are able to get practical training in script writing, announcing, producing etc. since some schools have radio services. Annually a media day is conducted by most of the schools and a magazine or a newspaper is done annually or quarterly.

This shows that several opportunities are available for students to gain different practical experience. When it comes to technology, resources and infrastructure, the main challenges are the inadequate resources and infrastructure provided for the subject. The assessments are also important in evaluating students' knowledge as well as in facilitating students to improve the knowledge and skills by giving the feedback as highlighted in the TPACK model.

“Assessment has an important role in education and it has a critical role in the teaching process. Through appropriate assessment, teachers can classify and grade their students, give feedback and structure their teaching accordingly. Practical and theoretical knowledge are equally important in the discipline of Mass Communication/ Mass Media. Therefore, assessments should also be given to equally evaluate the theoretical and practical knowledge of the students” (Irfan, 2018: 163).

This shows that assessments should be prepared to evaluate both theoretical and practical knowledge of students. The findings also show that some practical activities such as media workshops, media exhibitions, wallpapers, media days and media weeks, radio services etc. are conducted in schools though the curriculum is mainly based on theories related to media studies. Several assessments such as individual assessments, group activities, role play, listening, presentations, field tours, exhibitions etc. are also proposed in the text books and the teachers' guide. A student in the A/L class stated that,

“It is good to conduct the media workshops, media exhibitions, newspapers, wallpapers, media days and media weeks, radio services to give us practical experiences, but these opportunities are very limited as one or two activities are conducted per year. I think, in order to improve the practical skills and knowledge of students, marks can be given to the practical assessments or components at the term tests as well as in the O/L and A/L examinations, 50 % can be given to assess theoretical aspects and the other 50 % for practical based or skill-based assessments. Even though the z- score at the A/L examination is quite high for the communication subject, “A” grades are quite limited. So, this is a big challenge for students who select the communication subject.”

The results show that theoretical knowledge is mainly assessed at the examinations and evaluations. But it is a good opportunity for students to participate in practical activities such

as media workshops, media exhibitions, wall paper, media day and media week, and radio services. Since the opportunities are limited for students to be involved in practical activities, more practical activities and assessments can be introduced. A teacher in Communication and Media Studies stated that,

“We always encourage students to participate and conduct practical activities. As it takes time to cover the syllabus, more practical and skill based activities cannot be conducted. The curriculum is too heavy with theories and concepts of Communications. It is also good to have practical and skill based assessments, but proper training and resources should be given to the teachers to implement this. The other challenge is to get an “A” grade for Communication subject though the pass rate is nearly 80% . There are four parts in each question in the A/ L paper. Moreover, 40 marks (4, 8,12 and 16 ) are given to each question, but finally the total mark is divided by two. So, it is difficult for students to answer four parts in a descriptive manner with good time management. The paper is basically designed to assess theoretical knowledge. The teachers also cannot actively contribute in setting O/L and A/L question papers or in evaluation pannels”.

This shows that practical or skill based assessments are not mainly used in evaluations. Since the performance of students in taking “A” grade is limited, the questions can be formulated in a skills and practical oriented manner rather than creating it more theoretical. The other option is to have a systematic and more flexible marking scheme. It will also be a good opportunity for students to have both theoretical based and practical based assessments in the O/L and A/L examinations.

An academic who involved in the evaluation highlighted that more guidance and proper instructions are given to school teachers in evaluation. It was also emphasized that the importance of including both theoretical and practical inputs into the examination papers as well as into the curricula.

Apart from the curriculum, the assessments, the technologies and the resources, the teaching and learning process is also important in media education as highlighted in the TPACK framework. Makovec (2018) notes that the role of teacher is also very important in the teaching and learning process. The pedagogical skills of teachers such as knowledge of subject, curriculum, teaching methods and strategies and technological skills and creative skills etc. are important to have an effective teaching and learning process between the students and the teacher.

