Media Education in Asia
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Chi-Kim Cheung
Editor

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Introduction

Chi-Kim Cheung

Media Education in Asia

Media education in Asia is a relatively young, but rapidly developing part of the curriculum. Research has been conducted and papers written on various issues concerning media education in Asia. The dominant models of media education in the world are broadly Western and, more particularly, drawn from English-speaking countries; the question is whether a similar pattern exists in Asia, where there may be differences in culture, heritage, beliefs, values, education policy, as well as curriculum and pedagogy. Are educators in Asia following the western model in developing and implementing media education, or are they devising their own models? With this question in mind, this book sets out to understand the prevailing perspectives regarding media education in various Asian societies. While most debates about media education are carried out in Western contexts, this book hopes to provide a platform for readers to examine this issue in an Asian context. Though media education has made very uneven progress in Asian societies, a study of each case will give insights into the future development and implementation of media education in these Asian societies.

Many of our contributors are respected advocates of media education in their own countries, and the chapters they have written give important insights into how media education has been conducted in their respective societies. The publication of this book thus consolidates the many discussed issues of media education in different Asian societies, providing a platform for further discussion of themes related to the development and implementation of media education in various societies and the implications, and the possibilities and limits of further development. The above could be written in a local context, as well as in a comparative perspective.

Besides contributors from Asian societies, this book includes three chapters from media educators in the West. The chapter written by Buckingham and Domaille is significant as not only is David Buckingham a specialist in media education, but also

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many of his students have been from Asia. Thus his insights are valuable, especially for understanding the issue of Asian societies learning from the West in developing media education models. Buckingham and Domaille warn that it might be a mistake for educators in Asia simply to look to the West and import a model of education as the Western models “may well not be relevant to the social, political and cultural circumstances of Asian countries (which are themselves, of course, very diverse)”.

The chapter on Australia is also important because Australian media education policies are at the forefront of international strategies in media literacy, and because Australian educators have played a significant role in helping to define this curriculum area, in particular by developing the key concepts approach to media education. This approach is used in most parts of the world, including many Asian countries. Furthermore, Australia, as part of the Asian-Pacific region and as a multicultural society, has a strong interest in the significant contribution that media producers, film makers and media artists from Asia have made to the global media culture. It is therefore highly desirable that future developments in media education in Asia and Australia occur cooperatively, as there is a great deal to be gained from collaboration across Asian and Pacific nations in this essential educational field. New Zealand is geographically distanced from Asia but as its historical links with Britain and Europe further weaken, it has come to see its future trade and foreign policy interests rest within the Asia-Pacific region. In April 2008, New Zealand signed an important free trade agreement with China, and demographic patterns are beginning to show the consequences of migration, with the Asian share (the fastest growing share) of the New Zealand population projected to reach 16 percent by 2026, to exceed the Maori (indigenous) population. Just as New Zealand has much to learn from its Asian connections, Asia can learn from innovations in New Zealand—most particularly in respect of finding a legitimate place for media education in the national curriculum.

Themes in Media Education

In the opening chapter of this book, Cheng outlines the importance of media education in this changing world. He goes on to discuss the relationship between policy, technology, critical analysis, media production and media education. Although it might not have been his intention when he wrote the paper to use it as a framework to discuss the development of media education in Asian societies, similar issues regarding the development and implementation of media education can be found in many different Asian societies. The following discussion outlines the various themes relating to media education.

Media Consumption of Students: Its Negative Influence

Too much media consumption by young people is seen as a major problem. Television, film, songs and MTV have become the storytellers for young people growing up in the age of media, affecting their values and ideologies. Media
messages are commercialized, and advertisements aimed at children are produced through well-crafted subliminal techniques, familiarizing them with the new branded world, drawing them to the reality of consumerism and materialism, creating needs for them, and shaping their decisions on what to buy now and in the future (Klein, 2001). The enormous influence of the media is brought out by Buckingham and Domaille when they observe that “it is often argued that [the media] have now taken the place of the family, the church and the school as the major socializing influence in contemporary society.”

Media influence over young people’s lives is every bit as observable in Asia as it is in the West. Lin notes that Taiwanese students spend a lot of time watching TV and are spending more and more time on computer games and the Internet, while Arul and Suresh report that the typical Indian schoolchild watches television for three hours a day on an average. In Japan, according to Suzuki, the total amount of children’s exposure to mass media accounts for most of their spare time, and in South Korea, Jeong notes, the percentage of Internet use among people between the ages of 6 and 19 is estimated to be as high as 98.1%. Moreover, in China, there has been a perennial concern in China over young people’s computer and Internet addiction, as Xu notes in her contribution.

When young people are spending so much time with the media, many people worry about the negative influence that the media has on students. The increase in media consumption has led parents, educators and policy makers in Singapore to believe that some form of media education needs to be introduced at the junior levels. Aural and Sumesh observe that in India “The focus is often on negative issues pertaining to the media, such as that of violence, sex stereotyping, and manipulation in advertising.” Jeong notes the worries about the negative influence of television on young people in Korea and the fact that with more and more media exposure in e-media, parents and teachers are more concerned with the Internet because of the difficulty in adults’ controlling young people’s Internet use. Lin describes a similar situation in Taiwan, where many educators, researchers and the general public have been worrying about problems related to media. A major issue involves the need to arm children with the skills and awareness to prevent them from being influenced by the negative impact of media vehicles such as the Internet and TV. There have been several instances in Japan of the negative influence of the media where some youths have imitated events in a TV drama and used a knife to attack others.

Such worries are also prominent in other Western countries and media education has been called upon as a remedy to protect students from overexposure to the negative influence of the media. The negative influence of the media is noted by Halloran and Jones when discussing the media influence (1992, p. 10), who state that:

Young people needed to be protected against what was considered to be very harmful and powerful influences of the mass media. Young people were seen as sensitive and malleable, and hence capable of being exploited by the new media products.

In order to improve the situation and neutralize these adverse effects, Strasburger (1995) suggests several ways to protect children from the harmful effects of the media. One of these is to increase media literacy, which involves ‘demystifying’
the media for young children. In the same year as Strasburger’s publication, the American Academy of Paediatrics (AAP) argued that media violence is especially damaging to young children (under age 8) because they cannot easily tell the difference between real life and fantasy. In a policy statement in 1999, the AAP supported the development of media education as a means of reducing the risk of exposure to mass media for children and adolescents. This view was echoed by Dr. Faith Rogow, founder of Insighters Educational Consulting, who claimed in a radio program that media literacy was a potent antidote to media violence (Nov. 19, 2001). That was how media education was perceived by many – as a protection against the adverse influence from the media – when it first appeared on the scene. This stance was a familiar one worldwide in the early stages of implementing media education. When the media becomes students’ first curriculum and schooling second, what can be done? An increasing number of educationalists regard media education as one of the attempts to return students to the influence of schools by encouraging them to take a critical stand toward the popular media (Lee, 1997).

However, there are many approaches to media education, with different reasoning behind each one. Many commentators criticize contemporary schooling for its inability to compete with the diversity, sensuality, and drama of the world. Compared to the ever-changing media, schools are indeed more marked by an ‘essential sameness’ (Henry et al., 1988, p. 60). Schools often take the social values of the real world as being hostile and the enemy of canonical learning. In many cases, media education will be employed as tools to inoculate students against the adverse effects of overexposure to media messages, helping them to say no to the media.

From Inoculation to Empowerment

As media education begins to develop, media educators see the potential of it, from being simply a way to prevent students from becoming too exposed to the negative influence of the media, to being a means of empowering students with the critical ability to think, decode, and analyze. It is an alternative to censoring and boycotting the media. Brown (1998) asserts that media teachers around the world “avoid indoctrinating with their own opinions and conclusions, but rather, train students in the process of selective discrimination, analytical observation and reasoned assessment based on factual data judged according to meaningful criteria” (49). As noted by a White House Report (2002), media literacy empowers young people “to be positive contributors to society, to challenge cynicism and apathy and to serve as agents of social change.” In this sense, media education is more than a tool of inoculation: it can empower students to be more analytical, participative, and motivated to learn. The following definition of media literacy from the Alliance for a Media Literate America website (2004) sums it up nicely:

Media literacy empowers people to be both critical thinkers and creative producers of an increasingly wide range of messages using image, language, and sound. It is the skillful application of literacy skills to media and technology messages. As communication technologies transform society, they impact our understanding of ourselves, our communities, and our diverse cultures, making media literacy an essential life skill for the 21st century.
In this book, similar situations can be observed in various Asian societies, where media education first started as an inoculative approach against the negative influence of the media, but later on underwent a gradual paradigm shift towards empowerment. In South Korea, for example, leading organizations such as the Teacher’s Movement for Clean Media has begun to temper its anti-media, protectionist tendencies with a more “student-centered pedagogical ethos”, and school teachers have started to take a more open-minded and empowering approach to media education in their Free Activities classes. In Japan, the debate over whether to censor violent TV content via V-chip has given way to more constructive dialogue about the proper definition of media literacy. Even in Taiwan, where the ‘passive audience’ rhetoric still holds sway, the recent White Paper on Media Literacy Education places strong emphasis on ‘liberating’ and ‘empowerment’ in the teaching of media education to enable people to engage in society and use media to express their opinions, as well as to distinguish, choose and evaluate the content of media. Asthana clearly notes that, from his examination of initiatives in Vietnam, Kyrgyzstan, and India, youth participation in media education programs is a good means of empowerment.

Policy and Politics

There are many reasons for including media education within the curricula (Hart & Hicks, 2002; Heins & Cho, 2003; Cheung, 2004, Cheung & Rother, 2006), and yet it is still fighting for a place as an academic discipline in many countries. Though the development of media education, as has been observed in many countries, begins with a bottom-up movement, its continual growth requires the blessing of the government, with a policy that may directly or indirectly help the development of media education. However, not every country has a policy on this and teachers’ resistance has been strong on this additional burden as in the case of Thailand. Among the few that have, Taiwan’s Ministry of Education issued a white paper on media education policy in 2003, and established the Media Literacy Education Committee, proclaiming that the ultimate vision of media education is to strengthen the liberation and empowerment of the populace and reform a healthy media community through the mechanisms and the integration of media literacy education. In South Korea, the youth policy introduced in 1999, has had a significant impact on how youth projects and centers are run and has indirectly prompted the development of media education, and the new National Curriculum to be introduced in 2012 will include an optional, in-depth course in “media language”.

There is also a relationship between media education and politics. Politics in modern society are typically expressed through the media and the media’s presentation of political events and activities can influence people’s perception, to say the least, as well as voting behavior, to a certain extent.

Media education in South Korea originated not so much from efforts to promote children’s and young people’s systematic understanding about the media as part of the school curriculum, as from social movements in the form of cultural criticism and political activism. Civil rights and media activist groups have contributed to the development of media education particularly by bringing it into schools, training
lecturers and developing teaching materials not confined to the requirements of the National Curriculum.

**Curriculum, Pedagogy, and Resources**

Life would be marvelous for teachers if all pupils wanted to learn (Biggs, 1995, p. 83). According to Biggs, students are only motivated to learn things that are important and meaningful to them. However, most students are demotivated by difficult and abstract declarative knowledge in school. They tend to find learning in school either uninteresting or irrelevant to their daily life.

As learning is a goal-oriented activity, the task for teachers is to involve students in a search for meaning and importance in learning materials so that the journey towards the goal becomes a pleasurable experience. Teachers should teach in a way that allows students to interact with one another and to exchange information, attitudes and feelings. Meanwhile, students can feel good about themselves through recognition and identity. In addition, teachers need to understand their students’ learning level. Learning activity is demotivating if its level is either too high or too low for students. Furlong and Maynard (1995) mention that the teaching materials should be ‘something that pupils can relate to’ and ‘be within their interest level’ (p. 134). Teachers need to understand what students already know about the idea or concept to be learned, in order to enable them to “connect” the learning to the students’ present understanding. They should start teaching from what students already know or what they are familiar with. According to Cheung (2001), there are two types of prior knowledge: subject knowledge and encountered knowledge. Subject knowledge is the students’ previous subject knowledge learnt in school before the next stage of learning. Encountered knowledge is the knowledge which students have through their interactions with the world, (e.g. knowledge from popular culture). However, teachers often neglect the second kind of knowledge. If teachers introduce new materials by drawing upon both students’ subject knowledge and encountered knowledge, students can make sense of their learning more easily and will be more willing to learn. Since students’ encountered knowledge frequently comes from the media, it can be a useful aid for teachers to set the condition for learning. The use of media messages in teaching creates an environment that enhances learning. When teachers design lessons using examples from mass media, students will find it easy to follow. The classroom atmosphere will become harmonious (as learning takes place in a relaxed manner), enjoyable (as students are engaging in activities they like), and achievement-oriented (as students are more willing to participate, for they can taste success in answering correctly). When students see that their own experience is reflected and the work they do can meet their needs, learning is likely to occur.

The teaching of media education requires an approach very different from the traditional “chalk and talk” method. Students are encouraged to find out information through the encoding and decoding of media messages, and by engaging actively in media production to become critical viewers of the media. In media education, the
main focus is on children-centred learning. This requires a media pedagogy which encourages investigation and critical and reflective thinking on the part of students. Children will learn how materials and knowledge are selected and constructed for media texts. They have to ask questions to help them clarify issues that have value implications.

Learning by doing is important. Students are encouraged to explore learning at a deep and meaningful level. In recent years, with the advancement in information technology media production and project-based learning provide a platform for students to immerse in learning through exploring and doing.

In India, as Arul and Sumesh point out, there has been a shift in pedagogy as teachers have now become facilitators of knowledge rather than providers of knowledge in many of the best schools in urban India, which jells well with the student-centred teaching approach required of media education. In Hong Kong, media education is seen as a good means to support project-based learning, and Chu’s paper looks at how media education is actualized through media production from the perspective of the extended curriculum. In Japan, the government has introduced a new educational system and established the computer infrastructure necessary to create an environment for schools to develop media education.

The other important issue that media educators face is the position of media education in the present curriculum. It can be part of the official curriculum, or even extra-curricular activities or extended curriculum as preferred by some, whether deliberate or unintentional. Previously, in many countries media education was not an examined part of the curriculum, and so teachers, and more importantly, school administrators and governments, did not see it as a priority for professional development. However in the last ten years, there has been a move, world – wide, to reform the education scene. These reforms, together with the wide-ranging introduction of information technology and media, have greatly influenced the development of media education in various countries. Jeong notes that in South Korea “The 7th National Curriculum has given rise to ‘Free Activities’ classes, regarded by many school teachers as a good place for media education to happen”.

The development of media education also relies crucially on the resources available to teachers. The Broadcasting Development Fund in South Korea has been instrumental in the development of media education. In Taiwan, teaching packs have been produced for primary school teachers. In many countries, resources like TV programs and newspapers are made available to be used in the teaching of media education. The problem, however, is that those resources are usually in very crude forms and need to be edited by media educators before they can be fruitfully used in classroom. This requires human resources and especially teachers who know enough about media education to make it possible. And that takes us back to the root of the problem, which is the lack of teachers with sufficient training and experience in media education. The result is persistent scarcity of quality teaching materials and training programs, a problem that is especially apparent in countries where media education is still at the very early stage of development, such as, Thailand, India and China.
Learning by doing is an important aspect of knowledge acquisition in the 21st century. Students must be encouraged to explore learning at a deep and meaningful level, and media production provides a platform for students to immerse themselves in learning through exploring and doing. Many media educators believe that media production is a desirable form of Media Education (Buckingham, 1995; Eiermann, 1997; Hobbs, 2004; Kellner & Share, 2007). Frechette (2002) states that media production is vital:

Just as it is necessary for students to learn to write as well as to read, it is invaluable for teachers to allow students to ‘produce’ media texts as well as deconstruct them through their own voice, ideas, and perspective (realizing, of course, the partial subjectively from which these voices emanate (p. 114)).

The idea of media production is consistent with the aims of UNESCO’s Declaration on Media Education (quoted in OCR, 2002, p. 8):

The school and family share the responsibility of preparing the young person for living in a world of powerful images, words and sounds. Children and adults need to be literate in all three of these symbolic systems. [We need] to develop the knowledge, skills and attitudes which will encourage the growth of critical awareness […] and should include the analysis of media products, the use of media as means of creative expression, and effective use of and participation in available media channels.

In Australia, as Quin (2003) points out, media production has been a core element since the beginning of the development of media studies in the 70s. A similar situation exists in Canada, where media production is recognized, either implicitly or explicitly, to be an integral part of the Media Education curriculum. In the U.K., media production is included in the Assessment and Qualifications Alliance Examinations as well as being a module in the Media Studies syllabus in the Oxford Cambridge RSA examinations:

The purpose of production work is for candidates to put theory into practice, by demonstrating knowledge and understanding of technical skills in their own media production, as well as to engage them in creative, imaginative and aesthetic activity. (OCR, 2002, p. 1)

Media educators are aware of the value of student media production as a powerful means by which students can maintain their enjoyment of media and at the same time, understand how, for whom, and why media texts are constructed. Previously, it was difficult for students to participate in media production owing to the fact that equipment was expensive and operational skills were complicated. This is no longer the case today. With advances in modern mass communication and information technologies, equipment has become more sophisticated in functions yet easy to handle. This, combined with a drop in prices, has made media production class more manageable for schools.

Media production goes beyond mere comprehension and analysis in Bloom’s taxonomy. Those involved in media production have to include the production of meaning and design using a range of symbol systems in evaluating the availability of a wide range of media resources. Peppler and Kaifai (2007) noted: “What takes place during creative production is a critical reflection on what constitutes new
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media, how it is constructed, and how one would question or use these same design conventions toward different ends. The traditional role of formal media education still remains in media production because it involves stimulating critical reflection on a greater variety of media texts and engendering youth critically to write and reformulate those ideas” (152).

Many students are engaged in professional media production, working for campus TV or producing videos for competition. More often, though, individuals have participated by making their own YouTube videos and Flickr photos; developing their own profiles on MySpace; contributing their ideas as editor on Wikipedia; and sharing their lives through blogs and Facebook. Today, media production goes beyond mere production of texts and images and includes explorations of the inner voice and identity of individuals in this era of participatory culture.

Several chapters in this volume examine the issue of media production in various Asian societies. In Hong Kong, Chu looks at the relationship between media culture and school culture through a thorough study of two schools engaging in media production. In South Korea, Jeong observes that changes in the media environment have given impetus to media education. The government’s introduction of state-of-the-art ICT facilities into schools and the teaching of media education is a good way to demonstrate the use of ICT in learning and teaching. In Japan, the MELL Project (Media, Expression, Learning, and Literacy) makes media production an important theme of media education. The significance of media production in Taiwan is also noted in Lin’s paper. In India, the government has started giving community radio licenses to non-government organizations, which prompted the creation of The Community Radio Forum, an organization that promotes media education by engaging its members in producing radio content. In Singapore, the world’s top economy in exploiting global IT developments, the Media Development Authority has sponsored and supported a variety of awards and competitions to encourage student production of videos, animations, films, and even computer games. Asthana asserts the importance of media production from his examination of initiatives in Vietnam, Kyrgyzstan, and India.

The Importance of Partners

Besides initiatives from the education sector, media education has attracted the attention of many interested parties outside the formal education system, as for example, in the case of local youth and community-based projects. Indeed, as can be observed in several cases, a strong partnership is essential in the development and implementation of media education. For example, Sister Thoman in the U.S. founded the Centre for Media Literacy (http://www.medialit.org) to provide leadership for a Media Education movement. In Europe, Mediamanual.at (http://www.mediamanual.at) annually hosts a competition for the media literacy award for the best and most innovative educational media projects in European schools. In Canada, the advancement of media education receives the support from
the media itself. For example, Canadian Broadcasting Corporation has a comprehensive data base related to CBC radio, television and other media related services, and CHUM TV works with educators to provide meaningful support for Canadian Media Education. Since 1989, CHUM has created innovative programming that encourages children to think critically about music, popular culture programming and related social issues, even making study guides available for Canadian educators and students free of charge.

As our contributors observe, media education in Asia has also benefited from partnerships with outside organizations, especially the media industry and religious groups.

**Networking with Industry**

The development of media education may have originated in the minds of an enthusiastic few, but continued progress demands the support of others. In many countries, media education is not a top-down movement, but rather a bottom-up approach has been adopted. As Buckingham and Domaille note: “Much of this enthusiasm is generated from the grassroots, among teachers. In a number of contexts, teachers have formed supportive networks and associations that encourage the exchange of good practice and the development of dialogue and debate on the future of the field”. Similar examples could be found in this book. In South Korea, organizations such as the Seoul YMCA, YWCA, Women’s Link, Citizens’ Coalition for Democratic Media, Christian Ethics Praxis Movement, Citizens’ Coalition for Economic Justice, and Mabius are good partners. In India, there is a widespread partnership between schools and the newspaper industry to promote the use of newspapers in the classroom. Newspapers are used as a teaching tool and as an educational resource to promote basic literacy and to inculcate the reading habit in children. In Japan, the media industry and NPOs have made various efforts in media education. Broadcasters have produced media literacy-related programs targeting youths, and an organization called Newspaper in Education is actively incorporating newspapers into media education. In Taiwan, the Media Literacy Centre and the Fubon Cultural and Educational Foundation are important partners in the development of media education.

**Religious Groups**

In South Korea, the ‘Teachers’ Movement for Clean Media’, which was formed in 2000 as part of a religious group, the ‘Christian Ethics Praxis Movement’, has actively raised issues of commercialism and ethics of the media as well as producing teaching materials, textbooks and guidelines for teachers and parents. Media education in India started out as mainly a Catholic initiative in the early 1980s following advice from the Pope to the church to focus on the impact of the media. In some Christian schools, media education has become part of the school’s syllabi and not just a co-curricular activity. In Thailand, The Daughters of Mary Help
of Christians and Catholic Social Communications of Thailand play major roles in developing media education.

**The Future of Media Education in Asia**

The above themes only outline some of the common issues among various Asian societies surrounding the development and implementation of media education in their respective countries. There are many issues worth exploring, but it can be noted that the effort and enthusiasm of many educators and practitioners have finally met with a measure of success. There seems to be an increasing official recognition of media education by policy makers in many Asian societies, where the time for media education has finally arrived. The significance of media education is noted, but still, in these Asian counties, media education, as a curriculum, is far from fully developed. Much more needs to be done.

Though many may think that media education is an idea from the west, chapters in this volume remind us that it is far more than a ‘Western concept’. In addition, the rich information provided in this book can be used for further comparative studies of different issues regarding media education in the east and west. I hope the publication of this book can stimulate debate, policy and further research on media education.

**References**


The Times They are a Changing: Media Education

Kai-Ming Cheng

Preamble

Media is around us. Media is everywhere. As a student of policies, I would rate media as one of the most important elements, or actors, in contemporary policy-making. However, media is not only about policies, it is also about society and the environments in which our younger generations learn and grow. Seen from that angle, our knowledge about media, and the room we allow our students to understand media, are indeed too small. In this chapter, the attempt is made to delineate my understanding of the change in society, and in that context, how learning about media could take place.

The Changing Society

Society has changed. Fundamental changes take place in the economy, where mass production of commodities for scale marketing is now being replaced by customised products to fit individual clients. With that is the rapid increase of services and hence the expansion of the service sector. In this context, fashion has replaced use in many major products: clothing, food, telephones, watches, just to name a few. Ideas and design, and hence creativity, have become the most essential element in economic activities. Therefore, knowledge and information are extremely important for the progress of contemporary societies. It is also in that context that the media has a central position in today’s lives. In the following I will try to explain these statements.

Capitalism emerged basically as a result of mass production. Some would even attribute that to James Watt’s invention of the steam engine, which created a new power that has led to the possibility of large scale production. That in turn enabled a very complicated division of labour, and hence long production lines and large
factories. Without those, large scale production would not be possible, and only with that, industrial production has taken over agricultural economies. In the later part of industrial societies, largely in the later half of the 20th Century, even in commercial firms, division of labour, bureaucracy and hierarchy are the fundamental features of any large organisation.

However, since the later half of the 20th Century, and in the last two or three decades in particular, large scale production of uniform commodities has given way to diversity of products tailor-made with specific qualities customised to the individuals. As such, the quantity of each product is very much reduced. The large armies of production workers who used to be driven by the production lines (as one could be reminded by Charlie Chaplain’s *Modern Times*), and to work as a tiny part of sophisticated production machinery, are gradually being replaced by small work units that work on a small quantity of specific products or services tailor-made for specific clients. With that is the emergence of a large variety of services which are delivered directly to the clients.

In all these cases, individuals have to work in intensive human relations within the workplace, where brainstorming, debates, and integration of ideas and expertise have become the basic activities. Individuals also have to work closely with their clients and partners, by way of listening, presentation, negotiation, persuasion, and so forth. In other words, communications among human beings have now become essential to human working lives. This is very different from the industrial society where individuals work in bureaucracy and abide by procedures, rules and regulations. It is perhaps not exaggerating to say that the beauty of the division of labour also carried with it the deprivation of human communications.

However, communications are mate through media. And perhaps this is the very definition of the media. By this definition, the media has always been there, except that words and letters, that were the prevalent means of communications, are no longer adequate. Human beings now communicate with a much larger range and extended capacities of their physical senses, i.e. through multimedia means. Firstly, multimedia provides access to information and knowledge of different levels of quality. Secondly, multimedia provides access to information and knowledge that transcend space and time.

It is in this context we should ask: Are we preparing our younger generation for a future that is so overwhelmed by the media?

**Mastery of Media**

If we follow the arguments above, then perhaps the first item on our agenda of media education should be the mastery of the media as a necessary means of contemporary human communications.

The first issue of media mastery is, inevitably, technology. It is no longer adequate for our younger generation to master only words and letters, or “literacy and numeracy” in the conventional sense of the term. There is a need for the renewed
The Times They are a Changing

definition of literacy in the broad sense of the term. In the mid-1990s, there was a movement in Australia to redefine literacy. This is a meaningful nation wide discussion that has informed the subsequent education reforms. The Australian discussion acknowledges the changed basic needs in a changed society, and hence has retuned its education to catch up with such needs.

Among such needs is the mastery of multimedia. In ancient times, when letters were the only means of communication beyond physical and temporal boundaries, writing of the scripts was given essential attention, because the quality of such writing affects the quality of communication. Hence, calligraphy, in the Chinese context, was of fundamental essence in young people’s learning. It was part of literacy. In contemporary societies, if literacy is taken to mean the basic knowledge and skills that would enable effective communication, then it should include communication using multimedia.

In reality, if we examine young people in real lives, they could readily master multimedia technologies such as Powerpoint presentation, photography editing and simple video production using instruments that are commonplace in each household. And the convenience and easiness of such knowledge and skills is rapidly developing over time. However, in education, we seldom recognise their attainments and achievements in these aspects. Most of our assessments of students are based on sit-down examinations which require only words and letters.

This is also to do with the nature of schooling and hence the nature of examinations. The majority of examinations in today’s schools are expecting students to produce what are expected by teachers. Or, at least, only such “standard answers” are recognisable by our education systems. However, the majority of multimedia products are creative in nature. They do not always lend themselves to standard tests and assessments. Hence, although students’ creative products are often appreciated and encouraged as “extra-curricular activities”, few of them are counted towards the students’ qualifications and promotion to higher levels of education.

In other words, in order that learning of media could become an expected achievement of students, school education has to be so reformed that it has to break away from the traditional institution of education. That institution, which was started in the mid-19th century at the high time of the industrial era, was appropriate for the mode of the workplace of the time, where workers work according to expectations, procedures, rules and regulations set by the system. There was little room for the individual’s creativity in the workplace, and hence in school lives.

Media Production

There is, however, another dimension, perhaps with deeper meaning, in the mastery of the media. A school of thought in media education, basically the one that prevails in the UK and continental Europe, emphasises the participation of young people in media production. The argument is that unless young people are enabled to actually produce media, they would never really understand media. Or, from a positive angle, participation in the production of media would allow young people to have a real
understanding of media, and only that is the most genuine and thorough education about the media. According to this school of thought, media production is the core element in media education.

Such a notion of media education perhaps also echoes the contemporary understanding of learning. Learning is achieved only by human activities with real-life experiences and carry with them real-life significance. According to this constructive theory of learning, the media is understood by young people only when they have real life experience of producing media, and hence using media for a purpose.

Seen in this light, mastery of the media at an early age is not only a matter of literacy (i.e. knowledge and skills) in communications in the contemporary society, but it is also a fundamental path in which students learn about the media and learn to face the media that has formed a critical part of their lives. Using the media provides much more meaningful learning about the media than book knowledge or critical analysis of the media borrowed from older people, although this does not mean that the latter is dispensable, as will be seen in the following.

However, returning to an earlier analysis, media production in the media education sense of the term is not totally foreign to Chinese communities. The school system in China started only at the beginning of the 20th Century. It is only about one hundred years old. However, even in its earlier years, schools in China, and indeed in most Chinese communities, media production with real-life value is not uncommon.

Early schools in China were known for the self-governance of student communities, often with a school-wide democratically elected governance structure. Within the student government structure was often a “ministry” or convenor of “propaganda”,¹ whose tasks often included the publication of a newspaper which was a periodical distributed among the entire student body. Such newspapers were often published in mimeographs with hand-carved wax stencils. Alternatives to prints were wall bulletins or blackboard bulletins which were more economical. Such alternatives are sometimes more commonly used in smaller communities such as the class association.

Such a tradition is still continued in Mainland China and Taiwan, to some extent in Hong Kong and Singapore, but is indeed characteristic of most schools run by Chinese communities around the world. In most of these societies, such newspapers or bulletins are often used as the major means for moral education, a term used to include all aspects of education beyond academic studies. The tradition was somehow also hijacked for political and ideological education during the Cultural Revolution on Mainland China.

Such a tradition moved into multimedia when school radio stations were established, again run by students, in the 1960s and 1970s, and extended into school television stations starting in the 1990s. Many schools in Chinese communities maintain a radio station in one way or another, although the establishment of a television station sometimes is less straightforward. Although it may be argued that the media that are created in schools are sometimes “schooled” to fit the strong

¹Propaganda is often taken in the constructive sense of the word in China.
sense of “correctness” in the school culture, and hence the practice of media production in schools is no longer an experience in the “media sense” of the media, it nonetheless provides an entry to the world of the media, and is hence a way of media education.

**Critical Analysis**

However, none of the above addresses the concern of many who are advocates of media education. Their concern is more about how young people could avoid being polluted by the media, rather than how they could understand media. Although this rather negative notion about of the media is not shared by all, the concern is perhaps valid.

Media is so pervasive around our lives. Our understanding of the world around us is basically shaped by the media. Our perceptions are no longer reflections of what we see with our own eyes and hear with our own ears, but what we see and hear through the media. We know what is reported, but we don’t know what is not reported. The media on the one hand have expanded our perceptions beyond time and space. On the other hand, ironically, the media have also limited our perceptions by selections not of our own.

Our judgements largely reflect media judgements. Our value system also cannot easily escape the media. The concern is justifiable. If education is about critical minds and independent thinking, then one of the most important things to do is to help students penetrate the mist produced by the media.

For education, this is almost a formidable task. If even well educated intellectuals can be easily misled, blinded or confused by the media, how could we expect inexperienced young people to be critical about the media? However, if such an argument would be valid, then perhaps there is little we could achieve with education. If we assume that the young always know less, then there will be no progress in human knowledge. In the context of media education, we could only assume that young people could learn to be critical only when they are more experienced.

Again, contemporary theories of learning could be of tremendous help. While young people have to learn by life experiences and construct knowledge of their own, more experienced learners could always help the younger by “scaffolding”, which refers to the provision of frameworks and ladders for young learners, such that they could build upon existing human knowledge and move rather directly to explore new fronts.

The issue is, however, that the scaffolds with reference to media are yet to be erected. What are the fundamentals that young people should be equipped with in order to be able to analyse the media? What are the dimensions of an analytic framework whereby young people could develop their understanding and appraisal of the media? What are the possible rungs in a ladder, if there are any, which could help young people to progress in their ability to analyse the media? What are the value systems from which young people would learn to make choices? What are the basic assumptions that young people should learn to challenge? And so forth.
Practising Media Education

There is then the task of how the notion of scaffolding could be translated into education realities. The other chapters of this book are attempts to explore the possibilities and options. There is a vague consensus that in order that young people would learn to develop a critical mind about the media, students should be allowed to grow in their general capacity of analysis. There is then the likely debate of whether such a capacity is specific to the media, or generic.

On the one hand, one may argue that because of the specific nature of the media, the general capacity of analysis has to be developed within the context of the media, just as capacities of analysis in history are developed in analysing history, sociology in analysing societies, political science in analysing politics. According to this argument, there is likely to be a “subject” in secondary schools what corresponds to the discipline of Media Studies in higher education institutions. The beauty of this model is its concentration, such that learning will take place with intensive attention to all aspects of the media. However, such an approach is likely to face competition for resources with other existing “subjects” with tradition, in terms of money, effort and time.

On the other hand, one may equally argue that since media has such a pervasive presence and entails such a wide coverage of different contents, the capacity for analysing the media should be embedded in all dimensions of student learning. With this approach of a “diffusion” model, there would be no structural competition of resources, and hence would meet little objection. However, the objectives of media education could also be easily lost in the diffusion.

However, there could be a mid-way solution. There is the more practicable approach of achieving a focussed and disciplinary learning of the media through extra-curricular activities, as is with the case of drama. It does not occupy a particular space in the school timetable, hence would be seen as unharmful in terms of resource competition. It also avoids the evil of examinations, which could easily turn an exploratory, creative and critical endeavour into a conforming exercise.

Conclusion

In sum, there is a demonstrated need for young people to learn about the media that are so pervasive in contemporary lives. There are different ways of looking at what could be called media education. While perhaps it is too early to expect any consensus, there is indeed no indication that these various approaches could not co-exist. Meanwhile, there are technical aspects of media education that have to be resolved, but such aspects would only be developed through practice.
Making Media Education Happen: 
A Global View

David Buckingham and Kate Domaille

It is hard to overestimate the economic, social and cultural importance of the media in the modern world. The media are major industries, generating profit and employment; they provide us with most of our information about the political process; and they offer us ideas, images and representations (both factual and fictional) that inevitably play a part in shaping our views of reality. The media are undoubtedly the major contemporary means of cultural expression and communication. Indeed, it is often argued that they have now taken the place of the family, the church and the school as the major socialising influence in contemporary society.

To this extent, the case for some form of education about the media is fairly self-evident. Schools can no longer afford to ignore the media, or vainly attempt to teach against them. Of course, there is considerable room for debate about exactly how educators might respond to this phenomenon, and about the forms that media education should take. These issues will be explored from a range of different perspectives in the contributions elsewhere in this book. Our aim here is rather different. We take it for granted that media education is important and necessary. The question we would like to address is how we can make it happen.

People often look to the UK as a country where media education is already happening. It is true that we have a long history of practice in this field, stretching back over seventy years. All students in British secondary schools will be taught about key aspects of the media as part of their English (mother tongue language) lessons; and many of them will have the opportunity to take specialist courses in Media Studies leading to national examinations at the age of sixteen and eighteen. Increasing numbers of students are choosing these specialist courses – to the point where we now urgently need more trained teachers to teach them.

But in the UK, as in most other countries, we have had a long-running struggle to establish media education as a core element of every child’s education – as an entitlement for all. This is a battle that is very far from won. For example, very few primary school children in the UK receive any systematic form of media education – arguably, at the age where they are most in need of it. Even in secondary schools,
specialist Media Studies courses still remain a comparatively marginal area of the curriculum. And we constantly have to argue our case with policy-makers and educational advisers who do not really appreciate the importance and urgency of media education – or indeed, even seem to understand what it might involve.

There are many possible reasons for this resistance – to do with the peculiar British snobbery about popular culture, to do with a suspicion of ‘new’ educational ideas, to do with the media’s own unwillingness to submit to critical examination. Above all, though, the resistance is to do with the political pressures on education. Over the past two decades, education in Britain (as in many other countries) has been caught up in a mood of ideological reaction – a movement ‘back-to-basics’, to what are imagined to be the certainties of very traditional forms of education.

Indeed, it might interest readers of this book to know that politicians in Britain tend to look to the ‘tiger economies’ of Asia for lessons about how to run education – and they tend to conclude from this that children need longer hours in school, and much more testing. In Britain, there is a widespread belief among politicians that increasing the amount of testing is the most effective way of improving education – as though we could improve the practice of medicine by increasing the use of the thermometer.

The fate of English language teaching, and of literacy, is one important example of this trend. Like many countries, Britain currently seems to be living through one of a recurrent series of ‘literacy crises’, whereby people’s uncertainties about fundamental social and cultural changes are expressed through a concern about the apparent decline in literacy. Those of us who argue that the modern world requires multiple literacies – that literacy today is about more than print or books, but also about the modern media – are paid relatively little attention. On the contrary, the government is keen to return to very traditional, instrumental definitions of literacy and of literacy teaching, in which media education plays no part at all.

Ultimately, then, it might be a mistake for educators in Asia to look to countries like Britain, in which media education appears to be rather more well-established. Indeed, there are obvious dangers in the idea that one can simply import a model of education from elsewhere in the world and then implement it. The dominant models of media education in the world are broadly Western, and more particularly drawn from English-speaking countries. They may well not be relevant to the social, political and cultural circumstances of Asian countries (which are of course themselves very diverse). Even if they are, much of what can be achieved will depend on pragmatic actions rather than abstract ideas; and the political pressures educators in Asian countries are facing will probably be quite different from those we have been dealing with in the West.

With this ‘health warning’ in mind, this chapter offers some suggestions for what media educators can learn from each other in this respect. Our insights are drawn, not so much from our local experience in Britain, but from an international survey, which we undertook in 2002 for UNESCO. This was not a definitive or comprehensive survey, not least because we had a fairly short period of time in which to complete it. Nevertheless, the responses we received do provide a telling indication of the current state of the field, and throw up some broader issues for debate.
We gathered information from carefully chosen experts in a total of 38 countries, as well as undertaking an extensive review of print and web-based materials relating to media education. We drew on a small number of international edited collections of work in the field, and accessed other resources via relevant websites. This material was combined with additional publications and documents sent to us by our survey respondents. It is worth emphasising that our research focused primarily on media education in schools. This does not at all imply a lack of interest in other potential sites of media education. Indeed, in several countries (such as the USA or parts of Latin America) the most interesting and productive work in this field is happening outside the formal education system, in local youth and community-based projects. However, basic information about such ‘informal’ media education initiatives has not yet been gathered or circulated, not least because this is such a decentralised and diverse field.

We begin by offering some very broad generalisations about the overall state of development of media education. We then move on to some of the more specific issues addressed in our questionnaire survey; and conclude with a summary of what we need if media education is indeed going to happen.

The Big Picture

In many countries around the world, the past two decades have seen extensive and far-reaching changes in educational policy and practice. Despite this general climate of change, however, it would seem that media education has made very uneven progress. In many cases, one can see bursts of innovative activity that have not ultimately been sustained; while in others, potential advances on the level of national policy have subsequently been overturned. Some countries (such as Hungary and New Zealand) currently seem to be riding on the crest of a media education wave; although in others (such as Japan and South Africa) there is considerable frustration about the failure of policy-makers to address media education in any coherent way. In many developing countries, where educators are largely preoccupied with developing basic print literacy, media education is only just beginning to register as a concern; while in the countries where media education is most firmly established in the curriculum (such as Canada and England), there are signs of weariness among its most prominent advocates.

Where media education exists at all as a defined area of study, it tends to take the form of an elective or optional area of the secondary school curriculum, rather than a compulsory element. There is very little evidence internationally of systematic or extensive media education provision for younger children (under the age of 11). In many countries, there is considerable uncertainty about whether media education should be regarded as a separate curriculum subject, or integrated within existing subjects. It appears most frequently as a ‘pervading’ element of the curriculum for mother-tongue language or social studies (or its equivalent). In this context, however, it is often loosely defined, and is rarely assessed as such: it is both ‘everywhere and nowhere’.
Media education is also sometimes confused with educational media – that is, with the use of media technology for educational purposes. In these contexts, media education often appears to be regarded as a means rather than an end in itself. Only in a few countries does media education form a substantial, assessed part of the mother-tongue language curriculum (e.g. Canada, New Zealand, Australia) or a separate examined course (e.g. England). In this situation, the development of media education frequently depends upon the initiative of committed teachers, often working in isolation. The most urgent need identified in our survey was for sustained, in-depth teacher training, both at initial and in-service levels. Even in countries where media education is comparatively well-established, there are very few opportunities for training, and only a minority of teachers is reached by it.

Meanwhile, arguments for media education have generally met with indifference or even resistance from policy-makers: many of our respondents suggested that media education was not really on the policy agenda in any form. Media education necessarily involves critical thinking – an ability to challenge accepted representations and accounts of the world, and to look beyond superficial appearances and taken-for-granted stereotypes. Whatever they may say about active citizenship, these are not necessarily qualities that governments wish to promote. As a result of this indifference, media education suffers from a lack of funding, and a lack of recognition (for example, by universities); and particularly in poorer countries (though not only there), the efforts of teachers are hampered by a lack of basic equipment and resources. In general, there has been little sustained support for media education initiatives from the media industries or from regulatory authorities; and with a few exceptions (e.g. Russia, England, Sweden), there has been an absence of basic research, particularly into questions about students’ learning and about the effectiveness of media education programmes.

Many of the respondents in our survey compared the situation of media education with the rapid diffusion of information and communication technologies (ICTs) in education. Some argued that the massive injection of funding in this area offered considerable potential for developing creative work with media in schools (e.g. China, Hong Kong, Canada). In other contexts, however, the drive towards ICTs was seen to be undermining arguments for media education: in Japan, for example, the use of ICTs in education was seen primarily as a quick way of raising a ‘tech-savvy’ workforce; while in Denmark ICTs are largely the preserve of computer educators, rather than being addressed within a critical media education framework. However, several respondents suggested that this situation was likely to change over the longer term. They argued that the naive optimism about the power of technology that currently characterises the debate around ICTs would eventually give way to a more critical, questioning approach; and when this happened, media education was likely to have a great deal to offer.

Despite this rather bleak picture, our survey also suggested several grounds for optimism. In general, we found a high degree of commitment, and a lucid sense of the aims and objectives of media education. In many countries, media education is informed by a rigorous and systematic conceptual framework that is clearly reflected
in teaching materials, syllabus documents and the like. In general, there was a good deal of consensus among our respondents (and, by extension, among those active in the field) about the aims and characteristics of media education – even if this consensus is not yet recognised by policy-makers or by the educational world in general.

Much of this enthusiasm is generated from the grassroots, among teachers. In a number of contexts, teachers have formed supportive networks and associations that encourage the exchange of good practice, and the development of dialogue and debate on the future of the field. Many such associations publish newsletters or journals, and some sustain extensive websites (e.g. Australia). In some countries, there are well-established partnerships with media producers and regulators, and successful instances of peer-training (e.g. New Zealand, Australia, the work of the CBFA in South Africa). It is both a source of strength and a mark of optimism that teachers are continuing to argue the case for media education in relatively difficult circumstances. In recent years, significant gains have been made in countries like Russia and Hungary that have seen the establishment of formal curricula in media education, due in no small part to the continuous campaigning of local teachers and practitioners. Despite the fact that many media educators are working in isolation, they are occasionally very effective in making their voices heard. They are also increasingly keen to engage in international dialogue, and to share approaches and resources. As a result, it is very clear what media educators need if the field is to expand and develop – an issue to which we shall return at the end of this chapter.

Key Issues

Aims of Media Education

Historically, media education has tended to move away from an approach based on ‘inoculation’ towards one based on ‘empowerment’. These are admittedly loose terms, but they were recognised and used by many of our survey respondents. The notion that media education should aim to defend or protect young people against media influence seems to have lost ground in recent years. Even where our expert respondents recognised that this approach was still prevalent in their own countries (e.g. Hong Kong, USA), they tended to reject it or suggest that it needed to be superseded.

The more contemporary definition of media education seems to be based on notions such as ‘critical awareness’, ‘democratic participation’ and even ‘enjoyment’ of the media. This emergent approach also affords a more prominent role for media production by students. In Spain, for example, media education is argued for in terms of students becoming ‘critical citizens’ and gaining opportunities to become part of a ‘media community’; while in Sweden students engage in media education in order to help them in ‘expressing themselves, their knowledge and their feelings’.
In several countries, the term ‘media literacy’ is used more widely than ‘media education’. This reference to literacy is partly strategic, since it offers a basis for including media alongside print in the established mother-tongue language curriculum. This is where media education is most frequently to be found, even in countries where it is very well-established (e.g. Australia, Canada, England). However, this use of the term ‘literacy’ also reflects a broader argument about the changing needs of learners in a media-saturated world. Several of our respondents insisted on the need for a broader conception of ‘literacy’ if education is to address contemporary realities (e.g. Japan). It is vital to emphasise here, however, that this notion of ‘literacy’ is not a functional or instrumental one: for nearly all our respondents, media literacy was very clearly defined as a form of critical literacy.

Several respondents also maintained that media education necessarily entails a more ‘active’, ‘student-centred’, ‘participatory’ pedagogy. Media education was very much seen as a matter of ‘learning by doing’; and it was an area in which teachers needed to recognise the considerable knowledge and expertise of their students. This was particularly the case in relation to students’ engagement in practical media production, but it was frequently seen as a more general requirement. Here again, media education may be at odds with the predominantly conservative ethos of most education systems.

Generally speaking, countries with a less well-established tradition of media education still seem to be informed by a perceived need to ‘protect’ young people from the media. For example, this aim was clearly apparent in the work reported to be taking place in some African countries. Here, the aim of media education is to save young children from ‘unsuitable material’; or, in a more directly political vein, to ensure that they recognise the differences between imported culture and ‘authentic’ culture. However, these motivations are by no means confined to developing countries. The responses from the USA, for example, reflect the continuing influence there of an ‘inoculative’ approach in relation to issues such as media violence, drugs and sex.

**Curriculum Frameworks**

If most practitioners are clear about the broad aims of media education, the extent to which these are translated into classroom practice is highly variable. Many countries have generalised policy statements from central government agencies, which require media education to be delivered as part of mother-tongue language teaching or in social studies (or related areas like political education or citizenship). However, this rhetorical certainty is often undermined by the lack of any follow-up strategy in the form of clearly assessed activities or models of student progression in skills and competencies.

These different locations for media education obviously have implications in terms of how its aims are defined. Media education often seems to be used as a pretext for work on language or social issues and to be assessed in these terms; and as a result, aims specific to media education tend to be marginalised.
A clearly defined conceptual framework for the curriculum is obviously necessary, both in order to ensure that teachers and students are aware of the specific aims of the classroom activities they undertake, and in order to provide an agreed basis for assessment. The frameworks developed by the Association for Media Literacy in Canada and the British Film Institute in England (which are closely related) have been very influential internationally, even in very different cultural contexts. Most countries that have an explicit framework use some variant of these, while some appear to have adopted one or other of them wholesale (in some cases via the translation of relevant textbooks). Broadly speaking, there are four key areas that emerge as the common conceptual concerns of media education, although they are often described or labelled in different ways: language, production, representation and audience.

Nevertheless, some respondents in our survey were concerned about the dominance of what they regarded as ‘Anglo-Saxon’ or ‘Western’ models, and expressed the need to develop conceptual frameworks that were more appropriate to their educational and cultural contexts. In the absence of support and resources to undertake this work, however, it is likely that these conceptual models will continue to be the most influential.

**Learning and Assessment**

Predictably, only countries with the most developed media education curricula have clear specifications of the skills and competencies that are expected at different levels, and of how they are to be assessed. For example, these are very clearly defined in New Zealand’s new technical and vocational curriculum in media, and in the new Hungarian curriculum.

Respondents identified several overarching difficulties as regards assessment. In many instances, it seems that media education is included in curriculum documents, but is not separately assessed in its own right (or indeed assessed at all). As we have noted, media work is frequently treated as a means to other ends (developing skills in written or spoken language, for example), in which case it tends to be assessed in these terms. Assessment also frequently privileges written communication at the expense of other modes addressed in media education; and this seems to reflect a more general confusion about how ‘media literacy’ is to be defined in the first place. As a result, there is very little systematic attention to the question of learning progression.

In several instances, the difficulties of assessment have resulted in considerable frustration. In Chile, for example, the curriculum documents indicate that students should develop critical awareness and actively participate in creating media texts with a clear message; yet there are no defined criteria by which these skills are to be assessed. On the other hand, some respondents appeared to enjoy the freedom that came from a lack of such specification. In the language curriculum in New Zealand, for example, a lack of prescription was seen to allow for considerable flexibility on the part of teachers.
In general, however, there is no doubt that the absence of structured assessment procedures has contributed to the lack of status afforded to media education. The fact that media education has largely been subsumed within the assessment procedures of other subject areas has left it continuously struggling for recognition in its own right. Strategically, one can argue that assessment exerts a much more determining influence on classroom practice than any curriculum document, and as such should be prioritised.

Yet even when the criteria for assessment are explicit, the resources and training that teachers require to implement it may still be lacking. ‘Statements of intent’ are clearly important, but they are not sufficient in themselves to bring about fundamental changes in practice.

Theory and Practice

In many countries (with the interesting exception of some Latin American countries), media education is primarily defined as a ‘critical’ enterprise. Practical production by students is growing in importance, partly as a result of the dissemination of ICTs, but it still remains marginal in the large majority of cases, particularly where funding is limited. Even so, many of our respondents emphasised the need to integrate ‘theory’ and ‘practice’: while they recognised that students were highly motivated towards production activities, they also stressed the need for reflection rather than creative production for its own sake.

The latter was seen to be a particular danger with the spread of ICTs, where there is a risk of encouraging a purely ‘technical’ emphasis on production, which is lacking in critical thinking or questioning. However, some argued that the ‘wiring up’ of schools could usher in far greater prospects for media education at a later date, even if it did not appear to do so immediately. They argued that students would need some kind of critical competence in using ICTs (for example, in evaluating information encountered on the Web); and that enabling them to ‘cope’ with the new technology might eventually accelerate attempts to establish a more formal media education curriculum.

In some situations, the spread of ICTs, together with partnership projects with newspapers and TV stations, has led to a growing emphasis on the vocational (or pre-vocational) aspects of media education. Media educators now need to account for themselves in a new educational context characterised by a strong emphasis on technical skills and competence. However, these developments also highlight the division of skills in media teaching and learning. As one of our respondents put it, ‘students have the technical know-how, but not the critical sense – with teachers it is exactly the opposite’.

Ultimately, it is possible that the advent of ICTs will reconfigure the relationship between theory and practice in media education; and that it may result in a broader re-definition of the subject field. On the other hand, media education may well have a great deal to contribute to the development of critical educational thinking in relation to ICTs. There is a potential for dialogue here which seems, at least at present, to be largely unfulfilled.
Partnership

In principle, respondents accepted that partnerships of various kinds were a necessity for the future development of media education. However, their past experience of such partnerships was uneven. With a few exceptions (e.g. Japan, Canada, New Zealand, UK), there was very little evidence of regulatory bodies being interested or involved in media education, even though some were inclined to express support in principle. In terms of the involvement of media producers, there was considerable variation. In many instances, respondents reported that media companies were indifferent or even hostile towards media education; and in some cases, this was not confined to commercial companies, but extended to public service broadcasters also. On the positive side, several countries have ‘Newspapers in Education’ schemes; and elsewhere, there are projects in which children work alongside television or film producers. The Australian Teachers of Media (ATOM) sponsor annual awards which acknowledge a strong and growing relationship between media providers and media educators. Positive partnerships of this kind offer clear gains in terms of providing access to knowledge about institutional practices and arrangements; in terms of sharing expertise and resources; and (in some instances) in terms of providing vocational advice.

In poorer countries with a shorter history of media education, or with less interest from policy makers, the development of media education absolutely relies on such partnerships, as is the case with production-based projects in China and Hong Kong. In some instances, they are necessary simply in order to ensure the provision of basic resources (e.g. Mozambique). However, several respondents expressed some skepticism about the value of such initiatives, and others pointed to the dangers of blurring corporate and educational objectives. Some respondents argued that such partnerships should not be seen merely as a form of public relations for media companies, and that educational aims should be more strongly emphasised.

One issue that was raised by several respondents here was that of copyright. While laws on this matter vary significantly, in some countries the work of media educators is significantly constrained by the unwillingness of companies and governments to waive copyright restrictions on educational use.

Training

The lack of appropriate training for teachers of media education was an almost universal complaint amongst respondents. In general, teachers of media tend to have little or no formal training and find it hard to gain access to in-service training or further professional development. The absence of a centrally organized strategy meant that teachers were either training themselves or being trained in very ad hoc ways. At best, respondents were able to cite a few examples of university-level courses in their country, but the numbers of teachers being trained in this way were considerably short of the numbers required. It was frequently reported that centralized resources were being spent on ICT training, and that this was superseding any systematic attempt to educate teachers specifically for media teaching.
A high proportion of teachers of specialist media courses have no training beyond a few professional development days. A notable exception would be in Western Australia, where teachers must have a degree in the field and a postgraduate diploma in education, and where only trained Media Studies teachers are appointed to teach the subject. More commonly reported was the case in South Africa, where specialist teacher training for media education is negligible. As in other contexts, teachers of media tend to possess literature degrees and extrapolate their media teaching from their experience with working with literary texts. This is not only inadequate but often leaves teachers ill-equipped to deal with the more sociological or practical dimensions of media education that most countries believe are important.

Even where media education is firmly established in the formal school sector, there is frequently a lack of specialist training for teachers. In some European contexts (e.g. Denmark, England, Scotland), specialist media courses are now developing in schools. Yet this development has not been met with an increase in specialist teacher training. In England, for example, there is only one specialist course in initial teacher training (for Media with English), with places for a few students each year. Given that more than 50,000 students follow specialist media courses between 14 and 18, the level of teacher training is very far from adequate to meet the demand for specialist teachers. There are Masters degrees and a number of distance learning diplomas available, but even this is not in line with the level of expansion in schools.

This lack of training is being redressed in all kinds of ways. The world-wide growth of courses in media and communications at undergraduate level means that some teachers will now enter media teaching with a specialist background. There are a few examples of postgraduate courses (e.g. USA) or distance learning (e.g. Spain, England) being established to support the professional development of media teachers. But most often training is provided by less formal organizations and without substantial support from a centralized source.

In some instances, training is provided by networks of teachers themselves: in New Zealand, Australia and Canada, for example, there are lively specialist subject associations which produce resources, run conferences and maintain dialogue among practicing teachers via newsletters or journals. The dearth of training in other contexts has been addressed through a range of publishing initiatives: in Japan, China and Hong Kong, for example, commercial publishers have begun to address the lack of resources and training teachers face. One of the most repeated concerns here was that future training should focus on ways of applying media education principles to the new technologies, in order to counter the instrumental and uncritical approach that is seen to dominate much ICT training.

**Needs and Obstacles**

To sum up, it would seem that there are several conditions that need to be met if media education is really going to happen.

The respondents in our survey all recognized the importance of formal recognition at government level of the importance of media education as a key entitlement
for all students. Most reported that their government pays some lip-service to the ways in which students need to be equipped to cope with life in a multi-media world. But many fewer respondents were able to cite government mandates which specify where this might be located in the curriculum and how specifically it might take place.

One of the main needs expressed by many respondents was for an authoritative definition of the aims and conceptual basis of media education. While practitioners are generally very clear on these points, they have been less successful in communicating their ideas to politicians; and as a result, politicians tend to view media education with suspicion, or at least with indifference.

Even in contexts where media education has quite a strong and established place in the curriculum, the lack of clarity regarding assessment often reduces it to a marginal subject that can be sprinkled across other subject areas and provided for without any specialist training. Most damning of all is that in a country like Australia, with quite a well established media education history, qualifications in media education are not counted for university entry. The low status of the subject continues to make it difficult to argue for change, leaving educators in a position of lobbying for an area that has no formal recognition.

As we have noted, the most commonly expressed need was for specialist teacher training; and specifically for media education to be implanted in the first phase of teacher education. Continuous training is necessary to upgrade skills and practices, and to support the ongoing exchange of resources and strategies.

The absence of research was also registered as an obstacle. Most education systems that are centrally organized or that have centralized assessment tend to be innately conservative in their provision. Rigorous, academic research about the value and effectiveness of media education is necessary if governments are to be persuaded to change policy. Although such research has been undertaken in some contexts, it needs to be more effectively disseminated.

Finally, the success of media education appeared to depend very much on grassroots organization among teachers themselves, in the form of local self-help groups and workshops as well as regional or national subject associations. Like any form of curriculum innovation, media education is unlikely to be sustained over the longer term if teachers are not able to take ownership of it.

Ultimately, however, all of these elements are needed. Promoting and developing media education depends upon the presence of a series of inter-dependent factors, and on partnerships between a range of interested parties: it is not something that can just be mandated from on high by government, or alternatively just grown from the grassroots – it needs recognition and support at all levels. Without sustained training, teachers will be unable to take ownership of what they are doing; without research, it will be impossible for us to know what works and what does not; without properly funded resources, we will be competing for attention with the much more attractive offerings of the media themselves; without clear means of assessment, it will be impossible for us to give status to what students are learning; and without central government recognition, what we do will always seem like an uphill struggle.
As media educators, we need to be clear about our aims, to seek sympathetic partners where we can find them, and to recognize that we have to work together on several fronts at once. This is an urgent and important task, but it would be wrong to pretend that it is going to be easy.

**Note**

The full report of the UNESCO research was presented at a UNESCO Seminar on Youth Media Education held in Seville, Spain, on 15th–17th February, 2002. This chapter is based on a paper delivered to the Korean Society for Journalism and Communication Studies in Seoul, Korea, in September 2003.
Young People and Participatory Culture: Reconceptualising Australian Media Education for 21st Century Citizenship

Michael Dezuanni

Media education has recently emerged as an important new curriculum area in many Asian countries. In contrast, Australia has been represented as a “world leader” in this field, with a long established tradition (Brereton, 2001, p. 14). However, the experiences of teachers and researchers in Australian classrooms suggest that media education’s most fundamental claims need to be reconsidered (Turnbull, 2006). This chapter outlines some of the limitations of traditional media education discourses, suggesting they have often failed to recognise young people’s relationship with media as active and varied. For example, the direct participation in media culture made possible by new media forms draws attention to the inadequacies of traditional approaches to media education. Mallan’s and Pearce’s acknowledgement that “youth” cannot be “seen as a fixed, pre-existing entity or a unified image” (Mallan, 2003, p. X), suggests that media education interventions should avoid a “one size fits all” approach. Towards the end, the chapter will cite a case study relating to the study of video games in a media and technology studies classroom, which attempted to address young people’s involvement in participatory media culture. The extent to which Judith Butler’s post structuralist theory of performativity might elucidate the media learning that occurred in the unit will be discussed in the context of reconceptualizing media education’s objectives for participatory media culture and twenty-first century citizenship. It is hoped that the accounts of media education outlined here will be useful to educators and policy makers in countries that are just beginning to develop approaches to media education.

Media educators’ attempts to intervene in the relationship between young people and media can be described as various media education discourses. In Australian media education four broad discourses have competed for prominence in different historical contexts: inoculation, discrimination, demystification and participation. These have variously argued that media education should develop students’ ability to: resist media; discriminate between so-called high and low quality media; develop analytical skills and theoretical understandings about the media’s social and cultural roles; enhance students’ media production skills; or that practical production
work leads to broader theoretical and critical understandings. These approaches can be explained by social and cultural theories relating to the roles the media play in society and in relation to individuals’ identities. These theories generally originated in Europe and were adapted through proponents of cultural and media studies in Australia and subsequently informed media education policy, curriculum design and classroom practices.

Michel Foucault defined a discourse as “the group of statements that belong to a single system of formation”, allowing him to speak of “clinical discourse, economic discourse, the discourse of natural history, psychiatric discourse” (Foucault, 1972, pp. 107–108). He conceived discourses as “both objects and events, historical traces left behind in words...” (O’Farrell, 2005, p. 78). These “traces” take the form of both objects like policy documents and events such as professional practices. His interest was in identifying the relations at work within particular discourses and the relation of those discourses to other discourses; why discourses formed in particular ways and what they excluded; and how discourses aimed to make themselves appear natural rather than constructed (Foucault, 1972, pp. 28–29).

Following Foucault, versions of media education can be seen as different discourses that have produced policies and processes specific to particular times, places and cultural settings. From this perspective, it is productive to consider media education as a discontinuous set of practices and policies, rather than as a cohesive history or tradition, and to identify attempts to create cohesion as relying on particular hegemonic formations. That is, formations which aim to create consensus amongst the majority of participants, by appealing to “common sense” beliefs about the relationship between young people and media (Gramsci, 1971). Furthermore, in recognising media education’s aim to intervene in the relationship between media and young people, it is useful to consider Foucault’s theory of disciplinary power as it relates to discursive practices (Foucault, 1984, pp. 197–199). He suggests disciplinary power aims to “train” individuals to be both the objects and instruments of its exercise at the micro levels of society, with the aim of normalising behaviour in relation to particular discourses (Foucault, 1984, p. 188). From this perspective, media education policies and practices can be considered instruments of regulation in which subject knowledge is used to expose the inadequacies of young people in relation to media and to produce young people as knowledgeable subjects of discourses.

This approach reveals that with the exception of some versions of the participation discourse, attempts to intervene in the relationship between young people and media use deficit models to suggest that they are powerless and that education’s role is to protect or empower them. Consequently, the educational strategies proposed often require students to work within discourses that position them in a range of broader social and cultural contexts in which they potentially reproduce existing hegemonic formations (Buckingham, 2003, p. 119). The following examples provide clear evidence of how this has occurred within Australian media education.
Inoculation

With varying degrees of emphasis, some Australian media educators have always been motivated to inoculate young people from the supposed harmful and degrading effects of media. Although inoculation has long since been rejected by leading media education scholars as a productive or defensible educational approach (Buckingham, 2003, p. 7), it continues to have currency with some advocacy groups, some politicians and in the popular media, with continuing moral panics about the perceived dangers of new media technologies and the romanticisation of the literary canon. For example, advocacy group Young Media Australia draws almost exclusively on media effects research to highlight the presumed detrimental effects of media and promotes limiting children’s access to “harmful” media (Young Media Australia, 2007b). In most Australian states the education authorities have blocked students’ access to websites such as Myspace and YouTube for fear that young people might access harmful material (Colley, 2006) and in 2006 Australia’s Prime Minister described popular culture as “trash” that has no place in the classroom (ABC Radio, 2006).

In Australia, this discourse can partly be traced back to the early influence of two politically opposed theoretical approaches that shared a belief in the importance of high culture, the British “Cultural Heritage” tradition and Marxist “Frankfurt School” theorists. The former was associated with Mathew Arnold’s 1869 Culture and Anarchy (Arnold, 1994/1869), but refined for educational purposes in F.R. Leavis’ and Denys Thompson’s 1933 book Culture and Environment (Leavis & Thompson, 1933). They argued that teachers needed to intervene in the relationship between young people and popular culture in order to illustrate the purported poverty of media in comparison to literature and other art forms. Teachers were to educate their students to recognise the supposed superiority of good quality literature and art (Leavis & Thompson, 1933, p. 5). This would be achieved through “inoculation”, alerting students to popular culture’s faults by analysing it through various types of classroom media activities (Thompson, 1973).

From the 1930s to the 1960s, the “Frankfurt School” theorists used the classical Marxist theory of false consciousness to argue that “mass culture” maintained social authority and led to conformity through a process of pacification, by providing the masses with false pleasures and comforts (Marcuse, 1986, p. 12). They argued that the ‘culture industry’ was responsible for the products and processes of ‘mass culture’ which were marked by homogeneity and predictability (Storey, 1997, p. 105). Unlike high culture, the culture industry produced experiences that failed to critique society or lead people to desire a better world. Such experiences supposedly undermined resistance and depoliticised the working class because the focus on entertainment distracted workers from the true conditions of their existence. However, both these approaches were criticised by media theorists for failing to take account of the everyday lived experiences of individuals in different social contexts as being central to the formation of “culture” (Turner, 1990, pp. 200–208). In relation to media education, these approaches failed to acknowledge young people’s
active participation in media culture and their ability to use popular culture in the formation of identity (Buckingham & Sefton-Green, 1994, pp. 124–126).

A third significant influence on protectionism was American social science “effects” research that included numerous projects from the 1930s to the 2000s. These studies aimed to prove a causal link or correlation between on-screen representations of violence and societal violence, and responded to concerns about the direct effects of media on audiences, especially children and the “lower classes” (Brereton, 2001, p. 173). Classic studies variously claimed: that laboratory experiments proved screen violence caused children to imitate violent behaviour (Bandura, 2006/1963); that violence on American television created a “mean world syndrome” – the view that society was violent and certain types of people, such as minorities and people from lower socio economic backgrounds were to blame (Gerbner, 2006); and that television was a drug that caused viewers, particularly children, to experience the effects of addiction (Winn, 1985).

Other theorists challenged this research, suggesting it was often influenced by particular ideological objectives and conducted in the context of moral panics about youth and their presumed social and cultural inadequacies (Gauntlett, 2005, pp. 146–147); and that the researchers were biased in favour of media effects (Weaver, 2006, p. 1; Gauntlett, 2005, p. 130). Furthermore, critics argued such research was not conducted in situated practice and could not validly produce data that reflected the social and cultural context of real world media use (Gauntlett, 2005, p. 15; Gunter, 1990, p. 91). Despite these criticisms, media effects research continues to be conducted and remains influential, particularly in the popular media and youth advocacy groups such as Young Media Australia (Young Media Australia, 2007a).

**Discrimination**

During the 1960s and 1970s the discrimination discourse was influential in Australian media education. It aimed to have students distinguish between more and less worthy examples of popular culture, particularly television, with the ultimate aim of developing more demanding media users. Several key textbooks (Cooke, 1972; Dwyer, 1971; Perkins, 1968, 1972) and a government report (Australian Parliament Senate Standing Committee on Education and the Arts, 1978) published at the time identified the need to help students move beyond their everyday media habits, which were seen to be potentially poor in standard, to more intellectually “challenging” media as education’s most important objective. This discourse was informed by theories associated with British “culturalism” during the 1950s and 1960s. For example, Richard Hoggart (Hoggart, 1984/1958) and Raymond Williams (Williams, 1961) argued that culture included not only examples of “good quality” cultural artefacts, but also popular culture and the lived experiences and agency of people in everyday contexts. Williams argued the role of educators was to help students make critical judgements about different forms
of culture, whether these were traditional texts or from the world of “ordinary communication” (Williams, 1966, p. 143).

Stuart Hall and Paddy Whannel developed this approach as a media education intervention in the 1964 book The Popular Arts, where they argued that students could be trained to discriminate between poor quality and “artistic” forms of popular culture (Hall & Whannel, 1967/64, p. 15). They included examples of analysis of various forms of popular art using a “critical method” that aimed to show how distinctions could be made between various media texts within popular culture. The book became very influential within media education because it provided many useful classroom strategies for studying the media (Buckingham, 2003, p. 7). However, the discrimination approach was criticised by media and cultural studies theorists who argued that it continued Leavisite elitism, despite recognising some popular culture as worthwhile or “artistic” and that it did not provide an adequate framework for textual analysis (Masterman, 1980, pp. 18–19). It was argued that theories associated with structuralism, particularly semiology, provided a more valid analytical approach (Turner, 1990, p. 75).

Demystification

During the 1980s and 1990s many Australian media educators began to work within the demystification discourse, working from official curriculum documents that drew on trends in British cultural studies (Queensland Board of Secondary School Studies, 1981; Western Australian Education Department Curriculum Branch, 1982). This approach aimed to provide students with the ability to identify the ideological processes at work within media texts. It was informed by theories associated with Marxist structuralism that conceived individuals as the “subjects” of ideology. Structuralism was informed by semiology, which was based on the work of linguist Ferdinand de Saussure, and developed by a number of theorists, including Roland Barthes and Louis Althusser. It argued that language was historical and cultural, based on conventions of use within specific contexts, and therefore ideologically inscribed.

In Mythologies, Barthes provided examples of media and popular cultural analysis, arguing that semiology could be used to expose the hidden ideological processes at work within texts, particularly how they aimed to naturalise those ideological processes and “depoliticize” them (Barthes, 1972, p. 155). Althusser argued that ideology operated through the active process of individuals participating in institutions such as schools, organized religion, the family, the media and the culture industries that he called the Ideological State Apparatuses (ISAs). He suggested that ideology operated through an active self-deception undertaken by a subject in culture, who made cultural choices and adhered to the ideological implications of those choices (Althusser, 1971, pp. 162–170). These theories were relevant to media educators because they suggested that media and popular culture texts covertly delivered hidden ideological messages to young people who were already vulnerable to self-deception about the realities of life.
British media education scholar Len Masterman used these theories in his books *Teaching about Television* and *Teaching the Media* (Masterman, 1980, 1985) in which he argued media education’s primary objective was to empower students by developing their “critical autonomy”, or their ability to independently demystify the media:

> De-mystifying the world, seeing it not as a ‘given’ to be accepted, but as something to be critically worked on, to be shaped and changed by human agency, is a necessary pre-condition for a liberating educational praxis. (Masterman, 1985, p. 32)

The main target of Masterman’s intervention was television’s ideological function and its illusion of transparency, which he argued lead to the reproduction of dominant ideology (Masterman, 1980, p. 9). He proposed that the demystification of these processes was achievable through semiotic analysis and limited production practice in which students would replicate the process of developing “preferred” meanings (Masterman, 1980). This would enable students to raise their consciousness by learning how to identify, and reproduce, dominant ideology. This approach has been criticised for giving little credence to an audience’s ability to actively interpret messages without the educational intervention. For example, David Buckingham has argued:

> It seems to be assumed, not merely that students are suffering from ‘mystification’, but that they will somehow recognize the error of their ways once ideology is made visible and the ‘truth’ is revealed. The possibility that the ideology of a text might be perceived in different ways by different readers, or that there might be a negotiation or struggle over meaning in the classroom, is effectively ignored. (Buckingham, 1990, p. 7)

This reflects criticisms of structuralism, more generally, which suggest it fails to account for individual agency (Turner, 1990, p. 31).

**Participation**

Contemporary media education theorists in Australia and internationally have argued that discourses of deficiency fail to account for the complexity of young people’s relationships with media and therefore misconceive the role that media education should play in intervening in those relationships (Bragg, 2006, pp. 81–85). They argue young people’s active participation in media culture suggests they already have agency and that media education therefore needs to be reconceived. This reflects theories that acknowledge the proficiency of individuals in relation to popular culture that have argued it is often the context in which individual agency is enacted. Some theorists have argued that young people use media and popular culture to explore aspects of identity and to resist cultural forces. For example, during the 1970s scholars at the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) appropriated Antonio Gramsci’s theories because they believed he provided a framework to theorise the ways in which the ideas of both dominant and subordinate groups in society played a role in the formation of ideology through processes of negotiation (Hall, 1992, pp. 280, 282). Gramsci argued that for any
group in society to gain power, it must not only dominate through material force, but also gain consensus by showing “intellectual and moral leadership”, which often involved the incorporation of ideas from a broad range of groups.

This included the incorporation of the heterogenous “common sense” ideas of the popular masses, identifiable within folklore and popular culture, and rising “spontaneously” from within “everyday experience”, which Gramsci recognised as influential forms of political power (Gramsci, 1971, p. 199). According to Gramsci, social and political consensus, or hegemony, relied on recognising and accommodating the ideas, practices and principles of ordinary people. Turner suggested Gramsci’s theory of hegemony was important for media studies because it acknowledged the potential ideological and political role of all forms of popular culture, including media, through which popular ideas are expressed, debated and represented (Turner, 1990, p. 212). This provided the theoretical grounds to view participation with media in educational contexts as sites of cultural struggle rather than as opportunities for skills development or demystification.

The CCCS theorists used Gramsci’s theory of hegemony, along with structuralist and post structuralist theories to analyse various media forms, youth cultures and audience formations (Hall, 1980). Stuart Hall’s 1980 *Encoding and Decoding in Television Discourse* (Hall, 1980/90) theorised television as a site of negotiation of meaning, or what Hall referred to as the “‘politics of signification’ – the struggle in discourse…” . This was supported by David Morley’s *The Nationwide Audience* that applied dominant, negotiated and oppositional reading positions to situated audience research, suggesting that particular types of readings of a text were more likely to coalesce around communities of practice rather than along class lines (Morley, 1980). These approaches theorised media audiences as complex and active and directly opposed media effects and communications research (Turner, 1990, p. 89).

At the CCCS, youth subculture theorists identified young people’s active participation in media culture as a potential form of cultural resistance. For example, Dick Hebdige’s analysis of punk culture in *Subculture: The Meaning of Style* (Hebdige, 1979) argued that young people were engaged in a symbolic struggle over meaning in which they appropriated and reassigned symbols from hegemonic culture to disrupt it (Hebdige, 1979, p. 121). Although he showed that punk style was ultimately incorporated back into culture (Hebdige, 1979, pp. 92–99), the study demonstrated young people’s active participation in popular cultural processes, including the potential for resistance. Since the 1980s numerous re-workings of subculture theory within feminist studies, globalisation studies and new media studies have continued to theorise the relationship between young people and popular culture as characterised by active participation related to identity formation (Bennett, 2004).