This shows that the role of teacher is also vital in media education in secondary education. The qualifications, training, skills and knowledge are needed to be an effective teacher. A teacher in Communication Studies emphasized that

“Almost all the teachers who teach Communication and Media subject in government schools are graduates. Some did the special degree in Communication studies or Media Studies or related degree during the undergraduate level. The rest of the teachers did Media studies atleast as a subject in the degree programme. Several teachers have completed postgraduate studies in Communication. Some worked in the media industry before joining for teaching. But unfortunately, some teachers who completed Media related degrees still teach in the primary section. Some teachers are capable enough to teach this subject in all three mediums”.

This shows that it is an opportunity in media education to have qualified, experienced and capable teachers. But appointing teachers who have completed Media related degrees to the primary section is not a productive or practical decision. A student who follow Communication and Media Studies subject in the A/L class stated that,

“I did O/Ls in another school. So, the Communication subject was not available in that school for O/Ls and A/Ls. Because the school is a small one in my village. I entered this school one year ago. Because this school is one of the best schools in Sri Lanka . I wanted to do arts subjects in English medium. But after coming to this school only I got to know the subjects which I have chosen including Communication and Media Studies are not taught in English medium. The reason for not offering subjects in English medium is unavailability of English medium teachers in Arts stream. Even the teacher is not capable enough to improve any of our skills though theoretical knowledge is given to the students. But compared to the teacher in the tuition class, the school teacher is not that knowledgeable. Most of the school teachers give private tuition in our area. Their teaching methods and strategies are much better in private tuitions than regular teaching in the school”.

According to the information provided by NIE, the majority of teachers in Communication and Media Studies are qualified. But the Communication and Media Studies subject was only offered in several schools throughout the country. The English and Tamil medium teachers are less compared to the Sinhala medium teachers.

The findings show that Tamil and English medium students face several challenges in doing the subject without having adequate teachers, course materials etc. The other challenges related to teaching are less practical knowledge of teachers, qualified teachers appointed for the primary sections and private tuition becomes more essential for this subject than the education given in the school. Anyway, having qualified teachers in the Communication and Media Studies subject is an advantage in media education in Sri Lanka.

## CONCLUSION

The findings show that the purpose was achieved and the problem was answered in the study. In other words, there are some challenges and opportunities in media education in the secondary level in Sri Lanka. The challenges and opportunities are mainly connected with the curriculum, teaching, assessments, resources and technology which are the main elements of the TPACK model. Moreover, main challenges occurred in the media education are heavily concentrated on theoretical aspects in the curriculum and assessments and a lack of practical and skill based contents, medium of teaching mainly in *Sinhala Language*, teachers without practical training and technological skills, less training provided for teachers, limited resources and infrastructure facilities in schools, no directors for the subject at the zonal and provincial levels, qualified teachers appointed for the primary section, less representation of teachers in curriculum development and revisions, evaluation etc., unavailability of the subject in remote schools, private tuition becomes more essential for this subject, limited “A” grades for subject etc.

On the other hand, availability of qualified school teachers, having good Z-Score, having practical activities such as media workshops, media exhibitions, wallpapers, media days and media weeks, radio services etc. for students and having qualified and experienced academics in curriculum development, evaluation etc. are the opportunities available in the media education at the secondary level.

Therefore, the responsible authorities should take necessary actions to limit the challenges in media education. Therefore, the curriculum, text books and teachers' guide should be revised to equally provide the theoretical and skills or practical based contents. Moreover, English medium education, skills and practical based assessments etc. should be introduced to media education with support of all the stakeholders such as university teachers, school teachers, media industry, education specialists etc. The practical activities of students should be also increased by providing more infrastructure, technical facilities and resources. Updating both students and teachers with the past moving technologies, general knowledge, critical and analytical skills etc. is also a contemporary need.

The other solution is to provide proper training to the school teachers in Communication and Media Studies. Appointing separate directors for Communication and Media Studies subject at the zonal level and provincial level is also important to limit the communication gap between the teachers and the authority to sort out the issues connected to the subject. It is also very important to expand media education to all the schools throughout the country and introduce media education from primary education to secondary education by providing proper infrastructure and resources. In conclusion, curriculum, teaching, assessments, technology and resources should be developed to ensure the quality of the media education at the school level in Sri Lanka.