Since the 1990s British media education theorist David Buckingham has applied cultural studies’ audience and subcultural theories to media education and has argued that young people participate directly in media culture to learn about it. For example, Buckingham and Julian Sefton-Green conceive of the relationship between young people and the media as dynamic and dialogic, although they recognise that there are always ideological implications:
From this perspective, the media are seen not as all powerful forces of socialisation but as symbolic resources which young people use in making sense of their experiences, in relation to others and in organising their daily lives. They offer opportunities for experimentation with alternative social identities, if only at the level of fantasy and aspiration – although of course the identities and perspectives that they make are far from neutral. (Buckingham & Sefton-Green, 1994, p. 10)

Buckingham suggests that media education should provide students with opportunities to explore their own constantly evolving social identities through reading and writing with media and then give them opportunities to reflect on this, which may lead to new insights and understandings about the role of the media in their lives. Essential to this process is students translating their knowledge from one language form to another. For example, talking or writing about practical production helps to make the knowledge gained from undertaking the production processes explicit. Conversely, being involved in production helps to make theoretical concepts clearer (Buckingham & Sefton-Green, 1994, p. 148).

This contrasts with the position of theorists such as Len Masterman who, in the 1980s, argued theory was more important than practical production, because student production risked reinforcing dominant ideology (Buckingham, 1995, pp. 6, 7). Buckingham insists production is crucial to students understanding key concepts related to media (Buckingham, 1995, p. 11). He argues that production work involves students directly in the process of exploring these concepts in relation to their own identities, rather than simply theorising about them:

...practical production has its own dynamic: it is a social space in which students can be sanctioned to explore their own identities and emotional investments in the media, in a way that is much more subjective and ‘playful’ than is the case with critical analysis (Buckingham, 1995, p. 12).

From this perspective, media education can be seen to actively encourage young people’s participation in media culture, potentially involving them in negotiation with hegemonic social formations. However, Buckingham warns against the claim that this will lead directly to empowerment and he and others challenge the idea of media education as a form of radical pedagogy (Buckingham, 1998, p. 11; Turnbull, 1998, p. 90). Instead, media education can more productively be seen as providing students opportunities for creativity, dialogue and the recognition of difference (Buckingham, 2003, p. 14; Green, 1998, pp. 189–194; Morgan, 1998, pp. 124–128).

United States theorist Henry Jenkins also characterises the relationship between individuals and media culture as being participatory. His research focuses on highly participative fans who appropriate from specific media products in ways that make them personally pleasurable and meaningful and that often involved a re-working of the text (Jenkins, 1992, pp. 162–177). Jenkins draws on Michel de Certeau’s concept of cultural “poaching” to suggest that fans use the raw materials of popular culture to create meanings and pleasures for themselves and to explore aspects of their identity: “They employ images and concepts drawn from mass culture texts to explore their subordinate status, to envision alternatives, to voice their frustrations and anger, and to share their new understandings with others” (Jenkins, 2006b, p. 60).
Furthermore, Jenkins argues that the development of online communities, digital media production tools, and online news and opinion resources such as blogs have “mainstreamed” fandom, leading to the development of a new participatory culture in western societies in which fans’ relationships with media texts have become more intense (Jenkins, 2006b, pp. 135, 136, 142). He suggests that in the new “convergence culture” producers and consumers interact with each other in media culture as participants in ways that were previously impossible. However, he warns that participants have different degrees of power in these systems, depending on access, expertise and economic status (Jenkins, 2006a, p. 3).

Drawing on Pierre Levy’s work, Jenkins also argues that one of the attributes of the new participatory culture is the evolution of “collective intelligence” in which fan cultures are sites of shared expertise, knowledge creation and meaning-making that can benefit the whole community, and potentially become forms of collective power:

The political effects of these fan communities come not simply through the production and circulation of new ideas (the critical reading of favourite texts), but also through access to new social structures (collective intelligence) and new models of cultural participation (participatory culture) (Jenkins, 2006a, p. 246).

However, he suggests that there is nothing inevitable about fan communities participating in broader social struggles, or even significantly benefiting individuals, but that one of the ways to encourage this potential is through media literacy education (Jenkins, 2006a, p. 259). He argues that media and technology education need to go beyond a focus on the mastery of skills to explore the contexts within which young people participate with media and therefore culture more broadly:

We are using participation as a term that cuts across educational practices, creative processes, community life, and democratic citizenship. Our goals should be to encourage youth to develop the skills, knowledge, ethical frameworks, and self-confidence needed to be full participants in contemporary culture (Jenkins, 2006a, p. 10).

Recently, other theorists have also described the relationship between individuals and media in terms of participation. Axel Bruns’ “produser” concept describes how the relationship between individuals and the internet allows users to make significant contributions to the production of media content, particularly within the field of news production (Bruns, 2005, pp. 53–55). Mizuko Ito describes Japanese youth cultures centred on manga and anime, involving participatory and critically reflective practices ranging from card trading to the amateur production and exchange of manga. She also raises questions about traditional distinctions between the producers and consumers of knowledge and culture (Ito, 2005, pp. 49–66). Andrew Burn and James Durren suggest that remixing media can be an effective and fun way to involve students in media analysis through production. They provide the example of re-editing commercially produced films to enable students to deconstruct and reconstruct texts to gain in-depth conceptual understandings of the texts (Burn, 2005, p. 289). Gerry Bloustien demonstrates that participation with digital video cameras and editing software allow teenage girls to explore their self-concept and to play
with different identity formations and argues that this has the potential to be liberating (Bloustien, 2003, p. 63). These examples illustrate diverse ways in which participatory approaches to media education might engage concepts of identity and citizenship.

Australian theorist John Hartley argues that participatory culture has political consequences and that we were living in an era of “Do it yourself (DIY) citizenship”: “In a period of consumer choice, computer-aided interactivity and post-identity politics, semiotic self-determination is emerging as a right, not just a market segment over-populated with early adopters...” (Hartley, 1999, p. 181). He also suggests that there is a connection between media culture and the ways in which people “perform themselves” through “creative identities” (Hartley, 2005, p. 112). He argues that contemporary subjectivity is a matter of choice, regulated by the expectations of others, and provides the example of reality television as an instance in which contestants perform themselves, but are regulated by the responses of other contestants and viewers of the program (Hartley, 2005, p. 113). Hartley’s theory reflects post-structuralist accounts of identity such as those theorised by Judith Butler (Butler, 1990) that have been used to describe the identity work individuals undertake when performing gender. Hartley’s work also suggests that in relation to participatory media culture, media education’s role is to challenge processes of regulation. From this perspective, post structuralist frameworks such as Butler’s theory of performativity might be productively employed to theorise young people’s agency within participatory media culture and to explain students’ responses to media learning.

Butler suggests that the human body gains meaning within discourse (Butler, 1990, p. 92) and that it is through cultural performance, as an ongoing discursive practice, that gendered identities are formed, “… if gender is something that one becomes – but can never be – then gender is itself a kind of becoming or activity, … an incessant and repeated action of some sort” (Butler, 1990, p. 112). Therefore, there are no core or essential identities, apart from those that are expressed through bodily actions. Individual agency is located within the system of discourse and it is impossible to step outside discourse to oppose or alter it. However, Butler argues that because “signification is not a founding act, but rather a regulated process of repetition” it is open to intervention and resignification (Butler, 1990, p. 145, original emphasis). It is through the very repetition of signification that opportunities for variation in signification, and hence agency, become possible (Butler, 1990, p. 145):

The critical task is, rather, to locate strategies of subversive repetition enabled by those constructions, to affirm the local possibilities of intervention through participating in precisely those practices of repetition that constitute identity and, therefore, present the immanent possibility of contesting them (Butler, 1990, p. 147).

This reinforces Foucauldian theories of power that suggest it is impossible to step outside the disciplinary practices of social control associated with institutional discourses, and yet individuals and groups assert power within these practices, potentially changing the nature of the discourse (Foucault, 1984/77, p. 64). From
this perspective, individuals’ participation in media culture provides opportunities to perform the self in hegemonic or variational ways and particular types of media education activities may encourage (or discourage) performative variation. The media education classroom potentially provides the cultural space and technological access through which the “DIY citizen” can experiment with identity by performing the self is less regulated contexts than usual, and in which they see others performing “citizenship” in unexpected and provocative ways. The need for this to occur in local contexts suggests that a singular media education discourse is unlikely to be successful and participation should not be constructed as a specific set of strategies that are universally applicable. Viewed this way, media education’s aim is not to ‘empower’ young people through particular disciplinary strategies, but to provide localised opportunities for democratic participation. In such contexts, hegemonic media representations and institutional processes may potentially be negotiated with in creative ways. This may lead to a form of social proficiency that is essential for successful citizenship.

Year 10 Video Games Unit At IBC: Participatory Media Education in Practice

One attempt to recognise young people as “DIY citizens” in a media education context, was undertaken at Independent Boy’s College1 (IBC), a middle class Catholic boys’ school in inner city Brisbane for ten to seventeen-year-olds. As the media teacher in the school, I worked with the technology specialist to implement an “Immersion Unit” with a video games focus. It was one of several three-week intensive units chosen by year ten students as a special program of study during which there was a flexible timetable, no uniforms and non-traditional assessment. This unique structure provided the flexibility to integrate media and technology education objectives and approaches and the opportunity to work in collaboration with a technology education specialist. This was desirable because I wanted to explore how creative media units with a technology skills focus could retain aspects of media education’s critical agenda. As Schwartz argues, there is a danger that the introduction of new media technologies may lead to a refocus on skills training at the expense of theoretical understandings about media (Schwartz, 2006, p. 52).

We conceived of the classroom as a space in which theory, play and skills development would be integrated. We consciously aimed to achieve this through both the physical environment and a virtual learning environment with the objective of breaking down barriers between formal learning and play. The physical environment was a typical high school computer laboratory that was converted into a space for both work and play. Paper was used to cover the hallway windows of the classroom so that it became more private and students were allowed to bring their games consoles

1All original names have been changed to maintain anonymity. The aliases chosen by the students for use online have been used instead of their actual names.
to use during breaks and for some activities. At times it was difficult to distinguish between work and play as students moved between the consoles and computers while analysing and designing games.

Learning also occurred online in a virtual space called the “IBC Moo”, a Multi Object Orientation space which allowed students to create their own web space, chat with other students, share work, work in teams and complete tasks. This could be accessed from school and home, and students used this space at night to continue the interactions they began during the day, further breaking down the distinctions between work and leisure. Students personalised the Moo with artwork and found images, making the online learning space less academic and more familiar. Specific learning episodes also took place on visits to a video games production company and a games arcade. The students also worked at a technology training company learning specific animation skills for five days. Through these strategies, we aimed to break down the distinctions between home and school, leisure and work.

From a media education perspective, the unit activities aimed to move beyond skills development to challenge aspects of the relationship between teenage boys and video games relating to hegemonic relations and practices. This reflected the rationale of the Queensland Senior syllabus in *Film, Television and New Media* (Queensland Studies Authority, 2005), which says: “Critical literacy skills, used within the techniques and processes of moving-image media production and use, enable students to think, question, create and communicate... These skills are not only of vocational value, but they also facilitate informed and social participation” (Queensland Studies Authority, 2005, p. 1). The unit aimed to challenge hegemonic gender and race relations, and discourses reflecting managerial practices and economic structures favourable to what Fairclough has termed “new capitalism” (Fairclough, 2003, pp. 4, 5). That is, the institutional media processes and practices that privilege competition and economic success over individual creativity and social participation. This contrasted significantly with technology based activities which reinforced students’ existing technology and video games knowledge and skills, and which were forms of capital within the students’ masculine culture. The media education activities aimed to free up the regulation of these relations and practices to allow students to explore the potential for video games to be used by different people in different ways and for games to be designed for diverse purposes.

The unit was planned without the application of Judith Butler’s post structuralist theory of performativity that potentially provides a framework for an approach to media education that recognises young people’s agency within participatory culture, without ignoring hegemonic structures (Dezuanni, 2006). However, Butler’s theories can be brought to bear on the activities and the work the students produced during the unit to indicate which types of activities are more likely to lead to performative variation, where students’ responses are considered examples of performativity (Dezuanni, 2006). Preliminary analysis of student blog reflections suggests that the variational performance of masculinities is reliant on the opportunities to experience difference afforded by the activities themselves. For example, in one activity students were required to work in groups to design and draw a character for a specific video game genre and audience. It aimed to encourage students to
consider genre conventions, audience and representations and is the type of activity often designed for students in media education classrooms to develop “critical skills”. Despite the teachers’ intentions, this activity encouraged hegemonic performances of masculinity, largely because the activity itself permitted the reiteration of gender categories.

<Dogolas’>² team, “Final Fantasies”, was required to design a character for a role playing game (RPG) for 18-year-old females. In his blog reflection, <Dogolas> expressed the ease with which he thought the group was able to target a female audience:

Since my team members and I feel like we constantly play RPGs we knew the basic concept we just needed to go inside the mind of a female on “why would I buy the particular RPG”³ (Dogolas).

Agency belongs to the all male team in this reflection. <Dogolas> discursively constructs masculinity through expertise in game play and power over the female mind. The team has a relationship of solidarity, it is claimed, through shared game play, and through working together to reach a common goal. The implication is that regular game play has allowed the mastering of the concept of RPGs and that this is easily transferable to mastering female preferences. The metaphor “to go inside the mind of a female” is suggestive of exposure and the objectification of the female mind. It suggests exploration, conquest and colonisation, particularly read in the context of the activity, which required the students to target a female audience and exploit it for commercial gain. Despite the intention that this activity aimed to help students to somehow become more critical of institutional targeting and audience exploitation, it actually provided an opportunity for the hegemonic performance of masculinity, through insisting that the male students target a female audience.

In contrast, an activity completed the following day demonstrated that it is possible to design learning activities that create the potential for variation in the performance of masculinity. It involved students in a live online chat about gender and video games with female university students. The year ten students were located at school and the female students at university. Each team had its own chat room and different female students visited the different rooms to discuss the topic with the male students. This activity had a media education focus in that the teachers believed it would broaden the students’ perspective on gender and video games.

This activity brought the students into direct contact with people they would rarely encounter in their all boys school context – female university students. It also introduced a new space, not regulated by the discourses of IBC, and the activity was completed specifically for the purpose of promoting discussion, which would expose the male students to different perspectives. It was open ended in the sense

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²To retain the anonymity of the students, I have used the pseudonyms they chose to use for their online identities, rather than their real names.
³Students, reflections have been left uncorrected. Therefore they are likely to include grammar, spelling and punctuation errors.
that there were no “correct” answers. After the session, <Rhysay> focused on what he had learnt about games and sexism:

I almost always agreed with what Natasha had to say, as she had quite a knowledge of what was the purpose of video games and their relation with sexism. One of the things I learnt today was that, just because Tomb Raider gave precedence to a main female character, it still didn’t necessarily appeal to females (Rhysay).

In this example agency is shared between the participants. In the first phrase “I” <Rhysay> has agency as he gives legitimacy to Natasha’s point of view. In the second phrase, agency is shifted to Natasha as her knowledge of games and sexism is recognised: “she had quite a knowledge”. This leads <Rhysay> to suggest that he has learnt something, if not directly from Natasha (he does not say she taught him), at least from the overall interaction. In the second sentence, agency is given to Tomb Raider over the “main female character”. However, this is qualified in the next phrase in which Tomb Raider doesn’t “necessarily appeal to females”. The qualification is possible due to <Rhysay’s> new knowledge of the game and female players, resulting from his interaction with Natasha. This is significant because she is given a degree of status in Rhysay’s reflection. Sexism is marginalised and <Rhysay’s> performance of masculinity is variational, as he describes the possibility for different male and female responses to video games. The analysis of blog responses to these two activities suggests teachers need to be aware of their own reliance on hegemonic discourses if they want students to vary their performances. The second task was open-ended, less reliant on correctness, it was dialogic, and it provided the unique experience of hearing distinctly different voices and this provided the potential for variation in the performance of masculinity.

Further analysis of data collected from this unit reinforces that some activities were more likely to lead to performative variation than others. For example, an area called “Speaker’s Square” was created as an online space in which students were encouraged to respond to controversial issues related to video games. Speaker’s Square was intended as one of the critical media education activities to be undertaken by the Immersion Unit students. The students were required to respond to stimuli and give their opinions about particular video games related issues. At a minimum, the students were required to visit each of the stimulus items in Speaker’s Square, view and listen to the stimulus and write a response to the stimulus item. They were also required to revisit their own responses and other students’ responses a day later and add any additional comments they wished to make to other students’ responses. It was hoped that the students might take part in an ongoing exchange about the topic, in an ongoing “dialogue”, in a manner similar to message board conversations, and that a range of viewpoints would be put forward.

The stimulus for the video games and gender activity in Speaker’s Square was a short video clip of a young woman discussing gender representations in video games and the lack of video games designed for females:

It’s ridiculous. It’s skinny girls with big boobs in bikinis being shot at by guys with huge guns driving around in fast cars. It’s 2004 – women have gotten past that stage. I think it’s just ridiculous. They’re trying to tell us that women get a fair representation in these sort of
games. But really, Lara Croft? I’m sorry, but she really doesn’t represent any kind of true woman. Seriously, games designers, listen to this. We make up 51% of the population. We want something to do in these games rather than just stand around in a bikini. We’re women. We’re strong. We can do stuff. We just don’t have to sit back and watch.

When we designed the Speaker’s Square activity, we assumed that giving a young female gamer a “voice” by presenting her in a video clip would somehow require the male students to consider her point of view and perhaps become more “critical” in their responses than if I had simply asked the students to respond to a question about sexism and video games. Our assumption was that they would listen to her opinion and respond in a way that acknowledged her perspective. This is an approach consistent with many theory-based media education activities about representation in which students are asked to consider an issue from someone else’s point of view. However, a Butlerian theorisation of the likely process at work in responses to activities such as Speaker’s Square suggests that the Immersion Unit students are unlikely to put their masculinities at risk in this type of context.

Butler’s theory of recognition (Butler, 2004, 2005) is useful for the analysis of student responses to this stimulus because their responses are accounts to other Immersion Unit students and the male Immersion Unit teachers. Butler argues that individuals undertake performative acts to become recognisable to other individuals in specific contexts. Therefore, the Immersion Unit students’ responses to tasks like Speaker’s Square might be understood as instances of identity formation through which they aim to be recognisable to other students. In the Immersion Unit this is likely to include being recognisably masculine.

This activity contrasts with the online chat with female university students the Immersion Unit students were involved in. While the chat involved the students in an open dialogue with female gamers, and subsequent responses to the teachers in their blog reflections, the Speaker’s Square activity required written exchanges between male students in an online space that was read by all the Immersion Unit students. Therefore, Speaker’s Square is a different type of activity from the online chat and students potentially gave different accounts of themselves in each. Furthermore, the students’ responses may be informative about ways in which the Speaker’s Square activity created the conditions for students to potentially vary gender norms and how this compares to other types of activities such as the online chat.

The following response by <Bob> was similar to several written by the students in response to this task who did not choose anonymity, and which suggests female objectification is harmless and all in good fun:

Sexism is evident in most games of today’s society, for e.g. the ever so popular GTA series. Sexism is very common towards females because of a simple reason. The male markets for the video game industry is so much bigger, and so giving a portrayal of male dominance and including women as sex objects, the game is appealing to men and boys alike. While a whole gender is being ignored, it really doesn’t matter as females who play games are such a minority in the first place. (Bob).

<Bob> gives an account of himself as hegemonically masculine in this response most likely because this task requires him to be recognisable to other male students in the Immersion Unit community. Although he makes reference to the relationship
between commercialisation and the representation of male dominance and objectification of females, his response does not suggest that this is unfair. Furthermore, he does not make a connection to broader social and cultural discourses of gender relations by acknowledging potentially inequitable and exploitative processes in operation and he misses or ignores the central point of the video clip stimulus that such representations are inaccurate and that the majority of games do not meet female gamers’ needs.

The use of the term “sexism” in this response is a repetition of the word from the framing of the task in Speaker’s Square, and was not used by the female gamer in the stimulus. We used the term because we believed it would be more familiar to Year Ten students than “gender representation”, “gender exploitation” or “gender inequality”. <Bob> subsequently uses it as a term to stand in for complex social relationships and to “gloss over” the social consequences and the inequity of inaccuracy in representation, exploitation and objectification. The repetition of the word allows <Bob> to acknowledge the process of gender representation, but to ignore its consequences. His response treats “sexism” as an acceptable, logical, natural and common sense outcome of having a predominantly male audience. In other words, “sexism” is used as part of the repetition of hegemonic masculinity rather than part of the variation of masculinility.

However, other students responded to this activity in ways that showed they were willing to put forward broader viewpoints than those usually included in the hegemonic masculinity of the IBC Immersion Unit context. For example, <Jake> completely rejected the Grand Theft Auto series of games, which was highly popular in the Immersion Unit community, partly on the basis of its “sexism”:

I believe that there is sexism in most games, but not all of them. The GTA series is a big one in this area, as someone has already said, which is one of the reasons I think the games are a waste of time, money and shelf space (Jake original emphasis).

<Jake’s> choice not to play the GTA games can be considered variational because he implies that he does not want to support a game that is sexist in such a “big” way. He brings himself into being as someone who is not willing to repeat sexist gender norms to the extent that they are repeated in the GTA games. <Jake’s> refusal to play the GTA games is perhaps the ultimate goal for what many media educators would aspire to for their students: that is, the ability to make an ethical decision to condemn an example of media that is exploitative. However, in most classroom circumstances it is unlikely such responses will be forthcoming due to the students’ need to remain recognisable to others.

My exploration of various students’ responses to the Speaker’s Square activity indicates that there were a range of responses from students who seemed to be openly hostile toward the idea that video games culture should be less masculine through to students who openly demonstrated sophisticated understandings of gender relations in the broader community. The students read responses from at least a few of their peers that varied from those they would usually expect to hear or see. However, the students’ responses to the activity reinforce that when it comes to students’ subjectivities, generalised assumptions cannot be made about
how individuals will respond. For this reason, it seems media educators need to be open to the likelihood that no single activity will lead to performative variation on the part of all students and that different activities will create the potential for variation for different students in different ways.

Overall, the unit provided students with opportunities to perform their identities in multiple ways as games players, designers, producers and cultural analysts and they performed projected identities in relation to possible careers related to games culture. It recognised the value of students’ participation in media culture through both critical response and practical production, which aimed to be less regulatory than usual and this seems to be an approach that warrants further development and exploration. There are questions about how such an approach to media education might be represented in curriculum policy. However, it is clear from the work of Jenkins, Ito, Bruns, Burn, Durren and Bloustien described above that researchers and practitioners are already finding ways to work within participative media cultures to perform themselves in both hegemonic and variational ways. The challenge for media educators is to design curriculum that is less disciplinary in terms of having pre-conceived ideas of what students should be thinking or producing that simultaneously challenges students to be open to heterogeneity and encourages participation in diverse communities. Students should see how things are being done differently by others so that the specific communities they belong to do not become the only identity performances they experience. As an objective for media education intervention, performative variation should be the end result of young people engaging in new participative communities, where they experience various kinds of “collective intelligence” and in which social proficiency is essential for democratic processes.

**Conclusion**

This chapter aimed to describe the main discourses of Australian media education and the ways in which particular theories of the relationship between young people and media have suggested particular types of disciplinary intervention. These discourses have lead to the production of particular types of policy documents, curriculum resources and classroom practices. It has shown that traditionally these discourses have relied on conceptions of young people as deficient in relation to media and have therefore aimed to alter the behaviour of students. It has suggested it may be productive to avoid creating specific discourses of media education as disciplinary interventions, but rather to respond to local circumstances in ways that are appropriate to harness the power young people already have in the cultural process to show how it can be further utilised for active citizenship. In particular, it suggests that new media are allowing young people to participate in new ways and that this participation requires social proficiency as well as technical proficiency, and media education has a specific role to play in developing this capability. Providing students with opportunities to experience performative variation seems to provide a productive means of developing social proficiency and warrants further investigation.
References


A Success Story: Media Teaching in New Zealand

Geoff Lealand

Nestled at the bottom of the globe and far distant from Asia, but increasingly aligned with countries such South Korea, Japan and the People’s Republic of China through trade, tourism and immigration, New Zealand is acutely aware of its place on the periphery, and its shared interests in the Asia-Pacific rim.

One of these shared interests is the fostering of a media literate citizenry and the incorporation of media teaching in the school curriculum. New Zealand is in the vanguard of such efforts. The numerous reasons for this can be revealed by testing them against John Pungente’s ‘Criteria for A Successful Media Education Program’, as posted on the Center for Media Literacy website. This document, developed by a leading Canadian educator and a long time advocate for media literacy, provides a template of the factors which are necessary for the development of a successful media education programme.

In respect of New Zealand, the critical difference is that such criteria, to a greater or lesser extent, have been achieved on a national and broadly implemented basis. This is a rare occurrence as more frequently media education/literacy programmes have been implemented on a partial basis: on a provincial or state-wide basis (as in New Mexico in the USA, Ontario in Canada, or Queensland in Australia), or a regional or city-basis. Nation-wide initiatives are less common. The United Kingdom is another example, with over 57,000 students taking Film/Media Studies within GCSE and 16+ qualifications in 2006. In the case of both the United Kingdom and New Zealand, the provision of Media Studies on a national basis is dependent on the presence of a receptive framework.

Such a framework usually involves the presence of national curricula structures, or other mechanisms for implementing and moderating educational programmes. Ideally, such frameworks should permit equitable access to all students in formal education within the nation-state. Such is the case in New Zealand, where the National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA) is the primary leaving

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1 At www.medialiteracy.org/reading_room/article118.html. accessed 6 March 2008.
qualification for secondary school leavers.³ Media Studies has been an established subject within the NCEA framework since 2000,⁴ and is one of the reasons why Media Studies has been able to find a legitimate place in New Zealand schooling.

It is just one significant achievement in Pungente’s nine-point list of the factors which provide the fertile conditions for growth. This factor and the following eight factors are examined here;

**Factor 1.** Media Education, like other innovative programs, must be a grassroots movement and teachers need to take a major initiative in lobbying for this.

Media teaching in New Zealand can claim a genuinely ‘grass roots’ history and status. The initial impetus for attention to media elements in formal education came from a small group of highly-motivated teachers in New Zealand schools and universities, beginning in 1975 with the introduction of Film Studies at the University of Auckland (through the pioneering efforts of Roger Horrocks), with film teaching being smuggled into the English curriculum in schools.

In the following decade, a mix of Educational Media, Cultural Studies, Film and Television Studies and Media Studies began in various tertiary institutions; initiatives led by particular academics who were seeking to radicalize the curriculum, or merely wishing to share their love of film and other media. In 1983, the Association of Film and Television Teachers – later to become the National Association of Media Educators (NAME) – was formed. Described by Horrocks (2007, 14) as ‘a grass-roots network of high school teachers who share advice and resources’, NAME developed as a focus for lobbying and professional development and, in 2008, remains as the major driver of media teaching in New Zealand schools.

Also in 1983, the newly-introduced *English Curriculum: Statement of Aims, Forms 3–5* included a visual language strand (‘watching, viewing and shaping’) as one of its three primary objectives. This allowed for teachers to legitimately introduce or extend the study of static images (photography, print advertising) and moving images (television, film) within English, laying the ground for the emergence of Media Studies as a coherent subject area.⁵

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³The New Zealand school system (a mixture of state-funded and private schools) is divided into three stages of schooling: all children begin primary school when they turn 5 and remain there until they turn 10 or 11. Many then go on to two years at intermediate schools, and then begin their secondary (or high) schooling at age 13. They can spend up to five years in secondary schooling (Years 9 to 13), before going on to tertiary education (university or polytechnic), or joining the workforce.

⁴New Zealand secondary schools have experienced eight years of Media Studies (Unit Standards) and five years of Media Studies (Achievement Standards), within the NCEA framework. Unit Standards, which have a more vocational-skills emphasis, are now less frequently taught, as they only provide for Achieved/Not Achieved assessment. Achievement Standards provide a different set of achievement objectives, in that they offer Excellence/Merit/Achieved/Not Achieved options.

⁵It is important to draw distinctions between the uses of various concepts used here, despite the tendency to use them interchangeably. *Media education* means the teaching of media elements within long-established curriculum, such as teaching about the aesthetics and purpose of advertising (print advertising; television advertising) within English. *Media Studies* is a stand-alone...
By 2006, a significant number of students were taking Media Studies in New Zealand schools. In that year, there were 26,641 entries in Level Two NCEA Media Studies Achievement Standards, 16,350 entries in Level Three NCEA Media Studies Achievement Standards, and 303 students taking Media Studies Scholarship. There were an additional 4,478 entries in NCEA Media Studies Unit Standards. New Zealand media teachers teach to these assessment tools, moderate and modify them on a regular basis, set external exams and mark them, provide guidelines and exemplars for the internally (school) assessed work, and generally maintain a firm control over the content and delivery of Media Studies in New Zealand schools.

Teacher involvement in NAME remains ‘grass-roots’ in that it is an organization run by and for teachers. Funded through individual subscriptions and some sponsorship, its activities depend on the voluntary input of its members, even though there is an increasing level of incidental support, such as teacher release for training days or the revision of NCEA Achievement Standards, the commissioning of resources by the Ministry of Education and other institutions and – most importantly – the funding of advisory positions in Media Studies. NAME is the major ‘client’ organization in any discussions between education policy-makers and media teachers; but it also retains a high level of independence, in terms of shaping resources and assessment tools to suit the needs of media teachers, and in creating its own professional development opportunities.

**Factor 2.** Educational authorities must give clear support to such programs by mandating the teaching of Media Studies within the curriculum, establishing guidelines and resource books, and by making certain that curricula are developed and that materials are available.

The two government bodies involved in the development of Media Studies in New Zealand schools are the Ministry of Education and the New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA). The Ministry takes responsibility for maintaining Media subject area (and is usually capitalized), drawing on disciplines such as Sociology, Literary Theory and Political Science but having developed its own content, interpretative tools and focus. It can include, for example, the investigation of media forms such as film, television, computer games, the internet, news media and so on. There is considerable attention to media texts but as much attention is paid to systems of production, distribution and consumption.

*Media literacy* is a term of more recent vintage (with North American origins), primarily used by policy-makers (such as Ofcom in the United Kingdom) in their efforts to encourage higher levels of awareness and knowledge about newer and older media, in the broad citizenry. However, it is increasingly coming to be equivalent to *media education* but indicates educational initiatives that do not always have to occur within formal settings.

I have used *media teaching*, in this chapter, as a short-hand term that can include all of these possible approaches.

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6Because students are able to take a mix of Level Two and Three Media Studies Achievement Standards, as part of their overall NCEA portfolio, these figures do not necessarily equate to student numbers – except in the case of Scholarship, which is the highest level of assessment available in secondary schools. In 2006, 303 academically-inclined sat Media Studies Scholarship, and 63 Scholarships were awarded. (Figures supplied by the Qualifications Division of the New Zealand Qualifications Authority, November 2007).
Studies within the overall objectives of secondary school teaching in New Zealand, whilst NZQA have responsibility for the administration of Unit Standards and Achievement Standards, as well as facilitating the moderation and revision of assessment tools.

Their involvement has officially mandated Media Studies as a subject in the senior years of secondary schooling (Years 12 and 13). Media elements also remain an important strand (as Visual Language) in the national English curriculum.

In November 2007, the Ministry launched a new curriculum framework for New Zealand schools; a framework of ‘Directions for Learning’ incorporating Vision statements and ‘Values’, ‘Key Competencies’ and ‘Learning Area’ and accompanying ‘Principles’. This new curriculum, to be implemented in 2009, has been heralded as ‘an educational curriculum specifically designed for a knowledge economy, for the internet age’ (McCrone, 2008).

Media Studies is included in the new curriculum, within the learning area of social sciences,

> Learning based on the level 1–5 social studies achievement objectives establishes a foundation for the separate social science disciplines offered in the senior secondary school. At levels 6–8, students are able to specialize in one or more of these, depending on the choices offered by their schools. Achievement objectives are provided for social studies, economics, geography and history, but the range of possible social science disciplines that schools can offer is much broader, including, for example, classical studies, **media studies**, sociology, psychology, and legal studies. (*my emphasis*)

The specific applications of the new curriculum are still to be worked out. In respect of Media Studies the linkages with key competencies are not yet clear but media teachers are well placed to argue the case that Media Studies, in its content and goals, is ideally placed to fulfil the vision, values and principles of the new curriculum.

In respect of providing ‘resource books’, the Ministry and NZQA are actively involved in providing both print and on-line materials which support both teaching and assessment. The Ministry also maintains a very important on-line resource for media teachers with its Te Kete Ipurangi/The Online Learning mega-site which is introduced thus,

> About this site

*Welcome to Media Studies, a site for media studies teachers (NCEA levels 2–3) which includes teaching resources and virtual forums for media teachers to connect with each other to discuss developments in the subject and media issues of the day. New Zealand media studies teachers can access beacon schools and other resources, join an email group and contribute to a discussion forum in the Private community.*

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7 From [http://nzcurriculum.tki.org.nz/the_new_zealand_curriculum/learning_areas](http://nzcurriculum.tki.org.nz/the_new_zealand_curriculum/learning_areas) The Ministry, in 2008, is consulting subject area associations (including NAME) about issues concerning ‘alignment’ of subjects such as Media Studies within the new framework. This consultation process is funded by the Ministry.

In addition to having a presence on the Ministry’s mega-site, NAME maintains its own website, at www.waikato.ac.nz/film/NAME/.

**Factor 3.** *Faculties of education must hire staff capable of training future teachers in this area and offer courses in Media Education. There should also be academic support from tertiary institutions in the writing of curricula and in sustained consultation.*

With the exception of a few individuals in the School of Education at the University of Auckland and the School of Education at Massey University (Palmerston North), faculties of education in New Zealand have done little to equip trainee teachers to teach Media Studies in New Zealand schools. Possible explanations for this neglect include the lack of teaching specialization amongst staff, and a long-established emphasis on print literacy (reading and writing in English). In most cases, Schools of Education (previously Teacher Training institutions) have merged with neighbouring universities but this has not yet resulted in much cooperation between the two partners.

The vacuum of formal training for Media Studies teachers has largely been filled by Media Studies departments within faculties of arts and social sciences at New Zealand universities. In numerous cases, students have completed an undergraduate degree, majoring in Media Studies, which is then supplemented by a one-year (graduate) teaching qualification. Media teachers are also supported by in-service training opportunities facilitated by the Ministry of Education and NZQA (through the Beacon Schools scheme), and workshops and conferences organized by NAME.

Despite the neglect of training opportunities by most faculties of education, the School of Education at the University of Auckland has taken an important lead in providing courses which combine teacher training and Media Studies. Even more importantly, they have provided funding over the past three years (through Team Solutions) for a full-time, Auckland-based facilitator in Media Studies. The role includes resource development, maintaining the on-line Media Studies private community and e-mail lists, and co-ordinating Beacon Schools and cluster meetings in the regions, effectively adding a professional, funded position to the previous structure of voluntarism and informal communities of sharing.

**Factor 4.** *In-service training at the school district level must be an integral part of program implementation.*

New Zealand schools are organized on a centrally-funded, national basis rather than on a school district level as in Canada. Even though NAME is dominated by an Auckland membership (the region of greatest population concentration), there are informal groupings of media teachers in Waikato (North Island), Palmerston North

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9I can point to at least ten current Media Studies teachers in New Zealand, who have taken this route through Screen and Media Studies at the University of Waikato.

10Beacon schools are identified as a school of current or potential leadership ability, or ‘centres of excellence’ with skilled Media Studies teachers involved in developing teaching materials, as well as offering advice and support to newer teachers.
(North Island), Wellington (capital city) and Christchurch (South Island). Teachers are either drawn to workshop events in the Auckland region, or organize local professional development events.

Associated with the Beacon Schools initiative (see above) are regional ‘clusters’ in Auckland, Waikato, Hawkes Bay, Wellington and the South Island. These clusters bring together experienced teachers (two to four teachers in each cluster), with a leader who liaises with the national facilitator, to develop teaching programmes, improve student achievement and increase teacher understanding of assessment tools – all for the benefit of less experienced or beginning media teachers. Another objective is to develop junior (Years 9 to 11) Media Studies programmes, to ease the transition to senior (Years 12 and 13) Media Studies programmes.

**Factor 5.** School districts need consultants who have expertise in Media Education and who will establish communication networks.

Media teachers in New Zealand are greatly advantaged by having a full-time facilitator for their subject; an expert who is able to provide support and advice on a cost-free, national basis. They are also advantaged by being able to call on specific individuals in the Ministry of Education and NZQA who have responsibility for oversight of Media Studies, and the maintenance of communication networks.

**Factor 6.** Suitable textbooks and AV material which are relevant to the country/area must be available.

In addition to official documentation published by the Ministry and NZQA (Achievement Standards, Unit Standards, exemplars, exam papers), New Zealand media teachers are beginning to produce a range of New Zealand-oriented teaching materials. Many teachers continue to make use of British and Australian teaching texts\(^\text{11}\) but there is also a growing list of local titles.\(^\text{12}\) There is, for example, a small industry of book publishing emerging around a vigorous New Zealand film industry – especially in wake of the international success of shot-in-New Zealand films such as *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy and Peter Jackson’s remake of *King Kong*.

NAME continues to publish a print journal *Script* three to four times a year but, increasingly, teaching materials and resources are being developed through partnerships. In 2005, for example, NAME produced the DVD resource *Short Reels: Ten New Zealand Short Films* in conjunction with the New Zealand Film Commission. Other partnerships have included the Chief Censor’s Office (film censorship),

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New Zealand on Air (New Zealand television funding) and the Broadcasting Standards Authority (broadcasting regulation).

**Factor 7.** A support organization must be established for the purposes of workshops, conferences, dissemination of newsletters and the development of curriculum units. Such a professional organization must cut across school boards and districts to involve a cross section of people interested in Media Education.

As described above, NAME is the primary support organization for media teachers in New Zealand and is actively involved in a wide range of activities, on a national basis. It has the advantages of longevity (initially established in 1983) and authority, being regarded as the legitimate voice of teachers. It is interesting, for example, that similar organizations in the United Kingdom (Media Education Association) and the USA (Alliance for a Media Literate America) have a much shorter history, having been formed in the past five years, and tend to be starting off on a back foot.

The organization that NAME has a closest relationship with is the Australian Teachers of Media (ATOM). Considerable numbers of New Zealand media teachers cross the Tasman for the biannual ATOM conference, and Australian teachers are beginning to turn up at the intervening New Zealand conferences. The ATOM conference was hosted in New Zealand (Auckland) for the first time in 1999; but subsequent conferences, held in a different New Zealand city every two years, have been very New Zealand focused. Such conferences are greatly assisted by underwriting by the Teacher Refresher Course Committee (funded by the Ministry of Education), which provides money for travel, publicity and administration costs (up to $NZ15,000 for each conference). In addition, the state broadcaster Television New Zealand provided sponsorship for the last two conferences, enabling the participation of overseas media education experts (James Durran from the UK in 2005; Andrew Burn from the UK and Ben Goldsmith from Australia in 2007).

Similar activities are not a characteristic of media academics in New Zealand, where there is little formal organization and a much lower level of collegiality. There has been the occasional conference (such as the Medianz conference in Wellington in 2007); but, despite various efforts, no professional association has yet been formed.13 Several academics are involved in NAME but most remain blissfully unaware of NCEA Media Studies, and the vigorous secondary sector (more on this shortly).

**Factor 8.** There must be appropriate evaluation instruments which are suitable for the unique quality of Media Studies.

One striking characteristic of Media Studies in New Zealand is that, despite being a nationally mandated subject in schools, it does not have a curriculum framework specific to the subject. Instead, NCEA Achievement Standards (Level 2 AS 2.1 to

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13A fitful list-serve does serve to send notices and news around a subscription base of New Zealand media academics.
2.8, and Level 3 AS 3.1 to 3.9) stand in as a proxy or substitute curriculum framework. In recent years, there has been much debate between media teachers about the need for a curriculum framework or guidelines but little work in creating such a document has occurred since a prototype developed by Helen Martin (1994), in her *Critical media studies: A teacher’s handbook*.

A 2006 survey of media teachers (Lealand, 2007) showed that considerable numbers of media teachers (56 out of 69 teachers participating) desired a national curriculum. A common sentiment was that teaching often became assessment driven, with the following explanation provided by a South Island media teacher,

> This is the major aspect of Media Studies which is missing. It is necessary to assist new Media teachers, parents, school principals, students etc. to find out what the subject is about, what emphasis we place on major components etc. It is also useful to define what we should be teaching and not just what we would like to teach or leave out. The fact that most subjects have a curriculum they teach to and Media Studies does not, will not help our credibility. A curriculum would also help us come into line with what other countries are doing in media education. (Lealand, 2007, 25)

The absence of a national curriculum in Media Studies in New Zealand is largely a consequence of the history of the subject, rather than deliberate neglect. There is a strong desire for such guidelines but there are also significant bodies of opinion for and against such a proposition, which can be summarized as follows,

**Arguments for a National Curriculum:**

- provides legitimacy for the subject;
- shifts the emphasis from outcomes (assessment) to course content;
- provides a common focus (content, terminology) for all teachers;
- distinguishes Media Studies from associated subjects (English, Sociology);
- reassures teachers (especially new teachers) that they are ‘doing the right thing’;
- provides an incentive for introducing Media Studies at earlier levels of schooling.

**Arguments Against a National Curriculum**

- the subject has grown, and gained legitimacy, without a curriculum;
- Achievement Standards and Unit Standards pretty much define the parameters of the field, and allow for progression across levels of learning;
- Achievement Standards and Unit Standards are already teacher initiated, teacher revised and teacher moderated;
- the lack of a prescriptive curriculum allows greater freedom and choice for teachers;
- assessment is possibly more important than content, in establishing that learning has occurred, skills have been acquired and students are justly rewarded;
- NCEA assessment tools allow for both internal (teacher-based) assessment and external (examined) assessment;
Assessment in New Zealand schools is significantly more detailed and rigorous than assessment which occurs in the tertiary sector; curriculum frameworks used elsewhere can become restrictive, e.g. all teachers required to teach the same film genre in any given year; general and very broad guidelines or recommendations suit many teachers better; not all schools are equally equipped (especially for production elements); whose responsibility is it to develop such a document? The object of study (media) is so broad and ever-expanding and it would be impossible for any curriculum to encompass everything; the object of study (media) is changing so rapidly, any curriculum would need to be continuously reviewed and revised; the current Scholarship option in Media Studies provides for academically-gifted students.

This debate over the desirability of a national curriculum in Media Studies will continue and it may be that such a document will emerge in the coming years – even if it means that such an initiative comes from teachers themselves, acting through NAME. In the meantime, Achievement Standards and Unit Standards will continue to shape Media Studies teaching in New Zealand, through the application of Achievement Standards, such as the two following examples,

**Number AS90276** Version 3 Achievement Standard Subject Reference Media Studies 2.1 Title **Describe the relationship between a media product and its target audience** Level 2 Credits 3 Assessment External Subfield Social Science Studies Domain Media Studies Status Registered Status date 6 November 2006 Planned review date 28 February 2008 Date version published 6 November 2006

This achievement standard requires describing the relationship between a media product and its target audience. Achievement Criteria Achievement Achievement with Merit Achievement with Excellence • Describe the relationship between a media product and its target audience. • Explain the relationship between a media product and its target audience. • Analyse the relationship between a media product and its target audience.

Explanatory Notes 1. The relationship between a media product and its target audience includes identification/measurement of a target audience, use of techniques to make a product appeal to its target audience and the role/influence of other factors in the relationship. • Identification/measurement of a media audience could include Target Audience Grouping System (TAGS) or other audience identification techniques, such as: circulation figures, surveys, television rating systems, focus groups, sampling devices. • Techniques used to make a media product appeal to its target audience could include such things as: content, layout and design,

**Number AS90599** Version 2 Page 1 of 2 Achievement Standard Subject Reference Media Studies 3.1 Title **Demonstrate understanding of a specific media industry** Level 3 Credits 4 Assessment External Subfield Social
Science Studies Domain Media Studies Registration date 7 December 2005
Date version published 7 December 2005

This achievement standard requires the study of a specific media industry and description of how the specific media industry is organised and controlled, including the roles of key personnel. Achievement Criteria Achievement with Merit Achievement with Excellence

• Explain how a specific media industry is organised and controlled.
• Analyse how a specific media industry is organised and controlled.
• Analyse perceptively how a specific media industry is organised and controlled.

Explanatory Notes
1. The specific media industry may be: advertising industry, newspaper industry, film industry, music industry, television industry, etc. 2. The specific media industry may be studied with reference to a specific media producer (e.g. TVNZ, NZ Herald) within the media industry or the specific media industry as a whole (e.g. Hollywood movie industry, magazine publishing in New Zealand, newspaper industry in New Zealand).
3. Organised includes the roles of key personnel and such things as ownership, industry practices, marketing and promotion techniques, technologies.
4. Controlled includes both internal and external controls. • Internal may include impact of production processes, editorial policy, commercial considerations, self-regulatory codes, quality controls. • External may include government and societal agencies, pressure groups, market demands, regulatory codes, industrial standards.

Factor 9. Because Media Education involves such a diversity of skills and expertise, there must be a collaboration between teachers, parents, researchers and media professionals.

Media Studies in New Zealand has developed, and continues to grow, through the collaborative efforts of teachers and education policy makers – with significant contributions from institutions and individuals working in New Zealand media industries. Connections between teachers and the research community are developing – the input of media teachers to on-line resources such as www.mediascape.ac.nz is one such example.

Nevertheless, there is inadequate dialogue between media teachers in the secondary sector and media academics in the tertiary sectors.¹⁴ Both levels of Media Studies are experiencing strong growth, with a steady stream of students now moving on from secondary schooling to university, to further their Media Studies skills. There is only limited acknowledgement of this by New Zealand media academics, and little accommodation of prior learning. Tertiary teaching (especially in first year survey courses) can often just seem to replicate material students have already

¹⁴In a recent survey (Lealand, 2007), both teachers and academics acknowledged this. Virtually all (30) academics regarded the level of cooperation and understanding as inadequate, whilst most teachers indicated they did not know enough about what happened in tertiary media teaching. Nevertheless, nearly all were interested in finding out more.
encountered at school. With a few notable exceptions, tertiary media teachers have not integrated production and theoretical components as well as many secondary teachers have – despite often having access to bigger budgets for buying and upgrading equipment.

Other Factors and Conclusions

This may seem like a rather rosy picture of the state of media teaching in New Zealand. Nevertheless, it is not a case of unwarranted exaggeration, nor of unjustified claims. Media teaching in New Zealand is indeed in a healthy state and could well point the way for others to follow. Nevertheless, there are a number of problems and constraints preventing the full flowering of media teaching, to achieve the utopia of a fully media literate citizenry.

Such problems and constraints include:

- Limited routes for introducing media teaching in earlier years of schooling (primary, intermediate and junior secondary). What is happening in these areas is perhaps an echo of the early days of Media Studies in New Zealand, that is, enthusiastic teachers introducing media elements and Media Studies concepts into junior programmes.
- One unanticipated consequence of growth is the increasing number of Media Studies graduates moving into teaching is that there are not always classes available in schools. Such teaching has been dominated by long-established teachers, or experienced senior teachers moving from other areas, to teach Media Studies. The reality too, in most New Zealand schools, is that there are few teachers teaching Media Studies as their only subject, as teaching responsibilities encompass several subject areas (such as Art History and Media Studies, or Social Studies and Media Studies).
- Successive governments have taken an interest in curriculum issues in New Zealand schools and the national, relatively uniform nature of the New Zealand educational system has enabled dramatic changes in New Zealand education in recent decades. There is not certainty that this will diminish, even though NCEA now seems broadly accepted across the political spectrum.
- There are few examples of media education/literacy programmes in the non-formal sectors, such as adult education or parent education, even though regulatory bodies such as the Broadcasting Standards Authority are beginning to take a strong interest in this area.\(^{15}\) Much of the effort to date has been put to protectionist campaigns targeting children and their internet use.

\(^{15}\)See, for example, their July 2007 review of the literature *Media Literacy Information in New Zealand: A comparative Assessment of Current Data in Relation to Adults*, available at www.bsa.govt.nz/publications-booksandreports.php The BSA is also a major sponsor of the parent resource site www.mediascape.ac.nz.
Possibly to a greater extent than any other subject area, Media Studies is in a state of continuous ferment. Digital technology and the mergence of Web 2.0 mentality has led to new alignment of knowledge production and distribution; and the reality for media teachers, as for media students, is that the horizon is forever expanding, and knowledge is never complete. Countries are best equipped to deal with these eventualities when they provide the educational structures which allow this to happen: New Zealand provides an exemplary model.

Postscript

In the spirit of this contribution, describing the media teaching situation in a small nation that is increasingly connected to the great land masses of Asia, the core ideas were used in a presentation to a large group of Japanese academics, teachers and students, during a private visit to Japan in April 2008. The presentation, facilitated by Kyoko Murakami, was held at Hosei University and generated much interest in the New Zealand situation. Nevertheless, it quickly became apparent that the different approaches to secondary schooling in the two countries would place serious – and possibly insurmountable – barriers in the way of Japanese educators following the path of their New Zealand colleagues. The more liberal, school-centred approach to national curriculum implementation in New Zealand stands in strong contrast to the top-down and highly prescriptive approach in Japanese schools.

Other culturally-centred differences also emerged in the discussions which flowed from the presentation. For example, issues of censorship (a staple in New Zealand media teaching) did not resonate with the Japanese teachers, as formal censorship or regulation of the media is not so overt in Japan. There were also differing perceptions of concepts such as ‘critical analysis’, ‘representation’ and media ‘texts’.

Even though the successes achieved in New Zealand do not yet provide any solutions nor solace for Japanese media teachers, in their efforts to grow the subject locally, the April 2008 did start a dialogue. Another outcome was that it added further weight to the contention that the existence of national curricula can act as a constraint to the development of emergent subjects such as Media Studies – and as another argument in favour of the absence of a curriculum framework for Media Studies in New Zealand.

References

Media Education in South Korea: History, Dynamics and Challenges

Hyeon-Seon Jeong

Introduction

In South Korea, although there is currently no formal provision for media education in schools, there has been a significant growth of interest in the subject amongst a range of groups such as academics, media critics, broadcasting regulators, media activist groups, consumer activists, religious groups, teachers and youth workers (Cho, 2002). While there have been some significant developments in the recently revised school curriculum (Ministry of Human Resources and Development, 2007a,b,c) in that the subjects of Korean language, Social Studies, Ethics and Arts now include the elements of media education, the implementation of this new curriculum will commence in schools only in 2009 and will be completed only in 2012. Given the present situation, media education is mostly offered as an extracurricular activity in schools or as a cultural activity in youth projects outside school hours – during weekends and vacations (Cho et al., 2002).

Considering that the aims of media education programmes as well as the views on the media and its relationship with children and young people have not been consistent, generalizing the characteristics of the practices of media education in South Korea is close to impossible. However, many programmes offered to children and young people tend to focus on critical television viewing or the reduction of Internet use (e.g. Teachers’ Movement for Clean Media, 2003) in order to protect them from the negative influence of the media on their moral and social values or behaviours. In these programmes, children and young people are encouraged to critically ‘read’ or analyze the meanings of the media content or to monitor their daily use of the media.

Another common approach to media education focuses on media creation or production (Ahn, 2003; Han, 2005; Oh, 2006). While media production programmes or projects may have been a rare occurrence in many cases, youth centres, youth foundations and media activist groups have increasingly provided children and young people with the opportunity to produce their own media work and to learn about...
media production skills (M-J. Park, 2003). As a result of this approach, the media is perceived more positively as a communication tool insofar as they can offer alternative kinds of languages and channels through which children and young people may express themselves creatively as well as socially. As part of the government initiative of Culture and Arts Education, media arts education is offered in the courses that focus on the individual genres of arts such as comics, animation and film (Ministry of Culture and Tourism, 2004; Korea Culture and Arts Education Service, 2006).

While such projects may have been one-off instances, civil rights organisations, youth workers and media activist groups have increasingly provided young people with the opportunity to create original work and acquire media production skills. The popularity of this more positive approach has risen amongst the groups who have argued a need for alternative forms of education that aim to respond to the opinions of today’s youth. In fact, since the mid-1990s, educational debates in South Korea have been almost completely dominated by concerns and anxieties regarding the educational ‘crisis’ in Korean schools. It is reported that more than 70% of high school students in the city of Seoul, receive private tutoring after school in order to achieve better results in the university entrance examination, and many of them take private lessons until almost midnight (Choi et al., 2003). In such circumstances, most students throughout their entire experience of schooling are becoming more and more disillusioned by what is termed as ‘examination hell’, or even the ‘examination war’ (Cho, 1995). Moreover, teachers have confessed the difficulties in teaching students who are often physically tired from the previous night’s private lessons.

In this social context, an increasing number of teachers and youth workers have tried to offer a range of cultural activities such as extra-curricular film clubs in both schools and youth centres (Kim, 1999; Choi, 1999). Reflecting similar concerns, traditional youth projects and centres have been transformed such that they are better suited to provide the ‘screen generation’ or ‘N-generation’, who are mostly confined to examination-oriented lessons, with more student-centred, media and cultural programming such as video production and web design – subjects which are typically not taught in schools (Cho et al., 2002).

Although such activities and events appear to have been inconsistent and unclear in terms of their educational purposes and methods, nevertheless, they have recognized the positive role of the media and popular culture in providing an effective means through which teachers are able to better understand the culture of young students and offer alternative forms of education, which could be more meaningful to their students. Taking into consideration the broader perspective described in this section, I would like to further provide a more detailed description with regard to some of the significant turning points in the recent years pertaining to media education in South Korea, following the early history of media activism as part of a social movement.

Early History: From Media Activism to Media Education

While Korean media education is said to have begun as sermons and seminars lead by Catholic priests in the early 1980s, more systematic approaches to media
education began in the mid-1980s as a form of media criticism and consumer rights activism. In this initial stage, NGOs and NPOs concerned with women and civil rights along with religious groups trained people to monitor television programmes and newspaper reports. The purpose of monitoring was to address the political bias of the media and its consumerist nature and thus, to request better programmes for children and young people in the name of ‘viewer sovereignty’. Such organizations include the Seoul YMCA, YWCA, Korean Women’s Link, Citizens’ Coalition for Democratic Media, Christian Ethics Praxis Movement, Citizens’ Coalition for Economic Justice, and Mabius (Media Criticism On Our Own) (Park and Ahn, 1998). This early history suggests that media education in South Korea began not so much from the consideration of children’s and young people’s systematic understanding about the media as part of the school curriculum but rather from social movements in the form of cultural criticism and political activism.

However, the mid-1990s was a significant turning point, which was partly associated with the reflections of the media activist groups themselves regarding the manner in which they had led media monitoring and its consequences. On a more practical level, they found that the training programmes for monitors were, in many cases, inconsistent and unsystematic; moreover, the monitors were not professionally trained. At the same time, several different monitor groups in various organizations were expressing fairly similar criticisms of the press and television programmes. From their perspective, they were tired of having ‘wars without improvements’ with the media. Therefore, it was strongly felt that it would be considerably more effective to educate a wider range of people, including children and young people, as critical readers and viewers rather than training only a small number of people (Ahn and Jeon, 1999). Given the above, it can be stated that in actuality, media education in the proper sense began in the mid-1990s, insofar as it attempted to enable children and young people to become critical readers and writers of the media.

The Seoul YMCA (an NGO) began its television monitoring activities in 1985, and since it has remained one of the most influential media activist groups in the field. Apart from training monitors and publishing monthly reports of their reviews, in 1992, they began offering media education programmes for children and young people. Moreover, in 1996, they extended these programmes to parents and teachers. Such programmes involve ‘TV diary writing’ for children and parents, ‘Video-making camps’ for children and young people as well as teachers and ‘News-making workshops’ for amateur video makers. Further, in 1995, they began producing ‘20 Videos Recommendable to Young People’ in order to promote critical viewing among the youth. In addition, commencing in 1997, the Seoul YMCA organized annual film festivals and creative video production (Ahn, 1998). More recently, they have broadened their scope to include creating awareness about the Internet and animation and reflecting the interests of today’s children and parents (Ahn, 2003).

Similar changes occurred in the other organizations that were involved in media criticism and activism. While many organizations introduced their own educational programmes and projects for children and young people as well as for adults, they also began approaching schools, given that children and young people spent most of their time on campus. For instance, the Korean Women’s Link trained its own
instructors in order to enable them to provide media education in primary schools, albeit such instances are extremely rare and in many cases, confined to critical television viewing (Kang, 2003). Similarly, the Citizens’ Coalition for Economic Justice ensures that its lecturers conduct hour-long lessons aimed at critical television viewing and newspaper reading in middle schools throughout the academic year (H-O. Kim, 2003). In fact, the Mabius also has its own training programme and provides high schools with a media education programme that is fairly similar to that of the other organizations, although it is more production-based.

Civil rights and media activist groups have contributed to the development of media education by introducing it in schools as well as by training lecturers and developing teaching materials that are not confined to the requirements of the national curriculum. However, such practices have been restricted, particularly because they are conducted as extra-curricular activities, which are often cancelled due to school events. The number of schools benefiting from the providers of media education is quite limited; moreover, the external lecturers that are dispatched by the NGOs are not professionally trained teachers. Therefore, it is difficult for media education to be systematically provided, taking into consideration the learners’ cognitive, emotional and social development. In addition, the fact that media activist groups are not fully committed to monitoring the media because they have unnecessarily diverted their focus to educational practices has become a problem. While these issues have been addressed later, I will now discuss certain important changes that took place in the late 1990s: changes in social and technological infrastructures, which appear to have contributed in generating a much wider interest in media education than ever before.

Recent Changes that Triggered a Wider Interest in Media Education

Over the past few years, public awareness regarding media education has considerably increased in South Korea and has extended beyond the specific interests of a relatively small number of people who are personally committed to it. The infrastructural changes with respect to technology, education and youth policy have certainly contributed in generating widespread interest concerning media education, particularly amongst teachers and youth workers.

Changes in the Media Environment: ‘Digital Exciting’ in Korea and Concerned Parents and Teachers

‘Digital Exciting’ is a slogan for Samsung’s advertising campaign; Samsung is a world-famous Korean electronic company that produces computers, digital cameras and mobile phones. As suggested by the slogan, South Korea has become a ‘digitally exciting’ country. Following the economic crisis that began in 1997, the government
believed that only IT industries could help in rebuilding the economy; consequently, owing to the massive support for the IT and culture industries, particularly gaming industries, digital media became widely available both at home and in the workplace. As a result, since 1998, many aspects of the South Korean society have been transformed by rapid digitalization.

Recent statistics indicate that the media is playing an integral role in the lives of the Korean people, particularly in terms of obtaining information, communicating with others and experiencing culture. The percentage of Internet use is assumed to be 73.5% among people above the age of 6, while it is supposed to be 98.1% among children and young people between the ages of 6 and 19 (National Internet Development Agency of Korea, 2006). The purposes of Internet usage are as follows: obtaining information (86.8%), email and online chat (85.1%), leisure (83.8%), shopping and booking (48.7%), education (46.3%), homepage and blog (41%) and community activities (20.2%) (National Internet Development Agency of Korea, 2006). In 13 out of 17 areas, television is regarded as the main source of obtaining information; the Internet and newspaper, 3 and 1, respectively (Korea Broadcasting Institute, 2007). With regard to people between the ages of 13 and 69, the following percentages indicate the usage of different media among them: 64.8% (television), 37.7% (the internet), 29.3% (newspaper) and 15.7% (radio) (Lee and Jeong, 2006). With regard to book reading, it is said that students of primary, middle and high schools read for 45 minutes a day (Korea Publishing Institute, 2006).

While it is believed that the rapid increase of Internet use among children and young people is due to the rise in online gaming and chatting, parents and teachers have become increasingly concerned about the negative effects of cyber culture on their children and their students. As a result, many concerned parents and teachers have become interested in media education, albeit often in a defensive and protective manner. Moreover, anxiety regarding the negative influence of television on young people also exists because young people spend more time watching television than reading books and could consequently be influenced by the gender stereotypical views on television. However, the concern of parents and teachers with regard to the Internet appear to be considerably greater than that regarding television; this is perhaps because of the difficulty that adults face in controlling Internet use. In addition, the generation gap between young people and adults with respect to Internet use seems to further contribute to the increase of the fear of negative influence, partly because adults are unaware of the extent to which young people are engaged in computers.

Teachers’ Movement for Clean Media, which was formed in the year 2000 as part of Christian Ethics Praxis Movement – a religious group, has actively raised issues of commercialism in the media and media ethics as well as produced teaching materials, textbooks and guidelines for teachers and parents from a protectionist perspective (e.g. Teachers’ Movement for Clean Media, 2003). In association with parents’ groups and teachers’ unions, this group successfully led the campaign to assign an ‘over 18’ rating to ‘Lineage’, the popular online game that was often accused by the press of getting young people ‘addicted’ and commercially ‘corrupted’. 
Further, the Teachers’ Movement for Clean Media has organized campaigns for a ‘clean’ Internet, with a movement termed ‘Youth Patrol’; it has also held media camps for the youth during vacations and provided a ‘teachers’ academy for media education’. Based on these activities, this group has been involved in creating a media policy concerning the youth for various government committees such as the ‘Commission on Youth Protection’, ‘Information Communication Ethics Committee’ and ‘Committee for Presidential Undertaking’ (J-H. Kim, 2003). While this group’s activities can be regarded as an extension of religious practice, they have actively reflected the concerns of many parents and teachers with regard to the youth’s negative relationship with the media.

Teachers’ Movement for Clean Media attempts to balance their work between social activism as an indirect engagement with media education (i.e. campaigning against ‘unclean media’) and media education as a direct engagement with the lives of young people. Interestingly, however, their protective view does not appear to be asserted in the textbooks and teaching materials that address the youth, albeit it is strongly emphasized in their campaigns that are targeted at adults and the society in general. As such, their textbooks seem to reflect a somewhat uneasy reconciliation between their negative view about the media (and the protective position) and their ‘student-centred’ pedagogic ethos. Accordingly, it appears that the group experiences discomfort when expressing their negative perspective on the media which is considered a negative influence on the mind’s of young people. Given the above, perhaps the group might need to rethink the very basis of their protective view itself: Whose media culture is negative? What are the aspects of the media that they consider to be negative influences? How can they confront the problem?

**Changes in the School Curriculum and the Classroom Environment: From Teaching Through the Media to Teaching About the Media**

Alongside the rapid expansion of digital media in society, there have also been significant changes in schools. The 7th National Curriculum, which was introduced in 1997 and fully launched in every school in 2003, is more student-centred and offers individual schools and teachers more autonomous powers in terms of managing the curriculum (Ministry of Education and Human Resources, 1999). Currently, teachers are able to teach a new subject referred to as ‘Free Activities’, which is a weekly one-hour lesson incorporated in the school’s regular timetable. Under this subject, teachers have the freedom to teach the students whatever they wish, either in relation to their specialized area of study as specified in the national curriculum or any subject that is considered effective for the development of the students’ creativity. To reiterate, these newly introduced ‘Free Activities’ lessons are part of the official curriculum and are incorporated in the school’s regular timetable, as compared to the extra-curricular activities that take place after school hours. Therefore, these ‘Free Activities’ classes are presently regarded by many school teachers as
a good forum to conduct media education, similar to the manner in which NGO’s considered extra-curricular activities as a good platform for media education.

Alongside the implementation of this more student-centred curriculum, the government took a rather aggressive initiative termed ‘Advancing Classroom Project’ which was to introduce state-of-the-art ICT facilities into schools in every region of the country. As a result, in 1998, big screen television sets and computers with high-speed Internet connections were introduced in all classrooms from primary school to high school. In addition, every teacher was provided with his or her own computer as well as in-service training for the development of ICT, following which teachers were required to plan and teach at least 10% of their lessons using these facilities and techniques.

Initially, this central government-driven project was accused of making teachers unnecessarily obsessed with the technical aspects of their teaching. However, as teachers became more comfortable with the new technology, they began to understand why new media technology might enable students to learn better as well as the manner in which young people might be related to the media and popular culture in every aspect of their daily lives outside schools. Consequently, in one way or the other, the introduction of new technology into schooling contributed in creating a more media education-friendly environment by involving the interests of a larger number of teachers in the relationship between young people and the media.

For instance, in 1998, the Association of Korean Language Teachers founded the ‘Division of Media Studies’. While this group was initially more interested in effectively delivering the official curriculum to students using the media, some of the teachers began to focus on how language education should be transformed in order to teach literacy in the age of multimedia (Hong, 2003). The members of the group studied the theory and practice of media education, such as semiotics, critical media studies, youth culture, video production and the basic use of ICT skills, in an extremely systematic and balanced manner. In 2005, in consultation with external advisors specializing in media education, they developed a textbook for reading the media in the context of language education (Division of Media Studies, 2005).

Apart from this kind of an organizational movement, an increasing number of teachers have practiced media education in their ‘Free Activities’ classes, experimenting with the digital media such as digital cameras, videos and the Internet; they have done so based on their theoretical knowledge, in order to explore the daily experiences of students with respect to the media (e.g. S-G. Park, 2003; Lee, 2003; Shim, 2003). Unlike the Teachers’ Movement for Clean Media, the teachers who explore youth media culture in this manner tend to look at the relationship between young people and the media from a more positive perspective (rather than from a predetermined, religious one); consequently, they search for imaginative ways through which the youth will be able to explore their relationship with the media in a more self-critical manner.

In general, the conservative school culture might not welcome the entrance of popular media as a part of the content of the school curriculum; this is because (1) studying the media per se is not considered to be a serious school subject and (2) young people may acquire a rather powerful medium through which they will
be able to express their views regarding schools. In such circumstances, the teachers who advocate media education in order to enable young people to explore their own culture and views by learning about the media often find it difficult to communicate their own educational position with the school. In this sense, practicing media education itself can be considered as part of a more progressive, student-centred educational movement.

**Changes in the Curriculum for Korean Language Education: Incorporating Media Literacy**

In February 2007, the reformation of the national curriculum for Korean language education was completed after a two-year process involving research and debates. The revised national curriculum comprises the following two stages: (1) Korean will be a compulsory subject for Grades 1–10 (Grades 1–6 for primary school, Grades 7–9 for middle school and Grade 10 for high school) and (2) for Grades 11 and 12, there will be six ‘optional, in-depth’ courses belonging to the subject area of Korean. In 2009, this new curriculum will be introduced into schools for Grade 1 (the first grade in primary school) and Grade 7 (the first grade in secondary school); it will be completely implemented in 2011 when the Grade 1 students have advanced to Grade 10 (in the case wherein Korean is compulsory for Grades 1–10) and in 2012 when the Grade 7 students progress to Grade 11 and begin to select ‘optional courses’ for Grades 11 and 12. One of the significant changes in the new curriculum is that media texts have been officially included as a part of the content of language learning.

The existing curriculum, named the 7th National Curriculum (developed in 1997), encourages teachers to utilize media texts and ICT-related activities. However, the aim of this curriculum is to teach speaking, listening, reading and writing oral and written texts, and not to make students critically interpret these texts and express their own opinions through the media for their own purposes. For example, under the current curriculum, television news can be used in the classrooms as a learning material through which students can improve their comprehension skills. However, the students are not encouraged to critically examine the socio-cultural meanings in the news, given the textual features of the genre (news) and the social function of the mass media (television). Further, the curriculum has introduced the use of computers as a medium for writing, albeit students are encouraged to use computers merely as mechanical tools that serve as a replacement for pen and paper. In fact, students are discouraged from exploring how writing on the Internet impacts the manner in which people may interact with one another, for example, to discuss social issues, and how these interactions may differ from the manner in which people interact in face-to-face communication or letter-writing. In the existing curriculum for Korean language education, a separate ‘optional, in-depth’ course dedicated to media literacy has not been included.

In contrast, in the new curriculum for Korean (Ministry of Human Resources and Development, 2007a,b,c), media literacy has been incorporated into 6
different strands (listening, speaking, reading, writing, grammar and literature) for
Grades 1–10. Moreover, given the fact that listening and speaking is for oral texts
and reading and writing is for written texts, a significant number of academic
researchers and Korean teachers who advocate media literacy, have demanded that
a new strand, namely, ‘viewing and presenting’ media texts, be introduced into the
curriculum. The process of revising the curriculum (March 2005–February 2007)
has instigated an intense debate on whether the curriculum should formulate a new
strand of language activities such as ‘viewing and presenting’ media texts. However,
towards the final stages of reforming the curriculum, some linguists and literature
educators were apprehensive that an increase in media literacy would decrease the
teaching of Korean grammar and literature. Therefore, the revised curriculum does
not include the new strand of viewing and presenting media texts, and as a conse-
quence, there is no systematic approach to media literacy.

Nevertheless, the new curriculum for Korean makes it necessary for the students
to learn how to understand and produce various kinds of oral and written texts,
considering that the characteristics of the media influence the manner in which
the participants of communication might interact in order to produce and interpret
media texts. The following are the different kinds of media texts that the students
must learn about: picture books, news, advertisements, email, conversations and dis-
cussions over the Internet, radio programmes, cartoons, comics, animation, drama,
film and presentation with ICT (Ministry of Human Resources and Development,
2007a,b,c). These media texts have been included in the descriptions of the ‘level
and scope of texts’ specified for each strand for Grades 1–10. However, terms such
as ‘media literacy’ have not been specifically stated in the curriculum (Grades 1–10).

Apart from the Korean language being a compulsory subject for Grades 1–10,
‘Media Language’ – a new ‘optional, in-depth’ course for Grades 11 and 12 – will
be introduced in the revised curriculum in 2012 (Ministry of Human Resources
and Development, 2007c). The 6 optional courses for Grades 11 and 12 will be
Language’. ‘Media Language’ will replace the existing optional course, ‘Korean in
Use’ which was regarded as being extremely general and thus, not suited to be an
‘optional, in-depth’ course.

As suggested by the title of the course, ‘Media Language’ focuses on the reading
and writing of media texts as compared to its British or Canadian equivalent, ‘Media
Studies’, which appears to have a more comprehensive approach to media educa-
tion in general. For example, ‘Media Language’ emphasizes that students develop
the understanding that media language possesses the characteristics of integrating
sound, still/moving images and oral/written languages in texts (Ministry of Human
Resources and Development, 2007c). The purpose of this course is that students
develop their abilities to critically receive and creatively produce media texts, based
on their knowledge about how ‘media language’ might operate as a language and
their understanding of how the meanings of ‘media language’ might be contextu-
alized in the age of information society, popular culture and contemporary human
relationships. Media texts can be divided into the following categories: (1) ‘information/persuasion’ (news, columns, advertisements and pictures, documentaries and
current affairs); (2) ‘aesthetic and emotional expression’ (films, popular songs, literature on the Internet, cartoons, comics and entertainment) and (3) ‘social interaction’ (conversations over the Internet). However, ‘Media Language’ does not adopt a social studies approach in that it does not focus on the understanding of the media institutions.

Changes in Youth Policy and Youth Projects: Possibilities and Challenges for Informal Media Learning

In 1999, another important change was made in the youth policy; since, it has had significant impacts on the manner in which youth projects and youth centres are managed. In fact, it was a large-scale tragedy that accelerated these changes. As mentioned previously, a majority of the young people attending school in Korea experienced ‘examination hell’ during their daily school lives. While the number of places where young people could spend their leisure time after school was limited, it was not uncommon for them to visit beer houses for a drink and socialize with their peers. In 1999, a tragic accident occurred; the ‘Incheon Beer House Fire’ took the lives of approximately 57 young people and seriously injured 86. The Korean society was particularly shocked by the report that the reason why so many people lost their and were seriously injured was that the owner of the beer house had locked the door from the outside and blocked the windows to avoid being caught by the police for serving alcohol to minors.

This tragedy underlined the need to provide the youth with public spaces where they could safely spend their leisure time, thereby motivating policy-makers to establish new youth and cultural centres that would be locally accessible to the young people. Further, such changes were supported by the ‘Youth Law’ (which was amended in the same year) that emphasized the ‘support and encouragement’ of young people for personal expression as well as ‘protection’ from harmful influences. The Haja Center, a youth centre for alternative culture, and SSRO Net, a youth centre with an Internet broadcasting studio, are just two from among the many institutions that were established as a result of these changes, particularly as a new initiative of the Seoul Metropolitan Government to remodel traditional youth centres in order to meet the cultural needs of the youth (Go, 2002).

It is worth noticing that the names of these two specialist media centres represent a youth-oriented spirit; ‘Haja’ means ‘let’s do it’ in Korean, which stands in opposition to ‘don’t do it’, which is what most young people might have expected to hear from adults, and ‘SSRO’ means ‘on our own’ which also emphasizes the importance of taking initiative. Focusing on the popular media culture that young people would enjoy, these youth and cultural centres have offered hands-on, production-based courses in photography, video, animation, web design and music writing with the hold of computers. In fact, youth centres such as these have attempted to empower the youth by providing them with different kinds of learning experiences apart from schooling, i.e. the opportunity to create their own production (Cho et al., 2002).
While it is argued that such a hands-on, production-based approach is fundamentally different from how students are typically taught in schools, the approach does have certain limitations at least in the following two aspects. Firstly, emphasis on the creative production of the media appears to have resulted in negligence with regard to the importance of critically understanding how young people are affected by the media in their daily lives. This is related to an important issue in media education: striking a balance between a critical understanding of the media and the creative use of the media. Considering that perhaps the main reason young people choose to visit youth centres is to have more ‘enjoyable’ experiences as compared to schooling, this issue may not be easily resolved in the context of informal learning. The other issue pertains to the nature of informal learning: it appears that youth workers and media specialists find it rather difficult to be critical advisors while playing the role of a friend to young people (Jeong, 2003).