## REFERENCES

- Fedorov, A. (2001). *Media Education: History, Theory and Methods*. (in Russian). Rostov: CVVR. 708.
- Fedorov, A. (2008). Media Education around the world: brief history. *Acta didactica napocensia*. 1(2), 56-68. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1052329>.
- Gill, P. Stewart, K. Treasure, E. & Chadwick, B. (2008). Methods of data collection in qualitative research: interviews and focus groups. *British Dental Journal*. 204, 291–295. <https://www.nature.com/articles/bdj.2008.192>.
- Irfan, T. (2018). Importance of Assessment in ELT. *Journal of Education and Training Studies*, 6(9), 163-167. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1188961>.
- Kagitharan, N. (2014). *Problems faced by Students offering 'Communication and Media Studies' as a Subject in G.C.E Advanced Level (Special Reference to Jaffna district in the Northern Province of Sri Lanka)*. *Proceedings of South Eastern University Arts Research Session 2014, Sri Lanka*, 38. <http://www.seu.ac.lk/researchandpublications/seuars/2014/SEUARS%202014%20Proceeding%20of%20Abstracts.38.pdf>.
- Kumar, K.J. (1999). *Media Education, Communication and Public Policy: An Indian Perspective*. Bombay: Himalaya Publishing House.
- Luthra, R. (2018). Journalism and mass communication: the making of meaning. *Journalism and Mass Communication*. 1, 1-8.
- Ministry of Education. (2010). *Annual report of the Ministry of Education in Philippine*. Philippine: Ministry of Education.
- JMakovec, D. (2018). The teacher's role and professional development. *International journal of Cognitive Research in Engineering and Education*. 6(2), 33- 45. <https://scindeks.ceon.rs/Article.aspx?artid=2334-847X1802033M>.

- Murthy, C.S.H.N. (2020). Media education in India: Policy and Praxis in old and new communication media. In *Frau-Meigs, D. Kotilainen, D, Hoechsmann, M. Poyntz, S.R. Handbook of Media Education Research*. (pp.225-239). United States: *John Wiley & Sons, Inc.* [https://doi.org/10.1002/9781119166900.ch27\\_](https://doi.org/10.1002/9781119166900.ch27_)
- National Institute of Education. (2006). *Syllabus for Communication and Media Studies for Grade 12 and 13*.
- Omar, D. (2018). Focus group discussion in built environment qualitative research practice. *IPO Science Journal*. 2,1-8.
- Pawar, N. (2021). Media education in Maharashtra. *Media Education in Maharashtra*. 25(1), 108-114. <https://communicationtoday.net/2021/05/14/new-edition-jan-mar-2021/>.
- Quin, R. & McMahan, B. (2001). Living with the Tiger: Media Curriculum Issues, in Kubey, R. (Ed). *Media Literacy in the Information Age: Current Perspectives. Information and Behaviour*, 6. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers.
- Secretariat for Media Reforms. (2016). *Rebuilding Public Trust: An assessment of the Media Industry and profession in Sri Lanka*.
- Schmidt, D.A. Baran, E. Thompson, A.D. Misra, P, Koehler, J.K. & Shin, T.S. (2009). Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge (TPACK): The Development and Validation of an Assessment Instrument for Preservice Teachers. *Journal of Research on Technology in Education*. 42(2), 123-149.
- UNESCO. (1982). *Grunwald declaration on media education*. Grunwald, Federal Republic of Germany.
- UNESCO. (2002). Report on *recommendations addressed to UNESCO by the Youth Media Education seminar at Seville*. Seville. [http://www.unesco.org/new/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/HQ/CI/CI/pdf/youth\\_media\\_education.pdf](http://www.unesco.org/new/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/HQ/CI/CI/pdf/youth_media_education.pdf).
- UNESCO. (2007). *Paris agenda or 12 recommendations for media education*. Paris: UNESCO.