These issues are fundamentally related to the identity of youth workers or media specialists, i.e. determining the extent to which they should be considered as ‘teachers’ in an informal learning environment that is regarded as being more ‘student-centred’ and ‘enjoyable’. In fact, while young people are able to create their own media production in a more friendly and enjoyable environment, they seem to find it difficult to accept a critical evaluation of their work in such, supposedly ‘student-centred’, learning environments (Jeong, 2005). In other words, informal media learning in such ‘student-centred’ environments appears to have difficulties in terms of finding a balance between critical understanding and creative media production as well as creative expression and rigorous evaluation; this is perhaps because of the nature of the reason why young people choose to visit to these youth centres, i.e. to be able to freely choose what they wish to learn and to not be assessed, unlike the manner of teaching in schools.

These difficulties that the youth workers experience seem to raise important, albeit difficult, issues for the youth centres: how to find a balance between learning and play as well as how to devise methods to evaluate such interesting kinds of learning in a more rigorous manner. Further, such issues are not confined to informal learning sectors; they can be raised in schools as well. However, at present, they seem to be more prominent in youth centres perhaps because these centres have experimented with more student-centred, production-based approaches to media education in informal learning environments.

Thus far, I have described how the recent changes in media education and youth policy since 1997 have contributed in bringing about an increase in the interest in media education in South Korea and the manner in which they have impacted the pedagogic practices of different approaches. While the rapid development of digital media has affected how young people spend their leisure time as well as how they learn in school, it has also influenced many parents and teachers and raised concern among them with regard to the negative influence of the media on the minds of the youth, thus encouraging them to view media education from a protectionist perspective.

Contrarily, teachers who were initially interested in teaching the official curriculum using the new media techniques became considerably more interested in
understanding how young people are affected by the media in their daily lives, and thus, they began exploring these cultural processes in a more positive manner. Similarly, changes in the youth policy have encouraged the youth to express themselves through their own media production, resulting in the remodelling of youth centres which have now become a new place for learning from a more student-centred approach, albeit in an informal manner.

Challenges for Future Directions

Although media education in South Korea initially began as a social movement, with the arrival of digital media and the changes in the educational and youth policies, it has recently witnessed a rapid increase in the awareness regarding the subject. The civil rights groups that were actively monitoring the media soon grew tired of having ‘wars without improvements’ and thought that it would be considerably more effective to educate children and young people as critical media users in school. While such a shift in perspective has certainly contributed in bringing about a broader interest in media education in school, civil rights groups seem to have somehow lost their critical edge view of the media in the process of being diverted to educational works. With a rise in the number of school teachers interested in media education, it seems that civil rights groups need to rethink the focus of their work with respect to their role as media critics and activists.

Media education in schools needs to be reconsidered along with the recognition of the important roles that informal media education can play. With the rapid development of media technology and the recognition of informal and lifelong learning, media education seems to play an important role in youth projects, social work and in other kinds of informal learning environments, reflecting the diverse needs of children and young people such as Hemo, a media education project team, MediAct, a public access media centre, and the Haja Center, an alternative centre for youth culture. Hemo has developed its unique approach to media education, combining media production with counselling for ‘disaffected’ young people who need emotional and social support (T-H. Kim, 2003). MediAct has also targeted ‘marginalized’ young people from low-income families or with physical disabilities as part of their public access for the film medium (MediAct, 2003). Similarly, the Haja Center operates a small-scale, alternative school known as the ‘Haja Production School’ for ‘dropouts’ as part of its alternative approach to culture and media (Jeong, 2003). The various kinds of learning provided by such youth projects, or in other words lifelong education, can be regarded as being different from public education; therefore, these centres need to develop continuously with the support from the government and provide lifelong education alongside schooling.

At present, the biggest challenge seems to be the issue of how media education should be institutionalized in schools. It seems to be important for media education to be implemented in a diverse manner across the curriculum, particularly in the subjects of Korean language, Social Studies, Ethics and Arts so that young people could become critical and creative users of the media in a more systematic, consistent and
progressive manner. Creating a policy for media education that can be implemented in schools, while being based on rigorous research and dialogue between concerned parties seems to be the need of the hour. Thus far, most of the research seems to be confined to comparative analyses of media education in other countries, theoretical justification of introducing media elements in the existing curriculum, reviewing existing media education practices and teaching materials and policy development for media education in general (Eun et al., 1998; Ahn and Jeon, 1999, 2003; Park et al., 2000; Jeong et al., 2003; K-T. Kim, 2003; Shim et al., 2003; Won et al., 2003).

Taking into consideration the complex situation of media education, as mentioned above, it seems that the time has come for the government to take a more institutional and systematic approach to research and practice in media education; this approach will help academics, teachers, youth workers, practitioners and policy makers to discuss the issues together, irrespective of the interests of particular organizations. Media educators who have experienced the joys and difficulties of teaching in diverse learning environments should be able to more constructively communicate with each other their visions with regard to future directions. Although this will not be an easy task, it is a necessary step forward as the next chapter in Korean media education.

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Disciplining Media: A Case Study of Two School Media in Hong Kong

Donna Chu

Introduction

This case study is about how the cultures of media and schools interact and negotiate with one another at a time when it is said that our society is undergoing a major shift from an industrial to an information era. Mass media and mass schooling, as social institutions, grew along with the rise of capitalism over two hundred years ago (Henry, Knight, Lingard & Taylor, 1988; McNair, 1999). A review of the relevant literature will suggest that the theme of their relationships has been one that is characterized by a sense of confrontation rather than one of cooperation. Both held rather stereotypical views of one another. The formation of particular perspectives about one another is in turn informed by differing values, beliefs, norms and assumptions. Apart from being conceptualized as institutions, media and schools are henceforth conceived also as ‘cultures’, which hold rather drastically different assumptions about notions like entertainment, education, freedom and discipline.

Regardless of the noticeable differences between media and schools, it was not rare for them to come face to face in various contexts. In Hong Kong, for example, there was an impressive rise in the number of school-based radio and school-based TV over the past few years. Advances in communication technologies have made the production of media cheaper and user-friendlier. Such productions have created sites where the cultures of media and schools have their direct encounters. To differentiate from “mass media”, this study called the production of school radio, school TV as well as the more traditional print media like the school press “school media”.

This study examines how school media were initiated, designed, managed, supervised and received in two secondary schools in Hong Kong. Although school media are by no means comparable to mass media in their scale and influences, the present study argues that the introduction of a medium inevitably brings along assumptions central to this particular form of medium. How different parties in schools made sense of, as well as negotiated with, assumptions that appeared to be in contradiction with those held by schools will be a major focus. Based on findings from a two-year
ethnographic study of the production of school media in two particular schools, this paper argues that school media are eventually disciplined in a Foucauldian sense.

The Two Cultures

Media Culture

Central to all media is the activity of communication. As Lind (1998) said, “media can be defined as informative, aesthetic, and ethical interaction through communicative messages”. Accordingly, any human activity can be understood as media. The scope offered by this definition is possibly too wide to find a focus. Yet, the inextricable relationship between media and communication is properly acknowledged in this definition.

Given this close relationship with information and communication technologies, media are often amongst the first institutions to reap the benefits brought by such advances (see McNair, 1996). In this sense, media has an image of a pioneer, which is used in the sense of standing at the very forefront in the information society.

To say that the unprecedented scale in the production, distribution and consumption of media depend on technologies is not to say that media are mere technologies. Postman (1985) distinguished between technology and medium in which a technology was merely a machine, whilst a medium was a social and intellectual environment a machine created. This echoed the famous quote of McLuhan (1964) who said “the medium is the message”. The mere existence of a medium made a difference to its users, regardless of what messages it actually delivered. In the case of television, for example, regardless of its actual content, its round-the-clock programming schedule and centrality in a family setting are sufficient to make a difference (Gauntlett & Hill, 1999). Just by being there, media had fundamentally changed the cultural and social landscape of our everyday lives (Gerbner, 1999; Silverstone, 1991).

Innis (1951) analyzed how changes in technology had created a “bias of communication” and hence changed the social environment. With a differing focus, different technologies altered our “structure of interests (things thought about), character of symbols (things thought with) and nature of community (the arena in which thought developed)” (Carey, 1989, p.155). In the days when communication relied heavily on speech, communication was a time-biased one. There was a practical necessity for people to memorize speech over a long period of time so as to keep the communication alive. However, with the advent of communication technologies that could transcend space in a short period of time, the culture took on a bias of space. A space-biased communication era flourished with the rapid development in electronic media.

Meyrowitz (1998) created a typology of multiple media literacies to make sense of the different dimensions of any medium. The typology stated that different media had their unique grammars, or languages. Electronic media, for example, differed a
great deal from print media in terms of media grammar. Print media relied heavily on words, whilst radio communicated via speech. Television was predominantly visual in nature and hence has developed its own aesthetics (Agger & Jensen, 2001; Blythin & Samovar, 1985). These emphases brought forth different practices which should not be overlooked in any discussion of media culture.

The predominantly visual media greatly stressed visual appeal. What made a shot appealing? As Postman (1985, p. 86) noted, an average shot on American network television was only 3.5 seconds. With the popularity of MTV, today shots are even shorter. It seems to suggest that to be enticing visually, speed is one of the criteria. Consequently, there is an abundance of images, which never ceases to appeal to the eyes of the audiences.

Another criterion lies with entertaining. Entertainment, as Postman lamented (1985, p. 87), has become the “supra-ideology of all discourses on TV”. The need to be entertaining is by no means confined to entertainment media. As Halberstam said, “The great new sin in television news is not to be inaccurate, it is to be boring” (Halberstam, 1999, p. x). In news media, which include both electronic and print media, there are growing trends for sensationalism and “tabloidization”. The coverage of the Clinton-Lewinsky scandal served as a vivid example (Kovach & Rosenstiel, 1999). The outbreak of the September 11 attacks in New York also tragically demonstrated what it meant to be visually appealing in the media world (Powers, 2001).

Media also tend to seek confrontation and controversies. News and entertainment that have a shocking value can bring in more audiences (Bernarde, 2002; Glassner, 1999), although they also tend to cultivate unjustified fears. Today, state-of-the-art communication technologies like hidden cameras are used as tools to monitor the private lives of public figures.

To summarize, media culture is characterized with a preference for entertainment, conflicts, arguments and dramas. It is fun, hot, confrontational and sensational. Media is so pervasive that it is interwoven into the fabric of our everyday lives. Its influences, or effects, go beyond changing human behaviors and perceptions. Its ubiquitous existence alone has altered the social environment in significant ways.

**School Culture**

Levinson, Foley and Holland (1996, p. 2) defined schools as “a state organized or regulated institution of intentional instruction”. Hence, schools are predominantly concerned about “instruction” or education. Intrator (2000) argued that the emphasis on education had made the educational system push students to learn, even when it was not entertaining.

Whilst media has developed its own set of biases in relation to technologies, schools also tend to bend to certain values in their everyday practices. Hargreaves (1994), for example, believed that the structure of schools was unable to meet the demands of the postmodern world, as assumptions in schools had their origins in the
industrial society. The institution of schools was the product of the industrial economy. Henry et al. (1988, p.70) charted several correspondences between schools and work, which included the hierarchical division of labour, the use of extrinsic threats and rewards instead of intrinsic motivation, and the compartmentalization of knowledge and jobs.

The stress on hierarchy has given rise to a culture of conformity and obedience. Symes and Preston (1997) also argued that over time, education has become “a prisoner of technocratic values” (p. 22).

Well-intentioned reforms have constantly been introduced. However, reforms seem to be forever in vain (Sarason, 1990) and school culture has contributed to a society of conformity, in which the status quo is maintained.

An initial understanding of the two cultures has been charted. Table 1 summarizes some of the most noteworthy differences.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Media culture</th>
<th>School culture</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>At the forefront in the information society</td>
<td>Lagging behind in the information society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being entertaining is the supra-ideology</td>
<td>Being educational is the supra-ideology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confrontation and arguments are stressed</td>
<td>Conformity and obedience are stressed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Changing fast</td>
<td>Static</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blurring boundaries between public and private</td>
<td>Maintaining boundaries between schools and other domains</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The generalization as shown in Table 1 is by no means exhaustive. It must be recognized that both media and schools are more complex entities than they are here presented. Still, these dichotomies help to sketch the background for this particular study, which aims for an in-depth and grounded analysis of the encounters between these two cultures in the face of social change.

**Encounters Between the Two Cultures**

Schools are often depicted oppressive, dull and boring in media discourses; whilst media are taken to be naughty and powerful demons or competitors from the perspectives of schools. Such representations and imaginations are nonetheless discursive, mainly reflecting how they saw one another from their own perspectives. Following are specific examples in which the two cultures do have direct encounters within one and the same context.

**Making Use of Media: Educational Media**

Educational media represent efforts on the part of educators to make use of media to serve various educational purposes. In this particular case, media are conceptualized as tools.
The idea that media should be used to teach has been around for almost a century, at least in the United States. Cassidy (1998) found that in the past century, generations of educators were excited by the opportunities offered by new media. Although the enthusiasm often also met anxiety on the part of those who were not certain how these new media could be applied in school settings, the attempts to integrate new media succeeded one another, like that of education TV.

In the case of education television, the calls to bring television and education together could be dated back as early as the 1960s (MacLean, 1968, p. 26). After several decades, in a global survey amongst broadcasters about educational television in the nineties, there were comments which called for “the need for awareness of the educators, at all levels, about the importance of this activity (using instructional television)”. There was also a call for governments to “encourage teachers to appreciate the potential of TV and have the training and experience to use it effectively” (Tiene, 1996, p. 157). These comments somehow suggested that teachers were a group of people who came from a different generation, and were reluctant to embrace changes in education made possible by the arrival of the new mode of instruction. In other words, teachers did not really understand how they could make use of the educational television.

To account for these rather unsuccessful experiences, Cassidy (1998) noted that a common complaint of teachers was that the educational programming or software was of poor quality.

Teaching About Media: Media Education

Another site where media meet schools directly is in the case of media education. The literature shows that in order to teach media in schools, legitimacy has first to be won. While there are ongoing battles in many countries across the world today, it should be noted that media education practices vary across cultural contexts; and this section at best identifies some more common concerns amidst such differences.

Though media education is a relatively new social curriculum in schools (Lee, 1997), many writers agreed that media education had become a worldwide movement in the past 30 years or so (Brown, 1998; Hart, 1998a; Kubey & Baker, 1999).

Such gains in worldwide recognition were hard-won. As Alvarado Gutch and Wollen (1987) said, the emergence of media in the school curriculum has been a long and continuous cultural struggle. This struggle for legitimacy has shed light on two issues related to the central thesis here. Firstly, the hard won battle for media education reflected the fact that knowledge related to media was considered to be of low status (see Alvarado et al., 1987). It was “common knowledge” not worthy of serious attention (Gripsrud, 1999a). Duncan (1992) described the experience of teaching media in schools as one that was “educationally-marginalized”. These pointed to a deep-seated belief that this form of knowledge was less useful, if not irrelevant, compared with other high-status knowledge.

In the meantime, the efforts of educators to lobby the parties concerned to legitimize media education also demonstrated how legitimacy was valued in schools.
Without legitimacy, media education could never gain a “firm foothold” (Butts, 1992). Lee (1997) discussed in great depth how media education has successfully negotiated a place in Canadian schools. In short, it must have very good and strong reasons to emerge as a new subject in schools.

Even in the case when media education could eventually find a foothold in schools, proponents need to design the curriculum as well as develop relevant pedagogies. These give rise to other problems. As Hart (1998a) noted, there was “much rhetoric but little research” on media teaching. Little was known about what actually went on in classroom settings. However, the available existing research suggested that media education, when put into practice, differed rather markedly from what was advocated.

In order to uphold legitimacy for media education, the parties concerned have had to enlist the continuous support of the school authorities. One of the strategies most media educator advocates adopted was to promote the cause under the concept of “media literacy”. Heinle (1999) used the word “co-opt” to describe the act of naming the movement as “media literacy”. By co-opting the term ‘literacy’, the advocates were able to associate the movement with positive attributes brought about by literacy. Besides, it also “depoliticizes the entry of their curriculum agenda into school systems by claiming that media analyses and media production skills are synonymous with becoming literacy” (p. 23).

To survive in schools, media education had to acknowledge the presence of a school discourse. Alvermann and Hagood (2000) reviewed the literature on critical media literacy and discussed its relationships with the school discourse. They argued that the discourse of a school had formed spaces of inclusion and exclusion, from which dichotomies are etched into acceptable or unacceptable practices. School design, pedagogical implementation, and relations between teachers and students highlight within school discourse the distinctions between work and pleasure, classroom and playground, in-school and out-of-school literacies, teacher and student, and mind and body (Alvermann & Hagood, 2000).

**Producing Media: Media Production**

How should media education be conducted? Some advocates of media education believe that media production, when accompanied by a sustained critical analysis of the media at stake, could be a desirable form of media education (Buckingham, 1998a; Eiermann, 1997). In this instance, media production becomes a form of pedagogy.

Whether media production constitutes a good teaching method has been a preferred subject of debate. Skeptics questioned the educational value of such production. There were fears that students would only imitate the professional practices of mass media. Hence, the dominant ideologies would only be reinforced, not challenged (Alvarado et al., 1987; Masterman, 1985). There were also worries that an intellectual hierarchy would be produced because a course on media production tended to be taken by low achievers (Hobbs, 1998).
These worries on the "mindless imitation" and "intellectual hierarchy" reiterated the question of legitimacy. Other studies raised concerns about power relationships in such production. A three-year study with third-graders making videos prompted Grace and Tobin to wonder how comfortable teachers could be with children whose work "ignores, transgresses or exceeds teacherly, adult notions of appropriateness" (Grace & Tobin, 1998, p. 45). On the other hand, Buckingham (1998b) questioned the autonomy students had in such media production. The emphasis on a critique of ideology required students to engage in media criticisms via the production of media. This mission of "impossible text" (p. 68) highlighted the contradictory nature of media production. Students were under real pressure to succumb to the expectations of teachers, especially when assessment was involved (Buckingham, Fraser, & Sefton-Green, 2000). The tastes and preferences of teachers, even though when they were different from those of students, would become criteria students adopt in their making of media.

At a practical level, the operation and management of the production technologies form real concerns to any teacher who would like to venture into that unfamiliar field. Grahame (1991) warned that the first obstacle to useful practical work was the technology.

Buckingham et al. (2000) stated that another major problem at stake was that the large majority of student production would never reach a real audience. They believed that having a real audience in mind, students would engage in a more spontaneous and self-critical form of reflection. This belief remains to be tested in actual research contexts. School media are probably the best sites for conducting further research along this direction.

**Owning Media: School Media**

The advances in communication technologies have introduced great changes to this form of media production in schools. Desktop publishing improves editing work for school newspapers. Electronic media, which used to be taken as more expensive ventures, are also becoming more affordable. Technologies have become more user-friendly, with easy-to-follow interfaces. Today, even primary school students could master a video production on their own (Gauntlett, 1996). Schools on different levels can now afford to have their own media.

For schools to set up their own media, apart from solving those practical problems involving technology and equipment, they also have to address other problems which have been identified in other instances when media culture and school culture encounter each other.

Summarizing from the previous sections, the experiences of educational media, media education and media production as a form of pedagogy have witnessed uneasy relationships between media and schools. In the case of educational media, it was hinted at that the failure of teachers to fully understand the language and grammar of the media in current use partly led to the unsuccessful trials in educational media. In the case of media education, where media have to enter the thresholds of
schools, the ongoing battles to win legitimacy asserted the importance of winning support from the school authority. By doing so, an emerging new subject must be seen as worthy of study. It was also noted that even when media education could eventually find a foothold in schools, its implementation revealed again that power relationships in actual classroom settings would curtail the well-meaning intentions of media education to be political and critical.

The said power relationships were most readily found between teachers and students. It was particularly felt in the case of media production, when students were supposedly ‘free’ to create their own media products. On the one hand, teachers were uneasy about the subversive potential of such work. On the other hand, whose tastes and preferences this media work was about could also become places where the said power relationships became a problem.

Although school media range from newspaper, radio, television to homepages on the Internet, this study focuses only on electronic media which call forth a rather different set of literacies in the process of production. How participants come to express ideas in these electronic media and how participants, particularly teachers and students, negotiate the Dos and Don’ts in the process of production remain to be addressed and discussed in the present study.

Post-1997 Hong Kong

For a contextual understanding of the nature and dynamics of the encounters between the cultures of media and schools, Hong Kong is chosen for this particular study.

According to the Census and Statistics Department in 2002, there were 750 publications registered as at August in 2001. 53 of which were newspapers, of which 28 were Chinese language dailies and 4 were English language dailies. Television remained the most received medium, with an audience of 6.71 million out of a population of 6.74 million. Audiences in Hong Kong had access to 40 channels for both domestic and non-domestic television programs. 24-hour radio broadcasting was available from three main radio stations, adding up to 2,000 hours of programming each week. The film industry generated a gross profit of $950 million in 2000. Meanwhile, the penetration of information technology to local homes continued to see a rapid and huge growth (Census and Statistics Department, 2002). Together with the more “traditional” mass media, new media were entering many homes and making an impact in terms of media use and everyday lives.

Meanwhile, the school environment was also undergoing drastic changes. The Curriculum Development Council launched the consultation document Learning to Learn in November 2000. In the consultation paper, it was proposed that existing subject boundaries should be replaced by more flexible key learning areas. There were eight key learning areas. One of them was called Personal, Social and Humanities Education (PSHE). It was in this consultation document that ‘media education’ was officially mentioned.
In the existing school curriculum, the major contents of the Personal, Social and Humanities Education (PSHE) key learning area (KLA) are taught in a number of humanities and social subjects, together with related elements incorporated in cross-curricular programmes on moral and civic education, environmental education, sex education, media education etc. (Curriculum Development Council, 2000, p. 2).

Media education, as a relatively new practice and with no official guidelines from the Education Department before, was here described as one of the cross-curricular programs. It showed that there was a growing awareness on the part of policy makers. Media education was finally on the official agenda. There were, however, no further details about what kinds of ‘media education’ would be incorporated in this new key learning area. It was stated that the overall aim of PSHE was “characterized by students being able to ask questions, interact with others and actively search for their own answers... Among the nine generic skills, self-management, critical thinking and problem solving are particularly relevant...” (p. 16). These objectives shared a lot of similarities with the rationales cited for introducing media education elsewhere in the world, particularly regarding critical thinking.

Two Cases: School R and School T

Against these general and unique backgrounds, this study asked ‘what happens when media meet schools?’ This foreshadowed problem has presumed that something was going to happen when media and schools met in one and the same context. This “something” might include exchanges, or confrontations, of ideas, beliefs, assumptions, and practices and so forth. There was no prior fixed knowledge of the patterns of such interactions. In order to arrive at a holistic understanding of such encounters, the present study adopted a qualitative and emergent design.

Two secondary schools were chosen in this study. The school which introduced radio production was named as School R whereas the one which introduced school television was called School T throughout the study.

The choice of cases is one by selection rather than by sampling. The cases chosen are outstanding in their own right. The suitability and feasibility of those cases are accessed beforehand (Walsh, 1998). Both schools shared some important similarities that made later comparison possible. Firstly, both schools began introducing the media production during the same school year of 1998. Besides, both schools were running their new school media on a regular basis. Both schools received extra funding from two government funds for the launch of school media. Allocation of resources had not been a major problem.

In terms of general background, both schools were considered to be “good” schools in Hong Kong, with a history of around 30 years. Both used English as the medium of instruction (EMI). The academic abilities of students in these EMI schools were generally considered higher than average.

There were some marked differences between the two cases, which formed the basis for variation in comparison. In School R, the radio was the brainchild of the principal. He initiated the idea and passed it on to a teacher, Miss Lee, who became
the leader afterwards. In School T, however, the initiative mainly came from the students. The Student Union had experimented with school radio a year before and the then principal wondered if they could also work on video production. The teacher in charge, Mr. Chan, explored this idea with senior students and the school television channel came into operation.

The mode of supervision was also different right from the start. In School R, a committee of eight teachers was set up to advise on the operation of the radio station. In School T, there were only three teachers. In practice, however, students were given a free hand. Only one of the three teachers actually worked closely with the students. His work was mainly to coordinate, rather than to monitor the activities of the television channel.

I have taken on three roles during the period of research, that is, during the school years from 1998 to 2000. In the first stage (1998–1999), I acted mainly as an observer. In the second stage (1999–2000), I became a media teacher for both schools. In the final stage (summer in 2000), I was the researcher who conducted formal interviews with participants who had known me in the previous two stages. Following the emergent tradition, each stage was a result of the previous one, rather than a well-planned product from the start. In each stage, different methods were used when appropriate.

The method of participant observation was used in the first stage. In School R, I asked to take part in teachers’ meetings, students’ training sessions and evaluation meetings whenever possible. I talked to students and teachers when I had a chance. In School T, there were much fewer activities organized around the television channel. There was no fixed place and time when video production took place. Student participants were literally everywhere when they were working on their programs.

Having worked in local media, mainly TV production, for years, I have acquired some sort of ‘expert’ status in the eyes of the teachers in charge. The expert role helped me to find a place in School T eventually. In the middle of the school year, Mr. Chan asked if I could give a talk to some Form 3 and 4 students on the functions of mass media. I accepted the invitation immediately and hosted a workshop for a group of ten students. This trial had inspired Mr. Chan, who later invited me to become a media teacher in the coming school year. After careful consideration of the pros and cons of taking the role of a media teacher, I accepted the offer and in turn proposed the same idea to School R. The free training sessions offered to School R were at once welcome. The research moved on to the second stage.

I resumed the more conventional ethnographic research after these trials in media teaching. After two years of operation, enough experience was accumulated in terms of media production. Most students who had been working for the production for one or two years were about to be promoted to senior forms and they would need to leave the school media to prepare for the public exams. I decided to conduct in-depth interviews with key informants, who had been taking part in the actual media production work and who knew the inside stories of the school media.

I conducted 14 in-depth interviews with six teacher advisers and six student producers in School R. In School T, I interviewed the principal, two teacher advisers
and ten students. Some interviews were done earlier but most of them were conducted at the end of the second school year.

These interviews served two major functions. They certainly provided additional information about the actual operation of the school media. More importantly, these interviews were interpretations of the experiences with the school media in which the informants were making sense of the whole thing over a two-year span.

**Major Findings**

The two-year ethnographic study resulted in a wealth of data. School R and School T turned out to vary a lot in terms of the initiatives, the stated objectives, administrative procedures as well as supervision from teachers. Such differences are summarized in Table 2.

In School R, formality was more stressed than in School T. There was also apparent and serious supervision on the part of the teachers.

In School T, students were left to make their own decisions. Members enjoyed a high level of autonomy.

In Table 3, the evaluative comments made by informants were compared.

It was illuminating to see the similarities in responses, considering the apparent differences in administrative and management practices. Such differences in practices did not result in corresponding differences in the evaluation of the participants. First of all, almost all student informants made it clear that their enthusiasm dropped constantly as time went by. There was a general feeling of frustration. On the part of teachers, the discontent was more because of the heavy workload the school media brought to them. In short, no one was really happy about the experiences with the school media.

Informants also tended to use overtly negative adjectives to describe the programs they produced. The most frequently mentioned word was “boring”.

Despite the drop in enthusiasm, students stayed because they were “responsible students”. It was one of the most cherished virtues found in interviews.

Informants from both schools also liked to compare the school media with the outside media, and often resulted in a sense of failure. While envying the freedom the outside media had in creating entertaining programs, they were aware of the fact that they were “after all running the media in a school.”

Finally, the only difference shown in this table was about media literacy. Students in School R did not think the media experience made a difference in their knowledge about mass media. Students in School T could, however, articulate key concepts in media education.

The differences in the management of the school media in School R and School T led one to perceive School T to be more open and liberal. One might expect, as I did, that in School T, the encounters between the cultures of media and school would be more inspiring and interesting as students were given more autonomy to maneuver in the production. The evaluative comments turned out to suggest a rather different
Table 2  Practices in School R and School T

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Practices</th>
<th>School R</th>
<th>School T</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Initiative</td>
<td>Idea initiated from the principal, who later instructed eight teachers to take up the duties. None of the teachers were interested in the post at the beginning.</td>
<td>Student Union initiated the idea of setting up school radio at the beginning. Its successful operation made the principal ask if TV would also work. Three teachers were responsible for the school media. Two of them were interested in the media and paid more attention.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Purposes/Objectives</td>
<td>Clear statements of objectives Promote language education Promote all-round education Enhance sense of belonging</td>
<td>Objectives not stated clearly Promote communication between teachers and students Provide entertainment to schoolmates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Starting up and managing the school media</td>
<td>Many administrative procedures Formal recruitment, screening test, training programs, frequent meetings, whole school evaluation. All led by teachers.</td>
<td>Few administrative procedures. Informal recruitment, members join because of invitations from teachers or friends. No formal training, infrequent meetings, no formal evaluation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Supervision from teachers</td>
<td>Clear supervision Presence of teacher advisers during broadcasts Scripts required for all programs Frequent meetings with teacher advisers</td>
<td>Minimal supervision No special requirements in scripts No screening required before broadcasts Infrequent meetings with teacher advisers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Institutional Design</td>
<td>Modeled after mass media. For example, division of labour, titles of posts, frequency of broadcasts. Hierarchy stressed</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Program emphases</td>
<td>Educational and informative to be preferred Neutrality, objectivity and impartiality</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Audience responses</td>
<td>Poor audience reception Generally considered to be boring</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluative Comments</td>
<td>School R</td>
<td>School T</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. General Sentiments</td>
<td>Students: Dropping enthusiasm; losing interest</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Teachers: Heavy workload</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Program quality</td>
<td>Boring, too ‘educational’ and ‘informative’, not entertaining</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Learning about interpersonal relationships</td>
<td>Learn how to handle interpersonal relationships</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Censorship</td>
<td>Teachers emphasized that there was no censorship.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Teachers believed that students were able to tell right from wrong.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Self-censorship</td>
<td>Students admitted that there was “self-censorship” on their part. Certain topics were avoided, while ‘safe’ topics were chosen to play safe.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Students knew where the bottom line was.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Sense of responsibility</td>
<td>Students stayed for the school media because they had to be responsible.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Comparison with outside media</td>
<td>Students</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Not comparable in popularity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Outside media: more entertaining, trendy, attractive to audiences</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ours is not the real media</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The school media more like the public broadcaster</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>After all, we are in school.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Learning about media(self-evaluation)</td>
<td>Little gains in media literacy</td>
<td>Enhance media literacy</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
story. In both School R and School T, their media turned out to be in compliance with “school culture”, rather than “media culture”.

**Disciplining Media**

One might argue that it should not be at all surprising to find school media agree more with school culture than media culture. After all, school media operated in the context of schools. This seemingly straightforward observation was complicated, however, when one also considered the often taken-for-granted calls for “freedom of expression” in society. The case was even more complicated in a society like Hong Kong, where political changes had heightened concerns about issues of free speech and censorship. Against this background, how school media turned out to become more like ‘school’ instead of ‘media’ warranted careful consideration and discussion.

**Foucauldian Discipline**

Discipline was mostly about ensuring an orderly environment in schools. The concept “discipline”, however, could also be used to analyze the realities of schools and the “power relationships” found in schools (Alvermann & Hagood, 2000; Hollihan, 2000; Symes & Preston, 1997). Foucault (1977) defined discipline as methods “which made possible the meticulous control of the operations of the body, which assured the constant subjection of its forces and imposed upon them a relation of docility-utility” (p. 137). What was so new about discipline? Foucault argued that discipline produced both docile and productive bodies. Unlike punishments, discipline is not necessarily negative. As Simola, Heikkinen and Silvonen (1998, p. 68) elaborated, the Foucauldian discipline was not so much about increasing obedience and allegiances on the part of the students. Rather, it aimed at ordering and organizing a mutual power relationship. Discipline was best interpreted as “a technology of power” (Foucault, 1980, p. 148).

Such disciplinary technologies are found in a number of institutions ranging from workshops, schools, prisons and hospitals. The Foucauldian discipline was an example of how power could be exercised continuously at a minimal cost. In his now classic *Discipline and Punish* (1977), Foucault traced the changes throughout punishments in history. Torture as a form of punishment made a public display of the absolute power of the ruler. The cruelty of torture was later reformed into more gentle forms of punishment. However, both the political and economic cost proved to be the minimal when discipline was at work in an institution. In Foucault’s words, discipline was “a constant, total, massive, non-analytical, unlimited relation of domination, established in the form of the individual will of the master, his ‘caprice’” (p. 137).

According to Foucault, disciplining was an art of distribution, both in space and time. Apart from these specific arrangements, there were other mechanisms that brought discipline into full operation.
Firstly, it was about the means of correct training. Drilling and training was necessary for the subjects to internalize requirements presented to them. In disciplinary technology, punishments were corrective in nature. The purpose was to reduce gaps between the norms and the deviations. As Foucault explained, disciplinary systems favored exercises as punishments. These exercises were “intensified, multiplied forms of training, several times repeated” (p. 179). In other words, to punish was to exercise (p. 180) and hence further internalized the norms.

The emphasis on observing norms was another major technique used in disciplining. Foucault called it “normalizing judgement”.

A system of normalization is opposed to a system of law or a system of personal power. There are no fixed pivot points from which to make judgements, to impose will (Rabinow, 1984, p. 20).

In other words, individuals had to act according to the norms, rather than what was deemed right or wrong. What was important was to do what the majority did. Judgements were hence normalized, rather than made according to criteria of right or wrong. They were internalized as unquestionable values.

The internalization of norms was accompanied, and reinforced, by the hierarchical observation, which was made possible by structural arrangements. The subjects must come to realize that they could be under constant gaze, like the inmates in the Panopticon. This kind of surveillance was, however, done in an economic way. The surveillance was not achieved by coercion. Power was dispersed, rather than held in the hands of certain individuals. As in the example of parish schools, Foucault found that the system of supervision did not depend wholly on teachers. Instead, teachers would “select from amongst the best pupils a whole series of ‘officers’ – intendants, observers, monitors, tutors, reciters of prayers, writing officers, receivers of ink, almoners and visitors” (p. 175). As a result, everybody was caught up in the web of gaze in this disciplinary system.

These mechanisms, together with examination, turned people into disciplined subjects. Disciplining demonstrated that power was not necessarily negative and destructive. It could also be productive. This power was not to be understood as a thing or a property.

The power in the hierarchized surveillance of the discipline is not possessed as a thing, or transferred as a property; it functions like a piece of machinery. And, although it is true that its pyramidal organization gives it a ‘head’, it is the apparatus as a whole that produces ‘power’ and distributes individuals in this permanent and continuous field. This enables the disciplinary power to be both absolutely indiscreet, since it is everywhere and always alert, since by its very principle it leaves no zone of shade and constantly supervises the very individuals who are entrusted with the task of supervising. (p. 176)

In short, to Foucault, power was not necessarily all encompassing. Rather, it was capillary in nature. There was not one single source where absolute power emanated. Instead, everyone was at the same time the overseer and the observed (Foucault, 1993). Foucault saw schools as one of those institutions that tended to discipline.
The Disciplined Media

This study set out to understand “what happened” when the two cultures of media and school met in the production of school media. It was found that school media, unlike their counterparts in the wider social context, hardly stirred up any controversies, nor were they lamented for any wrongdoings. On the contrary, they were negatively described in terms opposite to features which were generally related to mass media. As teachers and students from different schools in this study said, they found the school media “boring”, “silly”, “meaningless”, “conservative” and/or “too educational”. In fact, both teacher and student informants were frustrated, in various degrees, after their work in the school media.

Despite the frustration, there were, except for one public showdown in School T, no open confrontations resulting from the production. It was particularly thought provoking, in the light that media valued freedom whilst schools valued discipline. These two opposing forces, when they met, were expected to produce some sort of conflict or unsettling episodes. The two-year study found nothing of the sort. On the contrary, the relationships between students and teachers, and amongst students themselves, were mostly on good terms.

Analyses of radio and video programs produced by students also confirmed differences, rather than similarities between the school media and mass media. In School R, most radio programs were about imparting knowledge, correct values and attitudes to fellow schoolmates. In School T, where video programs covered a range of school activities, they were still commonly evaluated to be boring stuff by both the producers and the audiences. Regarding presentation, these media works also differed markedly in terms of structure, tones and the uses of relevant languages and conventions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Media culture</th>
<th>Features related to school media</th>
<th>School culture</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>At the forefront</td>
<td>Serving educational purposes</td>
<td>Lagging behind</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being entertaining is the</td>
<td>Delivering positive messages about life</td>
<td>Being educational is the</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>supra-ideology</td>
<td></td>
<td>supra-ideology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confrontation and arguments</td>
<td>Except some critical works found in Channel T, most</td>
<td>Conformity and obedience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>are stressed</td>
<td>programs did not carry confrontation or arguments.</td>
<td>are stressed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Changing fast</td>
<td>Presentation style: static, structured, very few</td>
<td>Static</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>variations in styles; poor visual presentation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blurring boundaries between</td>
<td>Clear boundaries between school and “outside”</td>
<td>Maintaining boundaries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>public and private</td>
<td></td>
<td>between schools and other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Value freedom</td>
<td>Disciplined</td>
<td>domains</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Value discipline</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
When comparing these features with some notable features of media culture, the differences appeared to be more telling. Earlier, the comparison was made between media culture and school culture. Inserting some of the dominant features related to school media in the original Tables 1, 4 above suggested that the latter agreed more with the school culture.

In short, the school media were disciplined in ways that agreed far more with the school culture as a whole.

### The Three Disciplinary Forces

Table 5 summarises the three sets of factors that disciplined school media in School R and School T. Factors relating to the hierarchical structure were akin to what Foucault called “hierarchical observation”, whilst school norms could be interpreted as “normalizing judgement” in his words. The third set of factors was unique to the cultural context of Hong Kong, which had also exercised disciplinary functions in schools.

As shown in Table 5, School R and School T did not agree on every single item. It was most evident that the two schools differed markedly in terms of the hierarchical structure. School T was much less hierarchical than School R. However, the overall frustrations as well as evaluations about both school media were strikingly similar. How the three sets of disciplinary forces worked in School R and School T will be examined further below. Whilst all three forces were easily identified in School R, the case of School T, which had a more liberal outlook, prompted one to reflect on how school norms could exert influence in disciplining school media. Together, these two cases demonstrated how these forces were mutually informed and enhanced.

| Table 5 | Disciplining media in School R and School T |
|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| **Hierarchical structure (Hierarchical Observation)** | **School R** | **School T** |
| Hierarchical design | Pyramidal | Flattened |
| Accountability | Highly stressed | Less stressed |
| Supervision | Close | Minimal |
| The presence of an external supervisory body | Yes | No |
| **School norms (Normalizing Judgement)** | **Appropriateness** | **Educational** |
| | Yes | Yes |
| Cultural-specific factors in Hong Kong (Other Disciplinary Factors) | Emphasis on harmony | Yes |
| | Local media performance | Mainly negative |
| | Public broadcaster’s values | Agree | Agree |
Hierarchical Structure

According to Foucault, the mechanisms involved in disciplinary power were only simple instruments like hierarchical observation, normalizing judgement and examination (Foucault, 1977, p. 170).

The structure of Radio R followed closely to a hierarchical design. It was a top-down model, resembling the shape of a pyramid. At the top of the pyramid was the principal, who had initiated the whole project but had never really taken part in the actual production of any programs. Directly below him was the chairman of the school radio, assisted by seven more teacher advisers. Teacher advisers in turn worked in pairs, supervising four teams of student helpers. Each team was headed by student leaders. In the second year, programs were produced by two big teams, which were further split into smaller ones. The structure remained hierarchical in nature.

All teacher advisers, including the chairman, were instructed by the principal to take up the post. It was said that there was little room for further negotiation. The principal had assigned specific duties and responsibilities for each teacher adviser, who then formed a committee. From then on, the chairman acted as the bridge between teacher advisers and the principal.

The practice of division of labour was also implemented at the bottom level with students. The division was in two levels. Firstly, there was a hierarchy between student leaders and student helpers. Secondly, there was a division between technicians and DJs. Technicians were only to assist DJs on technical matters. Their rank was lower than DJs.

In this hierarchical structure, it was assumed that the higher the position, the more the power. In School R, being in the upper level in the hierarchy was desirable. It was seen to be of a higher ranking and status. In School T, the structure was much less hierarchical. In the “highest” level in this system, there were two teacher advisers. In reality, however, they seldom exercised this supervisory role.

Within the hierarchy, everyone reported to his or her immediate upper level. One by one, the power was relayed. No one was the ultimate holder of power. Quite to the contrary, as Foucault said, everyone “was caught up in a power situation of which they are themselves the bearers” (Foucault, 1977, p. 201). Actors, including teachers and students, were aware of the fact that someone could be watching over their shoulders. They thus had to behave themselves. The structure and organization of school media had determined the patterns of how actors would make decisions. Actors even were told that they could make decisions on their own; such decisions must be deemed appropriate in the eyes of these at the upper levels. As a result, the content and presentation of school media had adopted and represented not only the ideas of students, but also the second guesses of the latter. Students would only go for ideas that they believed would be acceptable in the eyes of their teachers.

Accountability

If the hierarchical design had set the stage, the stress on “accountability” held actors in place at this particular stage. In this study, the notion of accountability was
brought up in different contexts. For example, in School R, “accountability” was narrowly conceived as the relationship between one level and its immediate superior. Teacher advisers saw that they were held accountable mainly to the principal. What did it mean to be held accountable to the principal? The first meeting of Radio R I sat in was particularly illuminating. At this meeting, the foremost concern was to make sure that the radio programs would not upset the principal in the future. Teacher advisers discussed at length what measures they should adopt so as to prevent such a scenario. The conclusion was that students should not be allowed to criticize school policies because this might irritate the principal, who might close Radio R as a result.

Accountability was not limited to the four walls of School R. The stress on accountability was, to a large extent, due to the funding School R received from the Quality Education Fund. The money had to be spent well especially as it was “taxpayers’ money”. The accountability must be a visible one.

Formality was thus stressed at all times, especially in the first year. There were formal meetings, with agenda distributed beforehand and minutes recorded afterwards. There were screening sessions aimed at recruiting student helpers for Radio R. The performance and score of each student applicant was recorded. After being accepted for radio, students had to go through a series of training sessions. Attendance was taken in every lesson. Special school assemblies were organized to officially launch the school radio. Finally, at the end of the first year, there was evaluation.

It should also be noted that in Radio R, full scripts were required for approval before they could be broadcast. Such acts were interpreted as “censorship” in the eyes of some students. Teacher advisers, however, responded by asserting that they were only fulfilling their roles as supervisors in the hierarchy. They had to be held accountable for the students’ work and so they must lay certain ground rules.

**School Norms: Normalizing Judgments**

School T differed markedly from School R in terms of the structure of their school media. The hierarchy was much flatter and the emphases on instruction and supervision were much fewer. Being more open and liberal, with considerably fewer rules and supervision, Channel T should have been different. However, it was simply not the case.

This contradiction lent strong support to the second disciplinary force I would argue here. This disciplinary force was exercised by the school norms. Norms were shared assumptions held within a specific culture. Once formed, culture was resistant to changes and norms became taken-for-granted. It was akin to “normalizing judgement” in Foucauldian terms.

According to Foucault (1977), what was punishable in a disciplinary situation was not necessarily about right or wrong. A mistake in this light did not have to be incorrect, rather, it could be just that it did not “measure up to the rule”, or “depart
from it” (pp. 178–179). The word “normalizing” referred to the utmost concern of “normality”. Anything that was “non-conforming” was punishable. On the contrary, conforming to the standard and the rule was the norm.

Two dominant “norms” were found in both schools in their handling of content and presentation in school media. They were the significance attached to appropriateness and the adherence to the principle of being educational. Together, they helped actors to decide what was the safe thing to do. As a result, they limited the creative options open to school media and thus contributed to the disciplining of school media.

**Act Appropriately**

In this study, that one had to act appropriately was one dominant theme, albeit few could tell exactly what it involved. First, the appropriateness rule applied to mannerisms in speech. Students could not use foul words, as the bottom-line said, because foul words were definitely inappropriate. To extend further, colloquial and rude expressions were also not appropriate. However, the generation gap between teachers and students had made the work of definition difficult. What was rude to the teachers might mean nothing to students. As a result, one must exercise extra caution in the choice of words. Creative use of language, for example, could be too “risky”.

In Radio R, for example, scripting in advance favored the more literal expressions than colloquial ones. In other words, the safe thing to do was to use the teachers’ language, instead of popular expressions used amongst peers or in the media.

Appropriateness also applied to behavior. Students had to get the jobs done properly. They should not behave in ways that did not come up to the expectations of other people. To meet such expectations, they had to follow instructions and orders from the upper level. They should do what they were told. For example, although some of the student informants found the division of labour problematic in the school media, they never took any concrete actions to change it. It was not normal for them to challenge decisions. Acting appropriately required them to do what was required of their specific positions but not to change the status quo.

Acting with a sense of responsibility was deemed appropriate. As a result, even though student informants found the production work boring and tedious, they opted to stay in the groups. Being a responsible student, most of the informants said, they could not just run away and leave the school media unattended.

These unspoken rules regarding appropriateness exerted their influence when students were to fill in the content of their programs. Despite having the “freedom” to decide what topics they could talk about, students in the end were guided by their deep concern for appropriateness. To extend the list, they would not talk about school policy because it might produce criticisms that the school did not like. They would not talk about topics like dating, teachers’ performance, or radical and sensitive issues that might embarrass the school and other people. In Radio R, the intention to talk about elections in Taiwan was also deemed inappropriate, for it was “too sensitive”. Trendy things were also better avoided. A member in Channel T,
for example, thought that it would be “risky” to produce a program about piercing in ears, nose, lips and tongues. Things that were not “traditional” could invite criticisms.

In short, acting appropriately required students to play safe by talking about some “middle-of-the-road topics”. What made students so aware about doing things right? In Radio R, a system of close supervision was in place and hence, a constant gaze was felt. In Channel T, there was minimal supervision and the urge to be held accountable to leaders was much less compelling. There was not an “other” to keep a constant check of their “appropriateness”. In this light, the power of this normalized judgement was even more thought provoking. It showed how such norms were internalized in the minds of the actors.

Schools Have to be Educational

Another dominant and recurring theme was found in interviews with all the informants. The comment goes like this, “After all, we are a school. We have to be educational”.

Related to this comment were two assumptions. Firstly, a school was different from the “outside”. Secondly, schools must fulfill educational functions. The conjunction of “after all” recognized the limitations posed by the two “facts”. The four walls of the school erected not only a physical but also a mental barrier between the world inside and outside. What was allowed in the outside world did not necessarily get the green light within the four walls. When certain practices were not allowed, the explanation was a “normalized” one: “after all, we are a school”.

The pressures to conform to the standard “educational” were strong, even when there was so little instruction and supervision in School T. As a matter of fact, Channel T had set out to produce programs which could give some entertainment to their fellow schoolmates. However, at the end of the day, they found that this aim was not quite realized. Again, it seemed that the pressure to be educational was one from within.

This intention to make school media entertaining is unlikely to be realized. When Channel T was first set up, core members already believed that it should be able to give some entertainment to fellow schoolmates. Students were aware that being entertaining could boost the popularity of the school media, as the same was found in the case of the mass media. However, the tacit understanding that “schools have to be educational” had eventually guided the making of school media. The need to be educational turned out to be more overwhelming than the intention to be entertaining. The desire to be entertaining was one thing. The necessity to adhere to the school norm was quite another matter.

To be “educational”, knowledge and information were taken to be the core ingredients. There was a popular notion of “feeding” and “eating” information with informants in both schools. The metaphors somehow reflected that learning was understood as a linear process. The radio programs in Radio R, given their strong emphasis on educational objectives, revealed the underlying assumptions about “knowledge”.

In these programs, knowledge was stable, fixed and deliverable. It must be correct and incontestable. As a result, the presentation of knowledge was largely descriptive. Knowledge was to be taught or transmitted. There is bound to be a teacher and a student. In the presentation, as a result, there were those “knowledgeable elders” found in Radio R. They knew more than their fellow schoolmates and could thus act as teachers. They corrected mistakes and offered authoritative answers on different matters. As the holders of some absolute truth, there was little wonder why a student informant in Radio R said that they sounded like lecturing others.

When it came to values and attitudes, only positive and correct ones could be mentioned and promoted. Those who held wrong and incorrect values and attitudes were to be scolded. Again, the knowledgeable elders were the ones to announce what was right and wrong.

Other Disciplinary Forces

Apart from the above two disciplinary practices, there were other factors which also contributed to the disciplining of school media. These factors were more culturally specific in the context of Hong Kong and might not be so commonly found in other cultural contexts. These factors included an emphasis on harmony found commonly in Chinese culture, a general dissatisfaction with the local media performance, as well as an agreement with values associated with the local public broadcaster.

Harmony

One recurring finding that could be cultural specific was the apparent emphasis placed on harmony in schools. As repeatedly said before, there had been no major open confrontation in the making of school media. Conflicts were rare, if not non-existent, in schools in this study. It did not mean that there were no complaints, discontent or disagreements. The findings had indicated clearly that frustration was evident, and there was discontent amongst peers. However, most of them were driven underground. Maintaining a harmonious relationship in schools was considered to be highly important. In interviews, more than once student informants spoke of “avoiding making enemies for oneself”. It was inadvisable to have conflicts with others because it would create enemies.

As King (1996) showed, although Hong Kong was a westernized society, it was still to a large extent under the influence of Confucianism. Such values as filial piety and respect for the elderly were still widely recognized as virtues. Maintaining a good and harmonious relationship was another. It was said that Chinese culture was a “shame-oriented culture” in which individuals were “strongly socialized to be aware of what others think of them, and are encouraged to act so as to maximize the positive esteem they are granted from others, while trying to avoid incurring their disapproval” (Fung, 1999, p. 183). Winning the hearts of both fellow schoolmates and teachers was important. Getting into direct conflicts was undesirable and should
be avoided. The conscious attempts to stay in harmony and stay out of conflicts were cultural traits associated with the Chinese.

The emphasis on harmony eradicated the tendency of media to stir up controversies. There was no place for controversial topic in the school media. In order to make everyone “happy”, “sensitive” issues that might affect the interests of others would not be opted for. In the end, topics that were “neutral” and non-controversial were preferred instead. This preference ran against the tendency of media to start up controversies. Once again, the school media could not look like the media outside.

**Poor Media Performance**

Another factor that was unique to Hong Kong was related to the media performance. The landscape of mass media in Hong Kong had witnessed drastic changes after 1997. Media performance was lamented. Press credibility dropped. Interviews with both teacher and student informants confirmed the general discontent and distrust towards such performance.

Under these circumstances, there were strong reasons not to use the mainstream mass media as a model. As a result, features that were commonly associated with the mainstream mass media could be discarded in the process. What were found in the mass media, albeit often more enjoyable than those offered by school media, were associated with bad things like sensationalism, sex, violence and/or vulgarity. Copying these things was certainly not desirable in the eyes of the actors, including both teachers and students.

**The Immense School Culture**

The above factors had contributed to the formation of an immense school culture, which had exerted great influence on the making of school media.

As summarized in Fig. 1, each of these factors was significant in determining a specific aspect of the school media. Hierarchical structure, for example, had determined the design and the ensuing management of the school media. School norms, on the other hand, required actors to decide what content would be deemed acceptable in the school settings. The emphasis on harmony in Chinese culture had discouraged student informants to present conflicts in the school media. As informants were generally dissatisfied about the performance of local media, they tended not to copy them in content or presentation.

These forces were not specially created to discipline the school media. Schools did not bring in media for the purpose of taming them. On the contrary, schools introduced media in the hope of using them to enhance the sense of belonging, or to fulfill a range of educational objectives. In the end, however, school media did not live up to these expectations. From the very beginning, school media were shaped by forces that had been dominant in the schools. These forces were so dominant that even actors, including teachers and students, were not aware of their influences.
Actors did not necessarily understand why they did certain things in the process. In the figure, a number of concepts were masked. This was in order to highlight the fact that their meanings were never clearly defined or elaborated by informants in this study. Still, they were repeatedly mentioned to explain or justify various practices.

Why were the actors unaware of the presence of such an immense school culture, which guided them in every step in the making of school media? I would argue that it was due to the nature of the culture. Operating within a certain culture, one would not keep questioning the very assumptions that enabled one to operate. The culture was deep and stable so that it met our needs to have cognitive stability. Newcomers would be taught these shared assumptions, which were enduring values, beliefs, norms, rituals, and so forth, if they were to stay in this specific culture. In this case, actors in schools did not need to have a well-conceived plan to “tame” the newcomers, that is, the school media. As though autonomous, the various disciplinary forces would come into play and the school media would be tamed after the image of the school culture, rather than the alien media culture.

In the above accounts, there was no special mention of “who” were the key people involved with the disciplining work. The reason was that, as mentioned earlier, power did not emanate from a single source. There was no single “oppressor” who could be responsible for the capillary functioning of power. Rather, all the actors in
this study were, to various degrees, complying with this unspoken practice of disciplining. When everybody was involved in this process, no one could really articulate the shared assumptions that were at work.

**Conclusion**

To conclude, this study has argued that when media entered schools, the characteristics related to the former were all gone. It was shown that these school media were disciplined.

The evidence for this thesis came from the findings of a two-year ethnographic study in two secondary schools in Hong Kong. The two chosen schools had set up their own school radio and school TV in 1998. Three disciplinary forces were identified, namely hierarchical structure, school norms and cultural-specific factors found in Hong Kong. They together formed an immense school culture and shaped the school media in ways that were deemed acceptable by schools.

This study examined the microphysics of power in schools, hence uncovering how power was exercised in schools. Instead of being possessed by a few, power was dispersed and every actor had a role in bringing power into play. This called forth an awareness of every actor to this nature and dynamics of power relationship.

The immensity of school culture was acknowledged and there were clear signs that school reforms could be futile, if there was a lack of critical examination and reflection of all those taken-for-grantedness discussed in this study. School reforms, as well as media education, are certainly desirable and necessary in times of great changes. However, introducing either of them into the existing school culture without first determining their “compatibility” with the existing school culture can jeopardize the well-meaning reforms and result in waste of time, efforts and talent.

The dilemma is that when the compatibility is high it is unlikely that the proposed reforms can bring any substantial and lasting changes. When the compatibility is low, the immense school culture, whose power is exercised in productive and capillary ways, is likely to “discipline” the proposed reforms so that the existing school culture finds them acceptable. Both cases show that reforming schools in the age of information is an exceptionally tough task that calls for exceptional observation, reflection as well as tactics. How they can be introduced in a strategic manner is definitely a pressing problem that warrants further research as well as debate.

**References**


A Study of Media Pedagogies in Three Asian Societies

Sanjay Asthana

Introduction

The present generation of young people, unlike its predecessors, lives in an increasingly globalizing world that is being transformed by a wide range of technological innovations. Despite these major developments, it is a world that still faces deep socio-economic disparities across various regions. A number of scholars have characterized contemporary globalization in positive as well as negative terms; some argued that the “global media culture” implicates young people as passive consumers, while others pointed to the possibilities opened-up by information and communication technologies (ICTs) and new media (Feilitzen and Carlsson, 2002; Slater and Tacchi, 2004). Youth involvement in the media spans a wide range of activities – from learning technical, production, writing, and reporting skills to developing and deconstructing media content – and is closely connected to the processes of media education and literacy. In engaging with the media, young people explore and learn about themselves and the world around them. In doing so they bring with them their own unique knowledge and perspectives. This chapter was part of a larger study on youth participation in media, and offers an interesting range of examples from developing countries that best exemplify the innovative approaches and strategies adopted by youth in using the media for social and personal development. The chapter explores and examines three initiatives that represent good practice of youth participation in the media (Asthana, 2006).

The paradigm of media education, as it is generally understood and applied in several contexts, has been critiqued from a variety of theoretical and praxis-oriented angles. A considerable amount of scholarship has opened up fresh perspectives on youth, learning, and literacy. This emerging work is more than a revision of the earlier paradigm. It is an attempt to redefine and reorientate categories and concepts in order to grasp the multiple ways of knowing in the world. Contemporary discussions on critical media literacy (Buckingham, 2003: Feilitzen and Carlsson,
2002: Sefton-Green, 1998: Lankshear and McLaren, 1993) are grappling with what UNESCO had very aptly outlined over two decades ago through this following statement: “We must prepare young people for living in a world of powerful images, words, and sounds” (UNESCO, 2006).

With the emergence of new paradigms and models, media literacy among the young adults has become a focus of several institutions and organizations. Recent scholarship on young adults has begun to question the developmental models that view young people as “persons in the making,” thereby denying agency. The emerging new paradigms consider youth as protagonists who are capable of making decisions, exercising choices, and more important, as individuals who are active agents in promoting democratic processes and civic engagement (Tyner, 2004; Sefton-Green, 1998; Soto and Swadener, 2002). This is an innovative approach toward inculcating a critical stance among young people about the media world – a world where powerful images, words and sounds create reality. Here young people are provided with opportunities to learn through their experience of visual images and words. This enables a critical reflection on the media discourse vis-à-vis their everyday lives. A major influence that is driving the discussions is the impact of new information and communication technologies (ICTs) that are playing a significant role in enhancing youth participation and involvement in media. UNESCO’s ongoing work, through a variety of programmes and projects, points to the relevance of ICTs in education and youth development. Indeed, the role of ICTs and the notion of “media mixes” have been crucial in elaborating youth participation and involvement in the media that enable learning and education through fun and pleasure (Greene, 2003; Kinkade and Macy, 2003).

**Methodological Framework: Connecting Theory and Practice**

This study followed contemporary critical approaches to media education, youth, learning, and literacy by considering these as a conceptual constellation that remains alert to the currently existing social realities and life-worlds of young people and the communities. The three initiatives in this study are exemplary instances of the mediations across theory and practice and demonstrate that it is in practice that a theory ought to be anchored (Dewey, 1966; Freire, 1972; Sholle and Denski, 1993). To explore and examine the range of youth involvement in media in the process of learning and literacy as well as the production of various media materials – newspaper and magazine articles, radio broadcasts, television and video programmes, and internet-based materials – the following questions have been outlined:

- What are the various kinds of innovative uses and participation of youth in media?
- How does media participation empower the youth?
- What does youth participation mean in different cultural contexts and settings?
- What role do technologies play in youth participation in media?
To examine the three initiatives as case studies, the author conducted textual analysis of documents and policy materials; open-ended focused interviews with the youth and young participants from the initiatives; interviews with the project managers; interviews with staff members from these youth media initiatives; and reviews of several youth programme materials. The studies, limited to developing and under developed regions of the world, cover various media – newspapers, magazines, radio, television, and the new media – particularly the multiple uses of the Internet. Samples of many media and youth programs, drawn after an exhaustive survey of a range of materials, were carefully studied to determine the good examples of innovative use and youth participation in the media. The rationale for selecting these initiatives was based on the following criteria: The focus was on initiatives that considered youth as active agents, rather than “persons in the making.” The various youth-produced initiatives are innovative in terms of content production, media deployment, and practice. The primary focus of the initiatives centered on how young people understand and interpret their own life worlds and the social world that they inhabit. In analyzing the initiatives from different regions of the world, the author identified similarities and differences in the various media and geographical regions as well as social and cultural factors specific to those regions. With the awareness that youth has a complicated history, the author primarily uses the cognate term “young people.” This has analytic value especially when pursuing a comparative study of youth participation in media.

The three youth-led initiatives presented in the following pages offer some good examples of young people’s involvement in the media. This involvement is not a singular act: rather an active and collective process of learning. Within these social settings, young people create and develop their own perspectives and knowledge. Participation provided young people with a context and community to explore imaginative ideas. This process of learning, situating educational activity in the lived experience of young people, is dialogical and open-ended. The various media become more than facilitators and instruments; they enable and mediate learning and literacy. They become “social networks” of learning.

The Initiative from Vietnam

Learning Reporting Skills, Writing News Stories

A youth-led radio program with adult journalists as mentors started in 1998 as YOJO (Young Journalists Group) with the support of UNICEF and the Vietnamese National Radio. It is organised as “Junior Reporters Club,” where young members develop several media outlets for expressing their ideas. The primary mission is to develop and inculcate children’s rights via print-based and radio media. In recognition of its activities, the members of YOJO were invited to the UN Special Session on Children held in New York in 2001. The popular YOJO produces “Children’s Aspirations,” that is broadcast twice weekly, “Voices of the Youth,” a
monthly newsletter, and a published book named Children’s Aspirations that contains children’s writings on social themes from pollution of rivers to gender equality, and sustainable development topics. Over the last several years, YOJO has produced some 500-radio programs, published hundreds of articles in various print media outlets, thus making it an innovative and participatory media initiative.

Young Journalists Group in Vietnam has over a hundred members who come from various regions of Vietnam. About 40–50 primary members participated in the UNICEF sponsored journalism training workshops and learn journalism training from adult professional journalists before writing and contributing to various mainstream newspapers and magazines. These members, popularly called the “Junior Reporters’ Group,” later visited eight provinces of Hanoi city and other rural areas to train and mentor other youth as journalists. For instance, members have trained youth youngsters to write and develop their own story ideas. A monthly newsletter entitled, “Voices of the Youth,” and a children’s book, Children’s Aspirations have been published. Besides, members contributed hundreds of stories to numerous Vietnamese print publications. The self-expressions of the members of the Young Journalists Group through their own publications as well as in adult-based newspapers provide some unique perspectives on a variety of topics that are personal, political and social. According to Lan Anh, founder of the Young Journalists Group, persuading adult newspapers to accept their stories was difficult in the beginning. With their persistence and the gradual recognition in and around Hanoi, the Young Journalists Group found newspaper publishers willing to provide space for their writings. It was the ability of the Young Journalists Group to demand a forum for self-expression that the professional mainstream news media had to grudgingly accede to. The group had also made its presence felt among local and national Vietnamese government forums.

Health, Environment, and Children’s Rights

Although environment is the broad theme that is discussed, debated and written about by the members of the Young Journalists Group, there are other issues that are tackled as well. The members cover topics not only in their own roles as journalists, but also as social activists, adds Lan Anh. She asserts that “…we want to be more than youth journalists. We see ourselves as youth activists and youth innovators.” In this context, some of the significant achievements have been several articles on major flooding in Vietnam and pollution in and around Hanoi rivers that caught the attention of governmental officials and prompted action. These articles by the members also led to a wider involvement in community affairs that resulted in raising donations for rebuilding flood ravaged areas and prodded the government to become environmentally conscious. The Young Journalists Group’s focus on environment has opened up numerous opportunities in the form of civic engagement and participation involving local officials, governmental leaders, and social workers. In recognition of her leadership abilities and the Young Journalists Group’s contributions,
A Study of Media Pedagogies in Three Asian Societies

the founder Lan Anh was invited to the UN General Assembly’s Special Session on Children in New York in 2001. As a national organisation, the Young Journalists Group has extended the vision of its founding member Lan Anh by expanding its work into a wide variety of community-based initiatives. Although several hundred members are mainly engaged in writing news stories and essays for publication in various local and regional media outlets, they are also, at the same time, involved in pursuing developmental projects among local communities. These young members bring their journalistic skills to promoting youth involvement in community affairs. Several hundred children and youngsters have been mobilised from rural areas around Hanoi as co-participants in the developmental activities initiated by the Young Journalists Group. Thus, the Young Journalists Organisation’s work has frequently taken its members to community-based activities from training street children in writing articles, and developing radio stories, to actively participating in raising money and support from the general population toward children affected by chemical poisons as a result of the Vietnam war and conflict in 1960s. The members articulate their views on these topics through news articles and argue for urgent social action. Some of these articles have been collected and published in a book form entitled, *Children’s Aspirations*, which presents a glimpse of the Young Journalists Organisation’s work. An interesting point to note is that print and radio interventions have been complementary. Children and young participants have drawn on the strengths of each media wherever necessary, and combined the two in producing some sort of a dialogue between the two. Newspaper and magazine articles have been taken up for radio dialogue and discussions and vice versa. Further, conversations among the young newspaper reporters and radio broadcasters on community-related topics generated a greater sense of participation. In bringing media education and community development in dialogue and by providing concrete and innovative proposals for social change, the members of the group offer an interesting participatory development model not only for other children and youngsters, but also for the adult-world.

The initiatives explored in this chapter pointed out several innovative features with regard to media content creation – from writing news stories with informality and seriousness to developing creative newspaper and magazine graphics design and layout. Although newspaper and magazine journals offered the children and youngsters several opportunities and possibilities, it was the creative and transformative role played by these young people that is innovative and unique. By combining several media forms into “media mixes” the young people utilized the opportunities provided by media technologies. This generated and sustained excitement among youngsters at the various initiatives. Through their engagement with the media the young members are bringing together local and indigenous knowledge in dialogue with international and global awareness. This is visible in the topics and themes explored by the young participants – health, environment, and children’s rights. The newspaper and magazine stories that were discussed above reveal some interesting facets of this cross-cultural dialogue. This is a unique instance of extending the notion of participation from their immediate surroundings to far-away places and regions.
Radio

The year 2004 marked fifty years of the transistor radio. Although the anniversary was celebrated by various institutions and organisations involved in social change, the mainstream, commercially dominant media took little notice of the event. Unquestionably, radio has had a powerful symbolic value in the everyday lives of the poor and labouring communities in the underdeveloped and developing regions of the world. As a broadcast media, radio has inherent advantages over print and visual based media forms. Radio is best suited to enable participation and provide opportunities for an equal exchange of ideas, information and knowledge sharing. More importantly, radio is cost-effective, easily accessible and portable, which makes it a very popular medium. As someone aptly remarked, “radios... do not rely on electricity or literacy. They can be used by anyone anywhere, unlike other communications media such as telephones, the internet, television and printed media.” This assertion regarding other communications media is indeed correct, as there exist deep disparities and questions of access to the ICTs, particularly among the poor and working classes. If these issues can be addressed, radio can indeed become a medium that is not only available via the internet on computers, but can join people and communities from different nations into cross-cultural dialogues. This is something unique about radio as it is local and global simultaneously. One important aspect of this can be glimpsed from the many community radio initiatives in several regions of the world. The concept of the “community radio,” popularized by UNESCO’s efforts in several low-income regions of the world during the 1960s, has been successful in tackling poverty, ill health, malnutrition and a number of social issues. UNESCO’s community radio experiments demonstrated that by involving people and local communities and creating a sense of belonging and participation social change can be brought about.

Historically, radio as a broadcast medium, embedded as part of the state-controlled network in several underdeveloped and developing countries of the world, has been effective in a range of developmental activities like agricultural and farm practices, health and hygiene related programmes, not to mention its enormous role as an entertainment medium. Within the larger body of media studies, the role of radio in social change has not been theorized: rather, these has been a grudging acknowledgement at best. Although there has been a recent increase in community radio initiatives, scholarship has not kept up with it. It is important to note that radio exemplifies connections between theory and practice and could illuminate what philosophers like Bertolt Brecht and Walter Benjamin believed radio as a participatory media was capable of doing. Reminding us about some of the failures of radio, Benjamin points out the possibilities:

The crucial failing of this institution [radio] has been to perpetuate the fundamental separation between practitioners and the public, a separation that is at odds with its technological basis. A child can see that it is in the spirit of radio to put as many people as possible in front of a microphone on every possible occasion (Benjamin, 1999).
The following radio initiative is a good example of what UNESCO and Benjamin have outlined as the social responsibility of radio toward children and young people. The Young Journalist Group of Vietnam has been producing youth-led radio programmes, popularly called, “Children’s Aspirations,” on the “Voice of Vietnam” state-run radio network for the past several years. It had already produced over 500 radio programmes. The formation of the group has interesting radio beginnings when journalists from local Vietnamese government’s radio network visited a school to enlist students to read stories on the radio. A young student, Lan Anh, was selected to read the stories. After a brief stint, Lan Anh became aware that children’s own stories had to be told rather than reading out adult-produced radio material for children. Lan Anh’s singular determination led to the formation of the Young Journalists Group that now involved hundreds of Vietnamese children producing and presenting radio programmes in a wide variety of topics that relate directly to their lives. The members of the group receive training from a variety of institutions: UNICEF’s regular workshops, professional radio broadcasters, and non-governmental organisations. The motivation to become radio broadcasters shows that children seek to go beyond merely using media to voice their opinions. Rather, the abiding interest in radio has led to numerous children going on to pursue professional careers as civic broadcast journalists. The ability to speak and write and freely express their ideas in an adult-centred world brings about a major transformation. This passion for pursuing journalism as a career – from childhood to adulthood – is a life changing experience for the members of the Young Journalists Group.

**Health, Crime, Gender, and Sustainable Development**

The Young Journalists Group from Vietnam are involved in two weekly radio broadcasts from the state-owned Voice of Vietnam network. The programmes, broadcast to over 30 million listeners, feature two presenters who discuss a specific theme each week. Some of the topics that were featured included environmental and developmental issues and the rights of the child. Discussions on subjects such as pollution in Hanoi rivers and gender equity have generated popularity with the audiences. The radio programmes were made with sensitivity and understanding that brought recognition from the United Nations and the Vietnamese government. Some of the programmes on the environment have prompted the Vietnamese government to initiate a new set of policies. The ability of the young members to shape public policy on matters pertaining to sustainable development through radio broadcasting points to two things: one, innovatively produced programmes can bring attention to topics that went unheeded in the past; and two, children’s and young people’s voices have tremendous impact in the public domain.

As the case studies in this chapter demonstrate, the struggle for the recognition of children’s rights through radio use has a deep impact for both the participants and larger community. These can be construed as good examples of creative and socially responsible radio journalism. The young members showed that
radio could indeed become a powerful dialogic apparatus for communicating messages and building solidarity among members of the community at the local level. The community-based radio experiments of Vietnam demonstrated how links could be forged between democratic participation and youth development. In the pursuit of a better life, both individual and collective, dialogue, democracy, and development have become key practices of human societies, whether organised at the local, regional, national, or international level, that have the potential to take us out of social and historical quagmires.

As we saw in the previous discussion, children and young people are central to the articulation of democracy and development. Drawing upon radio’s dialogic potential, their unique voices and perspectives have started a conversation about peaceful co-existence between communities and cultures.

The Initiative from Kyrgyzstan

**Dialogue, Democracy, and Development**

The Children’s Media Center project, created in 1999, funded by UNICEF and the Democracy Commission of the United States Embassy, Bishkek, is carried out by children and young people who discuss a wide gamut of issues like child rights, gender, health, homeless children, etc. These topics are then produced either in print or audio-visual media formats. The primary focus is on young people’s self-expression. Children’s Media Center, Kyrgyzstan, combines television, video and short film production in promoting children’s rights, gender issues, and HIV/AIDS related topics. Video production is almost entirely handled by children and young people. The Center recruits children and youth in the ages between 13 to 20 as full members. After receiving training in video production, the young members develop scripts and write screenplays, and television story plots on a number of topics of interest to them.

Adult professional help and support in video production is provided through a series of short workshops on camera techniques, editing, and other post-production work. Although media production is accorded importance by the center, it is to be seen in conjunction with the basic mission of the center in espousing children’s rights, fighting against gender-based discrimination, and working to highlight issues around HIV/AIDS. The young members become familiar with these social issues confronting Kyrgyzstan. In unique and interesting ways, the members explore these issues through television and video and produce materials. Media education at the Center provides young members opportunities to explore various facets of video journalism. A member, Bektour Syykov, who has been at the Center for several months, says that he has learnt how to write for television and develop a storyboard independently. There are several other examples of young members who have become successful video producers. The video training is more than an acquisition of skills and techniques: rather, it broadens their experience. A 17-year old member, Anton Formed has become confident and asserts that he has not only learnt how to
use a camera, but also to develop his ideas through video stories. Clearly the Children’s Media Center offers these young people media education opportunities not found elsewhere in Kyrgyzstan.

**Reproductive Health and Life Planning Skills**

The visual media productions at the Children’s Media Center are meant for diverse audiences: from local and national television networks in Bishkek to international media like CNN. With a clear focus on promotion of children’s rights, gender issues, HIV/AIDS, and on imparting life-planning skills through the use of media, the Center is involved in bringing numerous children and young people into television and video production. Several innovative programmes have been produced in the past with the support of UNICEF and other organizations. A documentary entitled, “Children of the Underground,” about homeless children on the streets, won recognition from Kyrgyzstan national television network. The children’s production team was invited to participate in a discussion that was broadcast on the television network. The documentary also won recognition at international documentary festivals. Another documentary, “A Day of Water and Earth,” is about how children from the orphanages of Bishkek cleaned up the river Alameda. There are other programmes that cover topics like gender discrimination and children’s rights that were made in engaging and innovative ways by the child video makers. In addition, children had worked at the children’s television unit of the mainstream American television network CNN in Atlanta. The training here led to some interesting short television films called “video stories.” A couple of the stories were shown on the CNN network. In addition, a few interactive video albums have been produced.

The Children’s Media center, with sponsorship and support from UNICEF and the Democratic committee of the US Embassy in the Kyrgyz Republic, has involved children and young people – aged 13–20 years – in the production of a monthly television news magazine, “Neboscreb” (Skyscraper), that is produced in Kyrgyz and Russian languages. Although adults provide coordination and support, the youth take the lead in editorial matters and production discussions. Some of the topics featured in “Neboscreb” included: children’s right to schooling, homeless kids, child abuse, mountain climbing, wonders of nature, children’s health, etc. A cursory look at the topics indicates that these are not unique to the Kyrgyz children and youngsters, but appear in other case studies being discussed here. What is unique, however, to the Kyrgyz children (as one might expect for other countries as well) is that their commentaries and critiques are not ideological and coloured by politics: rather, the problems posed and solutions offered have pragmatic and ethical appeal. The television and video productions of the Center are broadcast over the state-run network but also between and among the members of the community. In an age where mediated forms of communication have become the primary means of delivering information and knowledge, what is, perhaps, needed is to extend dialogic forms of communication and conversation across cross-cultural boundaries. The video programmes produced by the children and young people are good examples of what can
be achieved by the youth while working with the television and video media. Rather than merely seeing the television and video media as facilitators for self-expression of the children, one must consider them in terms of social networks that are crucial to human development. The unique ways through which children and young people bring the media into conversations and dialogue are remarkable achievements that are worth emulating by adult-run commercial media institutions, such as the Kyrgyz television network.

To carry forward the conversations from television and video, the Center has printed some of these materials in the form of booklets for distribution among various schools. This strategy enables a long term dialogue and enlists the support and participation of school children as well. More importantly, it brings these concrete issues into education and learning in schools. Thus, by carefully combining its advocacy and activist concerns with educational and pedagogic objectives, the Children's Media Center, like so many other initiatives, provides an innovative media education model. An important strategy of the initiatives is the ability to generate ongoing dialogues and conversations that go beyond the “workshops” and have the potential to foster a sense of community and create numerous alliances among the young participants.

The Initiative from India

“Mapping the Neighbourhood”, funded by the Department of Science and Technology, Government of India, is an initiative of the NGO, Centre for Science Development and Media Studies (CSDMS). It was introduced in 2002, and “conceptualized as an alternative learning experience, has attempted to move from a ‘strategy-structure-systems’ approach to a ‘purpose-people-process’ approach through the use of ICT and community maps in the learning process. The programme has aimed to install a new kind of imparting education on the aspects of neighbourhood level development that is based on participatory learning and collection of relevant information of the locality.” The project is spread over several schools in Northern India. The “Mapping the Neighbourhood” project extends the concept by involving school children in the process. The main purpose of the project is to provide school children with opportunities to learn about their regional geography and landscape and share this with other members of the community. The school children learn about global information systems through workshops organised at their respective schools. The students work with personal digital assistants (PDAs) and global positioning systems (GPS) technologies to map their neighbourhoods.

The emergence of computers, the Internet, the World Wide Web, and various mobile communication devices has raised optimism among developmental agencies and media education practitioners. There are two responses: one celebratory and euphoric and the other cautious, but optimistic. UNESCO has been engaged in developing policies and programmes that are cautious and optimistic. Consequently, questions are asked and discussions carried-out on the transformative potential of
A Study of Media Pedagogies in Three Asian Societies

these emergent ICTs for children and young people. In this context, it is appropriate to ask how these technologies could enable enhanced participation and help overcome barriers to education. In what ways, if at all, do children and young people interact with these technologies? One example where ICTs are being incorporated into the formal school learning settings is indeed the “Mapping the Neighbourhood” Project in India. The project, conceptualized and developed by the Centre for Spatial Database Management and Solution (CSDMS), an independent organisation with support from the Department of Science and Technology of the Government of India, involves school children from the rural and urban regions of Almora and Nainital of Uttaranchal province of North India. The basic approach to community mapping has been to visually construct a “map” of the places and spaces in the community. It has been widely used as a tool for planning and development of various projects.

The main goal of “Mapping the Neighbourhood” is to make computer-based education attractive to young learners. Although ICTs are understood to enhance learning and participation, the project integrated the uses of several technologies like personal digital assistants and global positioning systems to local developmental needs. This in itself is an innovative approach. The involvement of school students makes it a unique exercise. First, it seeks to transform the traditional education process with learning that now takes place in the community, outside the classroom. It is through “doing” that students acquire knowledge. Second, the idea of development itself is transformed. Community participation provides the student learners with opportunities and training in citizenship. The convergence of ICTs, development and education can be glimpsed in the work being carried out by students in Almora and Nainital area in Hawalbag. Here community mapping goes beyond territories and landscape; rather, the visual representations of their regions gives the people knowledge and understanding of how communities live in the social and material world. Mullick, Dhar, and Satyaprakash (2004) conclude that the use of ICT as an alternative form of education in rural and urban areas has demonstrated that this form of education can have appositive affect on the community at large. . . . Innovative use of technology changes the way development takes place and ensures that the issues of concern to the general public are addressed.

The “Mapping the Neighbourhood” project extends the concept by involving school children in the process. The main purpose of the project is to provide school children with opportunities to learn about their regional geography and landscape and share this with other members of the community. The school children learn about the global information system through workshops organised at their respective schools. The students work with personal digital assistants (PDAs) and global positioning systems (GPS) technologies to map their neighbourhoods. Another goal is to bring students in dialogue with local and rural communities about the integrating mapping technologies for local development. An important aspect of learning here, one that goes beyond the formal schooling, is the active participation of school children in community development. The notion of participation takes on a whole new meaning in the activities of the school children. ICTs provide a context for
social networking and ongoing conversations among children and adult members of the rural communities.

Commenting on the innovative work, Rumi Mallick (2004) points out “that young people learn about participation and democracy while in school where they not only spend a considerable proportion of their lives and undertake a formal education, it is also a place where many of their views and perspectives on life are developed and shaped.” Although the idea behind the project is referred to as “an alternative learning experience,” the primary intent is to integrate ICTs into formal education. Mallick explains that “with an aim to create an enabling context for the youth to live, grow, learn, participate, decide, analyze, and change, the programme empowered the youth of the mountain areas by exposing them to technology tools, in this case Geo-ICT tools.” These are innovative ideas, extending the traditional community mapping through technologies and bringing school children as stakeholders into the development process. More important, it is aimed at transforming the idea of education from classroom settings to the field. These strategies enable learning, and as Mallick rightly points out, they provide knowledge as well as raise the consciousness of the school children. Taking the children as ‘agents of change’, this project has tried to evolve an alternative form of education as well as a developmental process.” The conversations between student teams and local community members are an exercise in decentralized planning and rural development. As a form of “direct education” it emulates what Paulo Freire had outlined through his philosophy of education: dialogic education through interaction with a focus on practice (or praxis).

Concluding Remarks

The various media practices undertaken by children and young people discussed here explored innovative uses, role of technology, particularly the old and new ICTs, and youth participation in cross-cultural settings. This provided a baseline for an exploration of how young people engage with the various media forms – magazines, radio, and personal digital assistants. The three initiatives offered a broad range of approaches to the media education, literacy, and learning. The media experiments revealed some interesting findings with respect to the questions outlined. The idea of learning through content creation also includes designing the messages in creative and expressive ways. Although the idea of content creation is an obvious first step in media making, it serves an important purpose for the children and young people. It provided a sense of accomplishment and ownership, both individual and collective. The conversations and dialogue between the young people, and their peers, with the adults within the initiatives and larger community, pointed to aspects of participation and involvement that otherwise would not have been possible in other media and educational settings.

The notion of “media mixes” has been crucial in elaborating youth participation and involvement in the media that enabled learning and education through fun and
pleasure. The combinations of media forms enabled the young people to creatively build media materials on a range of personal and social topics. In addition to simplifying the mundane procedures and tasks and enabling quicker learning of skills, the mixed media offered unique innovative possibilities for the youngsters as journalists and media producers. The struggle for the recognition of children’s rights through print-based media, radio, and ICTs has a deep impact for both the participants and the larger community.

Although the conclusions offered here are provisional, I noticed transformative possibilities of media in the hands of young people. The various initiatives discussed have faced sustainability issues – more particularly financial sustainability. The lack of adequate funding had in the past led to the threat of closure and discontinuance of the projects. The various project partners, sponsors and funding agencies have demonstrated a willingness to help and continue their support even in the face of serious political and social conflicts. With the continued support of organisations like UNESCO, UNICEF and others, particularly various non-governmental agencies, these initiatives have been able to successfully face the challenges. For the children and young people of the various initiatives the journey continues.

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Media Education in India

India is now experiencing a media boom, but the state of media education is not very promising. It finds no mention in school and college programmes in general. Media education is normally imparted in the form of workshops, seminars, or as one subject in the school/college curriculum. The older day media educators are not able to comprehend the present day media technologies. The developments in the media have gone beyond their grasp. But there are no serious attempts on the part of the media centres to deal with the situation. Most of the media education teachers are self-taught. Many of them are from a social action background. They want to criticize the media from the political and moral point of view rather than providing tools to analyse and understand them. Most of them have neither studied about the media nor have any working experience in the media. More so, media education enjoys a low priority in educational institutions and communication centres.

Media educators in India share the following assumptions with common people:

- The media perpetuate violence, sex, aggressive behaviour and anti-social values
- The media support the rich and the mighty
- The media are a neo-colonizing agent
- The media degrade women
- The mass media kill traditional media like folk media
- The media are used for political power
- The media waste our time and money
- The media are “the powerful other”. We cannot do anything about the media
- The young get corrupted by the media
- The media influence must be reduced.

In India we can see a clear pattern in media education programmes. Most of the programmes had been started by Catholic initiatives. Media education was started

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in India in a big way after Pope John Paul II’s announcement on International Communication Year in 1983 urging the Catholic churches to promote media education. He urged the church to educate the youth about the mass media and their effects. And the Catholic media centres started media education programmes.

**Models of Media Education**

Going into the models of media education is important as they determine the course content and modules of the respective media education initiatives. Here are some of the models of media education in India.

**Inoculation**

There is a deep-rooted mistrust and pessimism that springs from the thought that young people have to be protected from harmful but powerful influences of the media. The focus is often on negative issues pertaining to the media such as that of violence, sex stereotyping, and manipulation in advertising. This starts from misunderstanding and suspicion on the part of the teachers at school. This model aims at the strategies to reduce TV addiction, hero worship, etc. A good number of schools are interested in this model based on the logic that what is taught in the schools is washed away by undesirable values promoted by television programming. For instance, media activism by schools in the 1970s and the 1980s such as media clubs and public protests/processions against sensuous hoardings falls under this model. This model is no longer popular in India.

**Creating Awareness About Media Technology**

This is one of the very early approaches. Here the students or the participants are briefed about the technical aspects of each medium. For example, contents of media education workshops include the television broadcasting system, TV transmission station, a visit to the TV station, explaining about camera, mikes, etc., and an interactive session with media personnel. This model is based on the principle of breaking the myths about the media. It helps students develop an informed and critical awareness of the nature of the mass media, the techniques used by them and the impact of these techniques. For instance, Amirtavani of Hyderabad successfully experimented with this model in the 1980s.

**Criticizing Media Content from a Broad Left Perspective**

This model concentrates on media content instead of media hardware. Media messages are analysed in terms of anti-poor, anti-women, anti-tradition and anti-Third World. It discusses western domination and ideological control, and the divide between the First World and the Third World, and calls for political or social action. The idea is that the media are owned by capitalists and they impart their class
ideology on the rest of the population through the media. Social action groups are inclined to follow this model.

**Critical Autonomy**

Some media education centres use this model evolved by the British media educator Len Masterman. They teach about the media, their position in the present socio-political context, the uniqueness of the media, the determinants, the media institutions, media language and its audience, and encourage the participants to develop a critical autonomy towards the media. This model was used by the Culture and Communication Centre in Chennai in the late 1980s and the early 1990s. It helps increase the students’ understanding and enjoyment of how the media work, how they produce meaning, how they are organized and how they construct reality. This is achieved by the analysis of media texts and production of media content. For instance, such a model is adopted by professional journalists who (through a charitable trust) promote media education courses in school during the ‘craft hour’ as part of a Tata-funded project.

**Media Appreciation**

This model believes in strengthening the good media by supporting the good media, with the belief that the bad media will face a natural death. Bad media thrive because we are not able to appreciate the good media. So, this model concentrates on the media language and sees the media as an art form and develops skills for appreciation. This model is mainly used in the areas of film and print. Teaching of the media here includes cultivating among the young aesthetic taste and appreciation for media products particularly films. The history and theory of aesthetics and art too are taught. The focus is on aesthetics, the ability to enjoy, understand and appreciate media content from an artistic point of view. Starting with film appreciation, Chitrabani of Kolkata has done pioneering work in media education since the late 1970s.

**Media Issues**

This model concentrates on some serious issues about the media such as the representation of women, violence and the media, caste and the media, and consumerism and the media. The main aim is to throw light on these issues and accelerate social change. The idea is to create active and critical media users who will demand and assert their social and political rights through the mainstream media. Academic institutions on the media and the Asian Media, Information and Communication Centre base their media extension activities on this model.

**Alternative Media**

There is an ideological resistance to the mainstream media which resistance is considered part of a system to diffuse an oppressive ideology, often at the behest of
capitalists and imperialists. So this model involves empowering the participants by media action. It encourages the participants to be familiar with alternative media (such as street theatre, puppetry and folk forms) both in form and content. Video workshops are also conducted to train the participants in creating social documentaries. Social action groups emerging from the grassroots such as Dalit and women’s civil society groups have used this model for media education in recent years. Alternative media are seen as a form of struggle against such ideological domination.

‘Catch Them Young’ Model

Media organizations are now major players in media education. The idea is to catch the children when they are young so that the media have loyal consumers, besides promoting media awareness and encouraging consumer participation. Newspapers in particular take up activities such as painting, quizzes, drawing and writing competitions for school children. They also give newspapers at subsidized rates for children so that the readership base is expanded. They also bring out supplements for children/youth where the consumers have a say in creating media content. *The Times of India* and *The Hindu* have ‘newspaper in education’ projects.

ICT-Driven Model

At a time when media education has lost its charm mainly due to the funds drying up, hype on ICT has revived media education. Experiments on ‘information kiosks’ at the grassroots made by the M.S. Swaminathan Research Foundation, Chennai, and others are being replicated in several villages in the country. School going children in particular visit these information kiosks to learn about computers. UNESCO and private partners such as Tata have given financial backing. With the Government of India starting to give community radio licences to non-governmental organizations, the concept of a radio station owned, operated and managed by the community has become a reality. The Community Radio Forum – a forum of community radio activists in India – is bent on demystifying the medium of radio for villagers with their participation in content creation.

Demystification in Programming

In this model, the job of demystification of how media content is created is done in the media programming itself. For instance, in the late 1990s following a court direction to demystify the visual effects of a popular superhero Shaktimaan television serial, an episode was devoted solely to demystify the visual effects. The court direction followed a few suicide cases involving children – mistaking fantasy for reality – triggered by the visual effects of the serial.
**Theory to Practice**

Media awareness workshops are being conducted by various institutions such as the Culture and Communication Centre, Chennai; the United Theological College, Bangalore; the Newspaper in Education project, The Hindu, the Newspaper in Education project, The Times of India, New Delhi; and the Centre for Media Studies, New Delhi. Media organizations have the aim of promoting their media besides a sense of public service. When media organizations dabble with media education, they only talk about the rosy side of the media. Church institutions may like to point to the morally destructive character of the media. Non-governmental organizations may look at the media’s undemocratic aspect of neglecting some disadvantaged groups.

At times when a few children have taken to bizarre acts influenced by a serial, institutions such as the Centre for Media Studies, New Delhi, have organised workshops involving parents, teachers and social activists. Such workshops have made the people aware that violence is bad even if it is done to triumph over evil. In a country with a religious tradition that hails triumph over evil through violence, this is a major achievement.

In the 1990s, there was a lot of hype about introducing media education as a subject in schools and colleges in India. There was also a move sponsored by the University Grants Commission to introduce a visual literacy course at the undergraduate level in select colleges throughout the country, when proliferation of television channels started in the 1990s. This is based on the logic that with the vast expansion of television there is a need to make the youngsters understand the visual language and its possible manipulation. But then, the course never materialized.

The problem is, where will you fit in a media education course if it has to be introduced as a full paper in schools and colleges? Already, there is a non-major paper on moral education. And there have been demands for a value education course too. The demand for a value education course started with the National Policy on Education, 1986. The stress on value education got a renewed vigour with a spiritual tint when Hindu nationalism emerged as a political force in the 1990s. In the late 1990s, demand for another course surfaced – it would be called ‘human rights education’. So the question is, should schools and colleges incorporate every aspect of these in moral education itself or choose to have independent courses on moral education, value education, media education and human rights education. Peace education too vies for a slot in the post-9/11 era. As it is, students and teachers do not take the moral education course seriously.

Another argument is that media education need not be confined to a separate paper. It should be incorporated along with other subjects. (The same argument holds good for value education, human rights education, and peace education.) For instance, media education can be successfully taught as part of subjects like English or other languages by teaching language skills through media texts. In language classes, newspapers could be used as an effective textbook for learning ‘language through newspapers’ similar to the widely-prevalent approach of learning ‘language through literature’. Or in Social Science classes by commenting on the
effects of the media. Teachers have the mission to sensitize students to the happenings in the real world. For incorporating media education effectively in other subjects, the teacher needs to have creative ability and also proper training.

Students of today live in a media-dominant environment. It has been said that media programming washes away values learnt in schools. Schools can no longer ignore the media and remain insulated from the media content. Students take to the media with ease more than taking to books. So teaching through the media is not only a challenge but also a great opportunity. Radio and television can be effectively used as educational media either with syllabus or enrichment programming. Educational radio and educational television for school and college students in India have failed to succeed on a large scale because of the apathy of teachers. Teachers considered it a waste of time to allocate time for viewing or listening to educational programming. In fact, educational programming can also serve as a launch pad into media education. If these programmes were effectively used, teachers would also develop a positive approach to the power of the media. Thus media education helps students and teachers to have control over the media environment rather than be dominated by it.

The messages of the media can be informational, educational and cultural. So schools and colleges cannot ignore understanding of the media, at least when they have facilities to impart such a course. Of late, several colleges that offer degree programmes in Communication offer non-major optional courses for students from other majors. Some of the students on these courses at the undergraduate level later take to master’s degree programmes in Communication. Some others have entered media as professionals. A few B.Ed. programmes too offer a course on Media Studies; this could lay a solid foundation for the introduction of media education as a course, at least in select schools using the resources of teachers thus trained.

**Training Media Educators**

The basic aim of media education is to reinvigorate a democratic consciousness. Media education in India has to enrich the democratization of communication and development of society, which can be achieved by enabling the youth to take part creatively and critically in the use of media technology and traditional media as well. It should embolden people to air their views through the media and monitor the performance of the media. The thrust should be on training responsible and participative media consumers, rather than just critical media consumers. For this to happen, media educators should be equipped with the know-how of the media.

Training needs to be organized at different levels: (a) a basic course for all teachers; (b) a specialist course for those who will be directly teaching media education; and (c) a higher university level course.

The training of media educators should take into account the changing dynamism of the media. Media education should move from newspaper text analysis to
television text analysis; from a mere appreciation of the media to a critical understanding of the media, to creators of media content. Emphasis may be given on computer-based media, as computers and the Internet have been incorporated in the school curriculum, and students and teachers will be comfortable with them. More so, resources are, of late, spent on computer and Internet training and this seems to supersede the importance of other media.

Based on a review of proceedings of international conferences on media education, D.J. Sagayaraj (2006) has identified five recurring themes.

- Influence of television on children
- Impact of media violence in particular on children
- New technologies, particularly that of the Internet for education
- Media in globalization era, with reference to cultural identity and diversity
- Transformation of media educator from enthusiast to professional.

Media educators must be qualified in all aspects of media education – sound theory, good practice, ability to organize media education activities and research. Particularly when it comes to media education, teachers should give up ‘top–down teaching’ where the teacher is presented as the knower of all things. Teacher training itself should impart media skill-based education and media criticism, and a ‘bottom–up’ approach to teaching them.

Television is particularly biased against women and girl children as it often stereotypes them and shows them in a bad light. There is a tendency to deny the worth of women and girls and to promote men and boys. The stereotyped images of men and women should go. To promote gender sensitivity, children should be taught decoding and encoding methods for understanding and making meaning.

A variety of groups (educational and religious, formal and informal, public and private) provide media education to children. All these groups should be incorporated in the media educator training programmes. Collaboration with all stakeholders such as parents, community project organisers, and youth workers will be fruitful to organize workshops, conferences, sending across newsletters, and developing curriculum on media education.

Media education helps develop awareness on the ways in which meaning is made in media texts by imparting ways of analysing media texts. So media educators should know how to identify codes and conventions used in the media. They should teach how meaning is produced with the combination of words, sound, colour, light and image. Media texts and languages are basic for critical analysis. They are indispensible for knowing how the media produce meanings, and how codes, conventions and formats are used.

Insufficient training and lack of teaching materials available to media educators remain stumbling blocks. There is a need for cooperation and support from local and state government bodies for implementing media education. Also, there is a need to design relevant methodologies so that society as a whole becomes aware of the influence of the media. Media education must reach out to people in all walks of life.
The media scene has changed. It is no more limited to print and broadcast journalism. Professionals will handle television camera, web pages and corporate newsletters. The demand for trained writers and editors will increase. With foreign journals set to outsource editing and writing, more jobs are demanded. There will be a convergence of various media. Print, audio-visual and the Internet skills may be required of a single person to make a mark in the media world. By the end of 2010, India will have 1,500,000 jobs related to the media industry.

As argued in this paper, media education as a separate subject in schools and colleges in India is still not feasible. But to protect the students from the harmful effects of the media and to take advantage of the beneficial aspects of the media, media education has to be introduced at least as components of different subjects. As part of language classes, the media – particularly newspapers – could be introduced. When language teaching has a component ‘language through literature’ why not ‘language through newspapers’? Evaluating the media text would help students to develop analytical and critical thinking, which are integral to education. Media education courses could be introduced on a trial basis in select schools and colleges.

Alumni of Communication departments who are into the media profession too could be involved in the conduct of media education workshops. They would have the advantage of being professionals, besides possessing a background in media studies. The media education syllabi need to be updated frequently to keep up with to the fast changing media.

Media education in India is still in its infancy. Even research on media education is hard to find. Funding from the Catholic church for media education has diminished since the late 1990s. So church institutions, along with non-governmental organizations, acting as the civil society to pressure the government to offer media education in schools and colleges is a thing of the past. Since the curricula are centrally devised, only the government can introduce a course on media education. Otherwise, media education will be confined to and remain in the periphery of some media houses, church schools and some non-governmental organizations. Media education enables people to intervene actively in the production process instead of being passive consumers of media messages. In a developing country like India, media education can bring out the manipulative and morally degrading aspects of the media. The future of media education depends on the development of long-term, rigorous educational work with classroom teachers as essential partners in implementing it in schools.

Challenges Ahead

Here are some challenges facing media education in India.

**Funds:** Most of the media education programmes are project based, and they cease to exist once the fund flow stops. Due to the low priority society accords to media education, the programmes cannot generate money to support them. Many
programmes depended on foreign contributions, and when the sponsors changed their priorities the programmes suffered.

**Resources:** Media education came to India 30 years ago, but there are still no proper resource centres on media education. To teach media we need to systematically document media texts. But no centre concentrates on documentation. There is no library that stocks the key books on media education. The books on media education do not cater to the different levels. Moreover, there is a need of graded textbooks on media education. There is paucity for audio-visual training materials as well.

**Training of media educators:** There is no educational institution in India that offers courses for media educators, or to train people to handle media education classes. Media education teachers are self-taught. They use the available resources. So there is no uniform course structure for media education. The situation in India is that one can get trained in journalism, visual communication, and electronic media but not in media education. More so, academic recognition for media education is lacking in India.

**Follow-up:** Media education courses are conducted as a one-time programme. Apart from the evaluation conducted at the end of the programme there is no definite follow-up. Also, the programme is not graded; so a student will undergo more or less the same programme in every course. Since there is no systematic follow-up, the student cannot sustain interest in aspects taught in media education.

**Media education content:** Except in a few places, most of the media education programmes concentrate only on the content. They do not discuss the inseparable role of media form. When they discuss about the film they talk only a story, dialogue, and the moral, but they do not discuss the camera, sound narrative form and the like.

**Conclusion**

Communication training has a long history in India. Annie Besant, founder-editor of *New India*, started communication training in Madras (later called Chennai) in 1920. The first university communication department was tried out in Aligarh Muslim University in 1938. When media education emerged in the 1980s, it was promoted mainly by groups outside the purview of the academic institutions. Most of the programmes had been started by Catholic initiatives. The other initiatives are from NGOs, media organizations, universities and schools. Media education helps develop awareness on the ways in which meaning is made in media texts by imparting ways of analysing media texts. So media educators should know how to identify codes and conventions used in the media. They should teach how meaning is produced with the combination of words, sound, colour, light and image. Media texts and languages are basic for critical analysis. They are indispensable for knowing how the media produce meanings, and how codes, conventions and formats are used. Insufficient training and lack of teaching materials available to media educators remain stumbling blocks. There is a need for cooperation and support from local and state government bodies for implementing media education. Also, there is
a need to design relevant methodologies so that society as a whole becomes aware of the influence of the media. Media education must reach out to people in all walks of life. Media education in India is not backed by academic communication education centres unlike in the West. One reason is because media education ought to be development oriented in a developing country like India. Academic communication centres are media-centric rather than society-centric to cater to this need. By and large, media education in India aims at a democratic communication that liberates the oppressed from their shackles. This is why media education generally stresses training in alternative media besides media criticism. Media education in India is still in its infancy. Even research on media education is hard to find. Funding from the Catholic church for media education has diminished since the late 1990s. So church institutions, along with non-governmental organizations, acting as the civil society to pressure the government to offer media education in schools and colleges is a thing of the past. Since the curricula are centrally devised, only the government can introduce a course on media education. Otherwise, media education will be confined to and remain in the periphery of some media houses, church schools and some non-governmental organizations. Media education enables people to intervene actively in the production process instead of being passive consumers of media messages. In a developing country like India, media education can bring out the manipulative and morally degrading aspects of the media. The future of media education depends on the development of long-term, rigorous educational work with classroom teachers as essential partners in implementing it in schools.

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Media Education in Japan: Concepts, Policies, and Practices

Kanae Suzuki

Introduction

In this age of the information society, media is widespread among homes and schools, and children are exposed to various types of media at a very early age. The Time-Budget Survey (NHK Broadcasting Culture Research Institute, 2005) reported that the per weekday average of Japanese elementary school students exposed to some types of mass media (TV, radio, newspapers, magazines, comics, books, CDs, MDs or music tapes, and videos) was 2 hours and 50 minutes; for junior high school students it was 3 hours and 1 minute; and for high school students it was 4 hours and 51 minutes.

Video games and computers are also widely used by children. According to a survey conducted by the National Congress of the Parents and Teachers Association of Japan in November 2006, the rate of video game possession by elementary and junior high school students was about 90%. Moreover, the “Survey on the use of information communication equipment for elementary, junior high school, and high school students” conducted by the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications (MIC) reported the rates of possession of personal computers and cellular phones were very high among high school students (Benesse, 2007). Therefore, in this situation, where children are surrounded by media, it is becoming increasingly important to promote the ability to handle this media (Sakamoto & Suzuki, 2007).

This chapter provides an overview of the trends in media education in Japan. First, it organizes the current major concepts of media literacy in Japan, after which, it reviews the historical progress of media education in Japan. The Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology (MEXT) in Japan is currently promoting information education in order to promote the development of “skill to effectively use information” (Jyouhou Katsuyou Nouryoku); however, efforts at including media literacy into the curriculum are lagging. The chapter also proceeds
to summarize the current situation of media education in schools. The new curriculum guidelines that were introduced in 2002 instituted a few media education classes in junior high school and high school as compulsory subjects. Fourthly, it describes the present situation of social support for media education in Japan. Non-profit organizations (NPOs), civilian organizations, companies, public organizations, universities, foundations, etc., are conducting activities related to the promotion of media literacy for children although the cooperation between the organizations is weak in Japan, compared to the case in foreign countries. Moreover, the development of study materials and the provision of information pertaining to media education have gradually progressed, and this chapter introduces some examples that are indicative of this progress. Finally, the chapter classifies the issues of media education in Japan and discusses future visions.

**Concepts of Media Literacy**

There are four major media literacy-related concepts in Japan as follows: traditional media literacy as developed in Canada and certain European countries, media literacy as defined by MIC; the skill to effectively use information as defined by MEXT and which is widely accepted by educators; and computer literacy observed at schools.

*Traditional Media Literacy*

Media literacy refers to the ability to read information through the media and to write in order to communicate through the media. This term is mainly used in North America, and in England the term “media education” is used instead. Although the terms differ across countries, they have a common meaning, i.e., study in which critical understanding of the media is learned (Sugaya, 2000). The word “critical” refers to logical and unbiased thoughts based on the appropriate standards or grounds (Sugaya, 2000); it is pointed out that this word might also imply the concept of “reviewing” (Sakamoto & Suzuki, 2007). The Ontario Ministry of Education in Canada officially established media literacy education in its curriculum – the first country in the world to do so. This traditional media literacy comprises eight key concepts, one of which is “All media are construction” (Pungente, n.d.).

*Media Literacy Defined by MIC*

The former Ministry of Posts and Telecommunications (currently MIC) defined media literacy as a complex skill comprising three types of abilities, namely, “the ability to subjectively read and comprehend media content,” “the ability to access
and use media,” and “the ability to communicate through media, especially an interactive communication ability”, as shown in Fig. 1. The ability to subjectively read and comprehend media content is further divided into “the ability to understand the various characteristics of media conveying information” and “the ability to analyze, evaluate, and critically examine in a social context, and select information conveyed by media” (Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications 2000; Sakamoto & Suzuki, 2007; Suzuki, 2007; Suzuki, 2008).

**Skill to Effectively Use Information as Defined by MEXT**

The former Ministry of Education (currently MEXT), which promotes information education and reviews educational systems, has been using the term “the skill to effectively use information” instead of “media literacy” when implementing educational measures. In 1998, the former Ministry of Education articulated the three abilities listed in Table 1 the skill to practically use information, the scientific understanding information, and a positive attitude toward participation in the information society (Primary and Secondary Education Bureau of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology, 2002; Sakamoto & Suzuki, 2007; Suzuki, 2007; Suzuki, 2008).

**Computer Literacy**

The computer industry in Japan and the US had greater impetus, and thus, it is believed that computers were accepted first and then media literacy education about media such as TV started later (Sakamoto, 2004). Compared to the countries that are already well developed in the field of media literacy education, such as Canada or certain European countries, issues about the mass media are not very well
Table 1  Skill to effectively use information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skill</th>
<th>Description</th>
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| Skill to practically use information       | • Appropriate and effective use of means for handling information depending on assignments or purposes
|                                            | • The ability to subjectively collect, judge, express, process, and create necessary information
|                                            | • The ability to communicate such information while taking the recipients’ status into consideration |
| Scientific understanding of information   | • Understanding the nature of means for handling information, which is the basis of effective use of information |
|                                            | • Understanding the basic logics and methods to appropriately handle information or to evaluate and improve current information usage |
| Positive attitude toward participation in the information society | • Understanding the roles that information and information technology play in society |
|                                            | • Consideration of the necessity of information morality and responsibilities for information |
|                                            | • The attitude toward participation in creation of a favorable information society |

recognized in Japanese school education. Therefore, education about skills to effectively use computers (or “computer literacy education”) such as basic operating principles and the characteristics of computers, understanding of when to use computers, handling of devices such as keyboards and mice, typing and basic operations, and data and information processing are sometimes confused with “media literacy education” (Suzuki, 2008).

**Relationships Among these Concepts**

The four media literacy-related concepts are different in terms of which aspect the media is centered on and how critical thinking is regarded. With respect to the former, the traditional media literacy definition and the media literacy as defined by MIC center on relations with the mass media, such as television. In contrast, the skill to effectively use information as defined by MEXT and the computer literacy center on computers.

On the other hand, critical thinking is considered to be the most important ability both by the traditional media literacy and by the one defined by MIC. The skill to effectively use information as defined by MEXT includes critical thinking as part of “the skill to practically use information” and “a positive attitude toward participation in the information society.” However, it is not considered to be the main concept. The computer literacy emphasizes the effective use of computer technology but does not include reading the media or information (Sakamoto & Suzuki, 2007).
The Development of Media Education and their History

From Early Media Education to the Promotion of the Skill to Effectively Use Information

Examples of early media education include “learning and teaching using the broadcasting system” stemming from movie education begun in the 1920s and education on broadcasting such as “learning and teaching about broadcasting media” implemented in the second half of the 1940s (Postal Services Agency of the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, 2000). The latter which includes the critical reading of media hadn’t been conducted as many practical case examples as the former.

Since the second half of the 1970s, groups of researchers proposed the definition and the curricula of visual literacy and the media literacy education curricula. However, before these approaches were widely accepted and employed, computer literacy education attracted much attention in Japan in the 1980s, and as a result, the term “information education” proposed in the context of media education now tends to be understood as computer literacy education (Postal Services Agency of the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, 2000). In 1980s, through discussions by the Ad Hoc Council on Education (from September 1984 to August 1987), the phrase “the skill to effectively use information” was defined for the first time at the national level as the term corresponding to the concept of so-called “information literacy”1 in foreign countries. In this report, the skill to effectively use information was defined as “the basic ability of individuals to take the initiative to select information and means for handling information, and to effectively use such information.”

In 1990s, the current frame of the skill to effectively use information was proposed. According to the final report of August 1998 ( Researchers Conference on the Promotion of Information Education in Elementary and Secondary Level Education to Respond to the Development of Informatization, 1998), as described above, the skill to effectively use information, which was to be developed at elementary schools, junior high schools, and senior high schools, could be categorized into: (1) the skill to practically use information; (2) the scientific understanding of information; and (3) a positive attitude toward participation in the information society. Presently, this definition is the most commonly accepted one. In a report that was submitted in August 2006 by a study group on informatization in elementary schools and junior high schools – which was established in December 2004 – these three categories of the skill to effectively use information were organized into eight elements (Table 1). It defines the term “information education” as “the nurturing of children’s skill to effectively use information.”

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1 In a broad sense, information literacy refers to the general ability to process information required in problem-solving, and in a narrower sense, it usually refers only to the skill or ability to effectively use computers or the Internet (Takahira, 2003).
Informatization of Education

The six-year long millennium project titled “Informatization of education” began in the Japanese 2000 school year (from April to next March). According to the New Information Education Guide that was framed by MEXT in June 2002, the objectives of informatization of education are to (1) promote children’s skill to effectively use information, that is, implement systematic information education, and (2) effectively utilize information instruments to achieve targets for each subject. Moreover, information education in schools is described as education that is not specific to a particular level of schooling; instead, by implement systematic information education in schools from the elementary to the high-school level and through their whole life, it is necessary that information education establishes a foundation for the enrichment of individual lifestyles and society (Primary and Secondary Education Bureau of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology, 2002).

Therefore, the ideal methods required for introducing information education at each level of schooling were first mentioned in the New Information Education Guide. Next, these methods were systematically arranged in the report by a study group on informatization in elementary and junior high schools (from December 2004 to March 2006) (Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, 2006a). The findings of this study group revealed the following guidelines and the education continuity for each level of schooling. At the elementary school level, the skill to practically use information should be focused on; additionally, the scientific understanding information and a positive attitude toward participation in the information society should be promoted. At the junior high school level, these three abilities should be preferably promoted and treated in conjunction with one another and the scientific understanding of information should be enriched. At the high school level, it is mentioned that skills acquired in elementary and junior high schools should evolve into literacy, which is an integrated ability.

New Development of Media Education Since New Curriculum Guidelines in 2002

Due to the new developments in media education that were brought about by the curriculum guidelines established in 2002, the media education in Japan has also faced new developments. The former Ministry of Education (currently MEXT) announced the “new educational guidelines for elementary schools and junior high schools” (Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology 1998a,b) in December 1998 (revised in part in December 2003), and the “new educational guidelines for senior high schools” (Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology, 1999) in March 1999 (revised in part in May 2002, April 2003, and December 2003). The basic purpose of these new educational guidelines was to let each school provide “distinctive education” under “no pressure” such that children’s “zest for living,” which refers to their ability to learn and think for
themselves, would be fostered in the complete five-day-week school system that was introduced in the 2002 school year in Japan.

Based on the new curriculum guidelines, the newly introduced curriculum was introduced in the Japanese 2002 school year for elementary and junior high schools and in the Japanese 2003 school year for students starting high school education. By the revisions, a “period for integrated study” has been implemented within all elementary schools and junior high schools since the 2002 school year and is being implemented gradually at senior high schools starting from new students of the 2003 school year (Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology, 2002). Textbooks are not used in the “period for integrated study,” and classes are conducted to (1) foster the ability of children to learn and think for themselves, and (2) teach them how to learn or how to do research. To be more specific, they can study topics such as information, global understanding, the environment, and health and welfare.

In the new curriculum guidelines introduced in 2002, the principal revision regarding media education consists of the following two points: Firstly, the information and computer class as a technology and home economics subject in junior high school and as a standard subject in high school was made compulsory. Secondly, it was aimed to actively use the computer and the Internet for each subject and “period for integrated study” at each school stage from elementary school to high school.

Increase in Recognition of the Importance of Media Literacy

As mentioned above, the implementation of media literacy education has been delayed as compared with the rate at which the skills required to effectively use information has developed. However, a large number of discussions were held in Japan during the second half of the 1990s and onwards to determine whether media regulations or media literacy education should be prioritized since stabbing incidents by youths occurred frequently after the broadcasting of a drama in which a butterfly knife was used by a main character. Currently, much caution will be required if the media is to be regulated due to the issues of freedom of speech and expression, and therefore, the importance of media literacy has been much emphasized.

The portrayal of violence on TV became a matter of world concern in the 1980’s, and pros and cons of introduction of the V-chip was discussed in the US and Canada in the middle of the 1990’s (Suzuki, 2001).

In Japan, too, the former Ministry of Posts and Telecommunications established an advisory committee called “Conference on Multi-channel-Age Audience and Broadcasters” in 1995 consisting of the chairpersons of NHK and the National Association of Commercial Broadcasters in Japan, representatives from the media industry, those who are in the field of legal study and media, and members from the audience side such as representatives of the National Congress of the Parents and Teachers Association of Japan and the Japan Housewives’ Association. In May 1996, the midterm report was submitted and implementation of the V-chip was recommended from the juvenile protection point of view. This suggestion, however, was strongly criticized by broadcasters and the general public. The final report was
then submitted in December 1996, and in this report, implementation of the V-chip system was declined because it was judged to be too early to do so. Instead, the report proposed establishment of an independent complaint handling organization and the necessity of efforts in the field of media literacy (Ministry of Public Management, Home Affairs, Posts and Telecommunications, 2002; Postal Services Agency of the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, 1996). The proposal for establishment of the independent complaint handling organization was strongly objected to by the media industry since establishment of such an organization would result in violation of freedom of expression and speech, while at the same time the general public raised objections against implementation of the V-chip without careful consideration. However, due to frequent occurrence of juvenile crimes involving the use of knives in 1998, the former Ministry of Education (currently MEXT) and the Juvenile Problems Section of the former Management and Coordination Agency (currently the MIC) requested that positive considerations be made for implementation of the V-chip (Suzuki, 2001).

While debates over the V-chip continued among the general public, media, and the government, the former Ministry of Posts and Telecommunications established the “Study Group for Young People and Broadcasting” in May 1998, and submitted a report in December that year (Ministry of Public Management, Home Affairs, Posts and Telecommunications, 2002; NHK, 1999). The report stated that the examination of the V-chip issue should be continued, and suggested that efforts for improvement of media literacy should be promoted by for example improving the content of TV programs targeting youths and by giving consideration to the broadcasting hours of these programs. In response to this report, the former Ministry of Posts and Telecommunications, NHK, and the National Association of Commercial Broadcasters in Japan established “Working group on Young People and Broadcasting” in January, 1999. The summary reported in June 1999 presented seven basic policies agreed on by the former Ministry of Posts and Telecommunications, NHK, and the National Association of Commercial Broadcasters in Japan, and these policies were as follows: (1) enhancement of broadcast programs for young people, (2) improvement of media literacy, (3) promotion of research on young people and broadcasting, (4) utilization of third-party organizations and etc., (5) consideration for broadcasting time, (6) improvement in the provision system of program information, and (7) continued discussions on the V-chip (NHK, 1999).

In April 1999, NHK started broadcasting of a TV series on media literacy education in the program called “Education Today”, and has been producing programs targeting elementary school children. The National Association of Commercial Broadcasters in Japan, too, produced a program called “TV-kids-detective-squad” at the end of 1999 to be broadcasted by commercial TV stations across the nation. However, there were criticisms that this program had nothing to do with development of critical thinking since this program was broadcasted in inconvenient hours for children such as early mornings or late at night and also its content was to teach children how TV programs were made. In addition to producing these programs, the National Association of Commercial Broadcasters in Japan issued a list of programs suitable for youths and also submitted a proposal for a measure to set broadcasting hours from 5 to 9 p.m. as hours that children and youths can
watch “safe” programs. The approaches by the National Association of Commercial Broadcasters in Japan, however, received harsh evaluation since most of the programs included in the list of programs suitable for youths were already being broadcasted at the time of issuance, and also the programs broadcasted during the suggested hours did not show any difference from before except for the fact that the volume of violent content was slightly reduced (Suzuki, 2001).

Meanwhile, the former Ministry of Posts and Telecommunications established “Study Group on Young People and Media Literacy in the Field of Broadcasting” in November 1999 consisting of members from the fields of education, media study, schools, community-based organizations, and broadcasters (Ministry of Public Management, Home Affairs, Posts and Telecommunications, 2002). In the report issued in June 2000, the common understanding that “media literacy is a skill that citizens need to acquire in order to properly interact and utilize media with confidence” was indicated (Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, 2000). As a result of the various examinations and discussions described above, MIC proposed the definition of media literacy as seen in Fig. 1.

Thus, it is worthwhile for the development of media literacy education that a definition of media literacy was provided by MIC. However, a public curriculum following this definition has not yet been settled on, and future discussions are expected.

**Media Education in Schools**

### The Actual Media Situation at Schools

The Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) has been conducting a survey on the actual situation of informatization of education at schools since 1987. The 2005 survey results report the average number of computers used for education per school to be 32.9 in elementary schools, 47.5 in junior high schools, and 112.7 in high schools (Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, 2006b). The number of students per computer was 9.6 in elementary schools, 6.9 in junior high schools, and 5.7 for high schools. Moreover, 99.9% of the elementary schools and 100% of the junior high schools and high schools have Internet connections. The percentage of standard classes with LAN connection was 43.7% in elementary schools, 48.0% in junior high schools, and 75.5% in high schools.

With regard to the percentage of schools with their own web pages, nearly all high schools have one (98.4%), although only 72.8% of the elementary schools and 72.5% of the junior high schools have web pages. Moreover, a very small percentage (approximately 10%) of school (from elementary schools to high schools) has assigned individual mail addresses to each student. As a measure to prevent students from obtaining harmful information, many schools use filtering software and establish guidelines for using the Internet.

The percentage of school teachers who can use computers exceeds 95%. However, the percentage of teachers who can instruct their students the content of each subject by using computers is 85.6% in the elementary schools, 71.3% in the junior
high schools, and 67.3% in the high schools. However, a fairly small percentage of teachers have been provided training on information education—65.4% of elementary school teachers, 48.5% of junior high school teachers, and a mere 32.0% of high school teachers. Moreover, the majority of the teachers were trained in their own schools; few teachers underwent corporate training or the training conducted by the government and the board of education, or attended open courses at universities. Therefore, it is suggested that problems have emerged in relation to providing LAN connections in classrooms and training teachers.

**Compulsory Subjects Related to Information Education**

As mentioned above, in the new curriculum guidelines introduced in 2002, the following subjects related to information education were established as standard subjects: information and computer class as a technology and home economics in junior high school (Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, 1998c) and the information class in high school (Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, 1998d). The content included in each subject is detailed below.

**Information and computer class as a technology and home economics as a Subject in junior high school**

According to the New Information Education Guide, the information and computer class as a technology and home economics subject assume a central role in junior high school information education. The contents include basic theories and methods regarding the effective use of information and promote a positive attitude toward participating in the information society. The following are examples of the teaching guidelines that were presented for each of the three categories of the skill to effectively use information (Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, 2006a).

a. To promote the skill to practically use information, the guidelines advise that Inputting documents using computers, data base processing, and using a spreadsheet, and furthermore, an examination study (Shirabe gakushuu) using the Internet, a presentation using software, and exchanges of e-mails and the evaluation of the contents of them and so on.

b. To facilitate the scientific understanding information, the guidelines advise that students install and uninstall software in order to understand its role in computers; conduct comparisons among the various features of different types of media; understand the functions of a program by correcting and executing an existing one; and learn about the roles of sensors, computers, and control equipment by examining the mechanisms of various machines (e.g., an electronic rice cooker).

c. To promote a positive attitude toward participating in the information society, the guidelines suggest that students investigate the relations between computers and the daily life, discuss the dangers of anonymous on the network after they use only nicknames and communicate while using the campus LAN, etc.

**Information as a subject in high school**

Information as a subject in high school is not only a class for teaching how to operate a computer but is also a
comprehensive subject for learning how to collect, analyze, and transmit with a view to nurture people who can function in a sophisticated information society. In addition, it is also a composite class, which functions as an important link to other classes, the same as in a period for integrated study. There are two types of information subjects – standard and specialized. The standard information class is compulsory at all high schools, while the specialized class is taught as a part of the curriculum in technical high schools.

a. Information as a Standard Subject – The subjects are Information A, Information B, and Information C and students must enroll in one of the three (Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, 1998d). They can enroll in any class as there is no particular sequence, and more than two classes. In principle, more that one half of the total class time for Information A and more than one third of the total class time for Information B and Information C is allocated to practical training.

Information A consists of training that is more practical in using information devices such as computers and communication networks. The skill to practically use information is strengthened by fostering the basic skills through these activities. In addition, the scientific understanding of information is nurtured recursively and a positive attitude toward participation in the information society is nurtured with experience. Information A is offered at most of the schools.

Information B deepens the scientific understanding of information by teaching how the computer works and how to resolve problems by using computers. In this subject, it is assumed that it is important to teach the methods and concepts concerning the effective application of computers as well as how the computer works and functions, and it is not only to deepen the scientific understanding of information but also strengthen the skill to practically use information. In addition, the students are taught the various applications of computers in society and to nurture a positive attitude toward participation in the information society by understanding the technologies that support this information society.

Information C encourages a positive attitude toward participation in the information society as well as strengthening the skill to practically use information by learning the expressive methods of information and communications, the actual survey activities, and understanding the information society. The scientific understanding of information such as the structure and features of information devices and communication networks are nurtured along with these activities.

b. Information as a Specialized Subject – Information as a specialized subject was newly enacted by the report written by the Science Education and Industrial Education Council in July 1995. Information as a specialized subject has eleven topics that belong to one of the three categories (Common, Systematic (S), and Multimedia (M)) (Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, 1998e). The specific names of the subjects are Industrial Information and Society, Research Assignment, Practical Information Training, Information and Expression, Modelization and Simulation, Algorism (S), Development of Information Systems (S), Network Systems (S), Computer Design (M), Processing Graphics and Images (M), and Multimedia Expression (M). It has been indicated that the issues with
information as a specialized subject is that the classes are structured to polarize information engineering with Information Systems and Multimedia that are normally taught in a traditional engineering program.

**Media Education in Various Classes**

**Media literacy in Japanese classes** As for reading traditional media, media literacy education has been conducted in Japanese (Inoue & Nakamura, 2001; Sato, 2002). The method of the program production has been incorporated in Japanese elementary and junior school textbooks, since “Let’s make the news programs” had included it in 2002. Balloons and frames of comic strips are included, depending on the textbooks (Muranoi, 2006).

As concrete examples, “advertisements,” “drama and film,” “TV commercials,” “news,” and “invisible messages” are not only analyzed and criticized but also summarized logically, sent, and exchanged. Furthermore, activities involving creating pictures with learning software and critically reading the materials have been performed (Matsuyama, 2005).

**Learning how to associate with the media** Japanese schoolchildren have been taught how to associate with the media. For example, they are taught to construct Web pages; examine newspapers; and learn to use IDS, passwords, and cellular phones in order to achieve the following three goals: “to learn the characteristics different media and to appropriately choose between them,” “to understand the effects of the media on our lives,” and “to learn how to act safely in the media society” (Horita 2004; 2006) (For details, see Suzuki, (2008)).

**Analysis of the cases** Nakahashi and Mizukoshi (2003) classified the compositions of media literacy and analyzed the practice of media literacy in Japanese school education. As a result, they divided the concept of media literacy into the following six components: mastering the handling of media; understanding of media; reading, interpretation, and appreciation of media; critical understanding of media; expression of ideas through media; and conversations and communications through media.

Then, based on the above categorization, they analyzed a total of 60 cases of practical implementation of media literacy at elementary schools, junior high schools, and senior high schools. The cases were categorized into three activity types as a result of the analysis: 31 cases of “media analysis”, 25 cases of “media production”, and 8 cases of “bidirectional media use”. When emphasis of each component was analyzed, “reading, interpretation, and appreciation of media” and “critical understanding of media” were observed as the main themes in “media analysis.” On the other hand, with respect to “media production” and “bidirectional media use,” expression of ideas through media” and “conversations and communications through media,” respectively were the main themes. Moreover, “understanding of media” was emphasized in all the activity types. Finally, the theme of “mastering the handling of media” was observed more in “bidirectional “media use”, followed by “media production”, and “media analysis”.
**Curriculum on Information Morality**

MEXT conducted a support project on the Guidance on Information Morality and Other Issues in the Japanese 2006 school year by consigning the project to the Japan Association for Promotion of Educational Technology and the Center for Educational Computing. In May 2007, MEXT officially announced the results, which were summarized by the consignees as model curriculum guidelines for information morality (Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, 2007; See Table 2) and instruction guidebooks.

The model curriculum was divided into five categories (ethics in the information society, understanding and compliance toward laws and ordinances, safety consciousness, information security, and the construction of a public networking society). For each category, guideline levels such as primary and secondary objectives were set up to suit the development of the students.

The reports released on their website are case studies conducted at elementary, junior high, and high schools; guidance on information morality involving guardians; and references on guidance (http://www.kayoo.org/moral-guidebook/jirei/index.html). One of the references has three types of check sheets for the teacher, student, and guardian, regarding the attitude and understanding of information morality (Kayou no Kai, 2007).

**Social Support for Media Education**

**Japan Media Literacy Institute** Since its establishment in 1977, the FCT (Forum for Citizens’ Television and Media) Japan Media Literacy Institute has compiled the various research practices with respect to media literacy. It has published the book *Study Guide: Media Literacy* under the supervision of Professor Midori Suzuki at Ritsumeikan University. It has produced Japanese versions of the video teaching material *Scanning Television*, which was originally produced in Canada. Moreover, for the short term, training seminars have been held to enable facilitators to learn media literacy systematically and to persuade them to become supporters of the media literacy activities of various places (http://www.mlpj.org/).

**Children and Media** In 1999, Children and Media – an NPO – began its activities due to an opportunity when the Children’s Theatre Fukuoka Prefecture Center called out. This NPO attempts to foster children’s ability to proactively deal with the large volume of information presented by the various media. Thus far, it has conducted investigations through its enlightening videos into the level of children’s exposure to the media, research on media literacy, and the restrictions on children from watching any TV until they are two years old. It has also conducted a “No TV challenge” campaign whereby children spend a whole day with the TV turned off (http://www16.ocn.ne.jp/~k-media/index.html).

**Japan Media Education Center (JMEC)** A private educational research organization “Class Production Network” has been making practical approaches to media literacy issues such as the exchange of information on examples of media
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>L1 : Elementary School Yrs 1–2</th>
<th>L2 : Elementary School Yrs 3–4</th>
<th>L3 : Elementary School Yrs 5–6</th>
<th>L4 : Junior High School</th>
<th>L5 : High School</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Ethics in the Information Society</td>
<td>a1–3 : Takes responsibility for transmission of information and actions a1-1: Keeps promises and obeys regulations a2-1: When taking action, thinks about one's influence on one's partner</td>
<td>a2–3 : Obeys the rules and manners of the information society a2-1: Treats things that others have created with care</td>
<td>a3–3 : Understands the meaning of the act of contracting and no decisions are made without consulting permission</td>
<td>a4–5 : Predicts danger, prevents harm, and uses information safely a4-1: If inappropriate information is encountered, seeks advice from an adult, and suitably deals with matter</td>
<td>a5–5 : Predicts danger, prevents harm, and uses information safely</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b1–3 : Respects one's rights and the rights of others regarding information b1-1: Treats things that others have created with care b2-1: Treats own information and others' information with care b3-1: Understands that with information there are one's own rights and those of others, and these are to be respected</td>
<td>b2–3 : Obeys the rules and manners of the information society b2-1: Treats own information and others' information with care b3-1: Understands that with information there are one's own rights and those of others, and these are to be respected</td>
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<td>b5–5 : Predicts danger, prevents harm, and uses information safely</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Understanding Compliance toward Laws and Ordinances</td>
<td>c1–3 : Takes responsibility for transmission of information and actions c1-1: Keeps promises and obeys regulations c2-1: When taking action, thinks about one's influence on one's partner</td>
<td>c2–3 : Obeys the rules and manners of the information society c2-1: Treats things that others have created with care</td>
<td>c3–3 : Understands the meaning of the act of contracting and no decisions are made without consulting permission</td>
<td>c4–5 : Predicts danger, prevents harm, and uses information safely c4-1: If inappropriate information is encountered, seeks advice from an adult, and suitably deals with matter</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>d1–3 : Can protect oneself from danger in the information society and deals with inappropriate information d1-1: Computer/information used with adult present, avoids unfavorable incidents d2-1: Computer/information used in an environment where no inappropriate information is encountered.</td>
<td>d2–3 : Can protect oneself from danger in the information society and deals with inappropriate information d2-1: Computer/information used in an environment where no inappropriate information is encountered.</td>
<td>d3–3 : Understands the meaning of the act of contracting and no decisions are made without consulting permission</td>
<td>d4–5 : Predicts danger, prevents harm, and uses information safely d4-1: If inappropriate information is encountered, seeks advice from an adult, and suitably deals with matter</td>
<td>d5–5 : Predicts danger, prevents harm, and uses information safely</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e1–3 : Endeavors to use information property and safety e1-1: Becomes aware that inaccurate information also exists e2-1: If inappropriate information is encountered, seeks advice from an adult, and suitably deals with matter</td>
<td>e2–3 : Can recognize what inappropriate information is, and can deal with it appropriately e2-1: If inappropriate information is encountered, seeks advice from an adult, and suitably deals with matter</td>
<td>e3–3 : Understands the meaning of the act of contracting and no decisions are made without consulting permission</td>
<td>e4–5 : Predicts danger, prevents harm, and uses information safely e4-1: If inappropriate information is encountered, seeks advice from an adult, and suitably deals with matter</td>
<td>e5–5 : Predicts danger, prevents harm, and uses information safely</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f1–3 : Able to control/suppress actions that can harm safety or health f1-1: Obey promises and times that are decided regarding computer usage f2-1: To keep healthy, determines computer usage times and obeys schedule</td>
<td>f2–3 : Will not take any actions that threaten the safety of others f2-1: To keep healthy, determines computer usage times and obeys schedule</td>
<td>f3–3 : Understands the meaning of the act of contracting and no decisions are made without consulting permission</td>
<td>f4–5 : Predicts danger, prevents harm, and uses information safely f4-1: If inappropriate information is encountered, seeks advice from an adult, and suitably deals with matter</td>
<td>f5–5 : Predicts danger, prevents harm, and uses information safely</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category</td>
<td>L1: Elementary School Yrs 1–2</td>
<td>L2: Elementary School Yrs 3–4</td>
<td>L3: Elementary School Yrs 5–6</td>
<td>L4: Junior High School</td>
<td>L5: High School</td>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>g2-1: Understands the importance of confirmation/validation and can use it properly</td>
<td>g3-1: Can use computer without it being accessed illegally or having it used for illegal purposes</td>
<td>g4-1: Masters the basic knowledge of information security</td>
<td>g5-1: Masters the basic knowledge of information security, and acts appropriately</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>g2-3: Knows the basics of information security that are essential in one's daily life</td>
<td>g3-1: Masters the fundamentals/basics of information security</td>
<td>g4-1: Masters the basic knowledge of information security</td>
<td>g5-1: Masters the basic knowledge of information security, and acts appropriately</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>h3: Can take measures and deal with to ensure information security</td>
<td>h4-4: Can take measures and deal with to ensure information security</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>h3-1: Knows ways to protect information from destruction and loss/outflow</td>
<td>h4-1: Can set up counter-measures for basic security</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>i2-3: Has public awareness as a member of the information society</td>
<td>i3-1: Uses the network with the awareness that it is for public use</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>i2-1: Uses the network along with mutual cooperation</td>
<td>i3-1: Uses the network with the awareness that it is for public use</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>i4-1: Conducts oneself with the awareness of the public nature of the network</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>i5-1: To maintain the public nature of the network, acts with independence/self-direction</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Notes on the Codes (Example: a1-1)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Letters appearing first</th>
<th>Numbers appearing second in line</th>
<th>Numbers appearing third in line - numbers after the hyphen</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a–i: Items for the overall objective</td>
<td>School category/School year (L1–L5)</td>
<td>Consecutive numbers within the items are for the overall objective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1: L1 (elementary/ lower school: years 1–2)</td>
<td>1–5, 2–6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2: L2 (elementary/middle school: years 3–4 year)</td>
<td>1–5, 2–6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3: L3 (elementary/high school: years 5–6)</td>
<td>1–5, 2–6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4: L4 (junior high school; sometimes includes high school)</td>
<td>1–5, 2–6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5: L5 (high school)</td>
<td>1–5, 2–6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For example, Code a1-1 is read as follows:

Overall objective item a1: Takes responsibility for one's actions with transmitted information and actions in the information society (elementary school/students years 1–2)

Specific objective item a1-1: Keep promises and obey rules (elementary school/students years 1–2). It is the first specific objective after the overall objective a1)
literacy classes since 1996. JMEC became independent from this network in 2006. It utilizes the findings of the Class Production Network and is developing and promoting media literacy education in cooperation with local organizations (http://jmec01.org/).

**MELL Project** From 2001 to 2002, Media Expression, Learning, and Literacy (MELL) Project cosponsored the Media Literacy Project of the National Association of Commercial Broadcasters in Japan (Mizukoshi, 2003). It enabled children to learn about media by producing their own television programs. Commercial broadcasters promoted greater understanding of the media in audiences’ viewpoints. The project had many other achievements in areas such as the practices related to media literacy, citizens’ discourse on media literacy in various places, and publications.

Two new activities, which the Mell Project developed, began in 2007. The first is the “Mell no moto” web site (http://www.mellnomoto.com/) which shares the “seeds” of media literacy and expression activities. On this web site, there are three versions of certain practices: “Text to read or know,” “Basic workshop materials of WS (workshop) to conduct,” and “Link to investigate or connect.” The second is “Mell Plaza” (http://www.mellplatz.com/exchange/exchange_0802.html) which is a plaza where one can talk about media expressions and literacy. This web page provides information about study groups etc.

**Japanese Kid Witness News project (KWN)** Matsushita Education Foundation has conducted the Japanese KWN since 2003. This project is targeted toward elementary and junior high schools in Japan, provides video equipment, subsidizes activities expenses, and supports video (news) production in schools. No specific theme is given. Children are expected to produce works not exceeding five minutes in approximately six months (http://panasonic.co.jp/cca/kwnjp/index.html).

The purpose of the KWN is not only to help children acquire “media literacy,” which is essential in an information society, but also to help them build a greater interest in the society, to investigate and think about issues by themselves, and to adequately communicate these issues. Since 2005, half the participants have been publicly selected. In the Japanese 2007 school year, 60 schools participated in this project. On the web site, manuals for video production and editing are provided to explain “how to use a camera,” “how to use a tripod and microphone,” and “video editing using a DVD recorder” with video images. In addition, there is a plaza to promote exchange between participant schools (http://panasonic.co.jp/kwn/cgi-bin/kwn/forum.cgi).

**Delivery Lessons by Broadcasters and Newspaper Organizations**

An increasing number of broadcasters provide “delivery lessons,” which provide children and school students the opportunity of being able to handle filming equipment and to experience programming. For example, TV Shinshu Broadcasting has been imparting delivery lessons to schools every year since it joined the National Association of Commercial Broadcasters in Japan’s media literacy project (co-organized with the MELL) in 2001 and 2002. Children and school students, who participated in this delivery lesson, were provided explanations about programming
at television stations by professional staff members, and were guided in the process of planning, filming, editing, and broadcasting (TSB, 2008). Moreover, delivery lessons are also provided by newspaper companies. These lessons sometimes include lectures on newspaper production as well as lectures by reporters.

**Creative Activities by Using Various Media**

Recently, some companies, NPOs, universities, and social educational organizations such as a public library have held social contribution activities related to media literacy. For example, the Children’s Art Museum & Park (CAMP) has held many workshops to develop children’s creativity and their ability to express themselves properly through creative activities by using various media, collaboration among children, and presentations of their work (CSK holdings corp., 2008). It has produced workshop packages that enable other organizations to easily conduct their own workshops. These packages are called “CAMPACO”, a “Cricket Workshop” wherein children create robot-like toys using “Cricket,” a small battery-powered computer developed by the MIT Media Lab, and everyday materials such as paper, cloth, and wood; and the Digital Picture-story Show Workshop “Degikamishibai Workshop”, which uses digital cameras, small wooden dolls, and a big scenery board to develop picture stories with four scenes.

Cinema workshops have also drawn attention as activities that can promote media literacy among Japanese youth. In the Tsukuba cinema workshop 2007 for junior high school students in summer, fifteen students participated, and were exposed to several activities including writing scenarios, filling roles such as director, assistant director, cameraman, recordist, and actor, and editing scenes and sounds (http://movie.slis.tsukuba.ac.jp/). Moreover, universities, public libraries, and companies have collaborated in activities to promote media literacy among children. For example, the Graduate School of Library, Information and Media Studies, University of Tsukuba, has conducted workshops for elementary and junior high school students, in collaboration with public libraries and companies since the Japanese 2005 school year (Suzuki, 2006). It conducted the “Cricket Workshop” in 2005 and the “Degikamishibai Workshop” in 2006 (CAMPACO was used for both workshops). In 2007, it conducted a new workshop, where participants investigated and studied the theme of animals using books at libraries, and expressed what they investigated by using clay. All workshops tried to help participants in creating new things by using media, and presenting what they produced to other participants and their parents or guardians. Thus, as social education, these workshops are expected to be effective in enhancing children’s media literacy.

**Development and Provision of Study Materials for Media Education**

Though gradually, study materials for media education have been developed or more information about these study materials has been provided.
Study materials of MIC The Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications (MIC) had advertised for media literacy study materials, starting from the year 2000. Through applications by email, the video teaching materials developed by this grant-in-aid can be obtained free of charge. Some of the material can be downloaded on their web page (http://www.soumu.go.jp/joho_tsusin/top/hoso/kyouzai.html#01).

MIC also developed a program for children in the fifth and sixth grades of elementary school, which was called “Enhance ICT Media Literacy (Connect! Understand! Communicate! This is the network)” in the Japanese 2006 school year and released it in July 2007 (http://www.ict-media.net/link.html). The purpose of this program was to develop ICT media literacy so that children can utilize ICT such as internet and cellular phones in a safe and secure manner. Here, ICT media literacy is defined as follows: “In addition to the ability to utilize and operate ICT media in a simple manner, it also includes understanding the characteristics of media, the intentions of the senders, and the ability to communicate using the media.” Thus, this program emphasizes the development of the ability of autonomously reading, judging, and delivering information. Four types of textbooks and internet support material were utilized in this program. The textbooks consist of a “teachers’ guide,” “learning textbook for the class,” “guidebook for self study,” and “study workbook” (http://www.manabinoba.com/index.cfm/4,8751,149.html). These textbooks are available for free. In addition, the internet support material allows children to experience email and internet and to learn in a safe virtual internet space. These can be accessed through the link to the “educational information promotion page” (http://www.soumu.go.jp/joho_tsusin/kyouiku_joho-ka/index.html) of MIC from anywhere in Japan (Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, 2007).

el-Net “el-Net” is the “education and learning network” developed by MEXT and which uses a satellite communication system to distribute information on education, culture, sports, science, and technology across the country since July 1999. Approximately 2,000 social educational facilities and schools serve as receiving stations, and there are some 30 transmitting stations at institutions such as MEXT, the National Science Museum, and education centers across the country. From these stations, programs such as “Kids Broadcasting Station,” “Open College,” “the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology News,” and “Training Program” are broadcast (http://www.mext.go.jp/a_menu/shougai/elnet/index.htm).

NICER The National Information Center for Educational Resources (NICER) is a central website providing all types of information on educational resources in Japan. It is a pillar of the above-mentioned “millennium project,” NICER initiated. It supports the promotion of “informatization of education” in schools, higher education, and lifelong learning. Its website provides many study materials for each subject, including the compulsory subjects of information, educational tools, and project information (http://www.nicer.go.jp/index_en.html).

Other materials In order to promote practical media literacy activities in Japan, the Sports and Youth Bureau of MEXT conducted a survey in countries, where media literacy more advanced than that in Japan, and translated some parts of educational materials used in Korea and Hong Kong, edited them as the “Collection of
Actual Examples of Media Literacy Educational Materials in East Asia,” and published these materials on its web site. For example, the web page provides a checklist or a television viewing diary, such as a “media guide book for a parent and child,” to keep track of the television viewing at home. It also includes study materials to increase children’s and parents’ awareness of media and information.

The Center for Educational Computing provides an educational material study unit (animated movie) called “How to Walk in an Internet Society” on its web site (http://www.cec.or.jp/net-walk/). Users wanting to use the material can download it from the web site. The contents consist of information search, information distribution, private information and copyright, cellular phones, communication (such as chain mail, spam mail, and internet addiction), safe consumption, and internet shopping.

With regard to internet and cellular phone usage, KDDI introduced a study content website called “JUNIOR net,” which targeted senior children at elementary schools and junior high school students, toward the end of December 2007 (http://www.kddi.com/junior/). The purpose of this was to encourage home, schools, and social educational organizations to widely make use of this content in preventing the problems caused by incorrect use of internet and cellular phones. This allows children and students to learn correct usage, rules, and internet and cellular phone etiquettes through entertaining quizzes. For example, specific contents include “do not disclose personal information to strangers,” “you must not immediately believe what is written on internet sites,” and “you must not take a picture of the contents of a book using your camera inside a bookstore without permission.”

Some initiatives utilize newspapers as educational materials. The Japan Newspaper Publishers and Editors Association initiated organizational actions to enable the newspaper industry to cooperate with the educational field (providing multiple newspapers to classrooms and homes of students without charging them for a certain period of time) in 1989. The Japan NIE (Newspaper in Education) Center was established in Yokohama in October 2000 to promote NIE. The NIE has released a guideline concerning the utilization of newspapers and information in a comprehensive manner in high schools on its web site (http://www.pressnet.or.jp/nie/nie.htm).

Issues and Future Vision of Media Literacy

In this section, I would like to discuss the future issues and visions based on the approaches to media literacy, till date, in Japan.

Introduction of Media Literacy into the Curriculum

As described above, the skill to effectively use information, as defined by MEXT, has been gradually integrated into the official curriculum in Japan, but media literacy has not, although its importance is beginning to be recognized. Therefore, during classes in the period of integrated study and each subject, similar contents are taught in elementary schools and in junior high schools as well (Asai, 2006). Some
researchers have already proposed curriculum related to media literacy that would consider the continuity from elementary schools to high schools. It is expected that in the future, the new curriculum on media literacy will be examined at the national level.

**Further Developments of Study Materials Related to Media Education**

The existing study materials and the provision of information related to media education seem to be rather advanced when compared to the situation in the past. However, it is necessary to further develop the materials and provide related information, because the content of media education is wide-ranging. In particular, it is expected that study materials will be developed in terms of continuity, that is, the developmental stages the students undergo from elementary school to high school will be taken into consideration.

**Development of Training of Teachers**

It will be necessary to examine the training conducted by the government and the board of education in the future, although some organizations and universities are sponsoring courses and study groups as social support toward media education. In addition, the effective use of the abovementioned “el-net,” and the creation of the teachers’ training curriculum through the cooperation of the government, the board of education, and various organizations where have achieved results in the implementation of these courses, and held study groups are expected to be established in the future.

**Creation/Establishment of a Network Connecting Various Organizations**

If various organizations including the government, schools, media industries, and NPOs continue to take action independently, it will not be possible to resolve the present state of confusion over the media literacy-related concepts or to develop systematic learning systems. Subjects to be examined in the future include the cooperation among various organizations in the development of study materials, training of teachers, and systematic education.

**Examination of the Effects of Media Education**

Although there are few practices in which the effect of media education classes can be examined, such research is necessary for examining the methods of utilizing
media education. For example, there is a study that examined the learning effect of video study material on media literacy – which was produced by the grant-in-aid provided by MIC – on classes of first graders (Komaya & Muto, 2006). According to the study, the children who attended the class in which this video study material was used showed a greater understanding of “imagination and reality in television” than those who did not attend the class. Moreover, many studies have used methods such as quasi-experiments and panel surveys in order to examine the effects on the skill to effectively use information (Naito, Sakamoto, Mouri, Kimura, Kashibuchi, Kobayashi, Ando, Suzuki, Adachi, Takahira, Sakamoto, Kato, & Sakamoto, 2003; Sakamoto, Sakamoto, Mori, Takahira, Adachi, Ibe, Suzuki, Katsuya, Kobayashi, Hatano, & Sakamoto, 1999). These studies suggest that the skill to practically use information and the scientific understanding of information were partly heightened as their use of the Internet increased. However, a positive attitude toward participation in the information society was not shown. This seems to imply that merely increasing children’s Internet usage is not sufficient, and it is necessary to conduct systematic classes to impart the fundamental knowledge regarding contents of the attitude to them.

More studies that examine the effect of classes or activities related to media education are expected to be conducted so that children can take advantage of the huge potential of the media and to avoid its negative effects.

Conclusion

This chapter reviews the major concepts of media literacy, and the history and current status of media education in Japan. The definitions and relationships of media literacy-related concepts have often been confused. There are four major concepts: traditional media literacy as developed in Canada and certain European countries, media literacy as defined by the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications (MIC); a similar concept of media literacy which the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) refer to as “the skill to effectively use information”; and computer literacy observed at schools.

In the historical view of media education in Japan, learning using the media has been conducted more than learning about the media which includes critical reading. The implementation of media literacy education has been delayed as compared with the rate at which the skills required to effectively use information has developed. As for the developments of the skill to effectively use information, the current structural concept was proposed in 1990s, and the new curriculum guidelines were established in 2002. In the guidelines, Information and Computer class as a Technology and Home Economics in junior high school, and the Information class in high school were established as standard subjects, and a period for integrated study had been implemented in schools. In addition, MEXT has officially announced model curriculum guidelines from elementary school students to high school students for information morality.
The present situation of social support for media education in Japan has been gradually advanced. Non-profit organizations (NPOs), civilian organizations, companies, public organizations, universities, and foundations, etc. are conducting activities related to the promotion of children’s media literacy, although cooperation between the organizations is weaker in Japan when compared to that in foreign countries. Recently, workshops to develop children’s creativity and their ability to express themselves properly through creative activities by using various media have gained interest in the practice that they are promoting media literacy among Japanese youth. Moreover, the development of study materials and the provision of information related to media education have also gradually progressed. Some study materials can be downloaded from the websites.

In the future, much caution will be required toward media literacy in Japan, because it is difficult to regulate the media due to the issues of freedom of speech and expression. To advance media literacy education, five issues such as the introduction of media literacy into the curriculum, further development of study materials, development of training teachers, creation/establishment of a network connecting various organizations, and an examination of the effects of media education could be suggested. It is expected that these issues will be addressed in order that children take advantage of the huge potential of the media and avoid its negative effects.

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Opportunities and Challenges for Media Education in Mainland China

Wen Xu

Media education has been developed over many years in some advanced countries. In mainland China, it is still a fairly new field, developing with the growth of the media industry. TV entered into common households in the 1980s, and subsequently the personal computer in the 1990s. Now there is a TV set in almost every household, and many young people under 18 have access to the internet. TVs and computers have become dominant media in young people’s lives, especially in urban areas. With greater access to different media, it intensified the awareness that media have tremendous influence on young people’s knowledge, values, attitudes, learning and social behavior.

National Effort and Regulation

The Chinese media system, including TV, radio, film and internet, is controlled by the state. In order to create a favorable media environment for young people, the state enacted many measures from various aspects. The State Administration of Radio Film and Television (SARFT) encouraged the local TV stations to develop channels specifically to enrich children and juniors’ lives, but children, especially when reaching adolescence, enjoy viewing adult programs. They do not choose the programs they watch very carefully and are passively exposed to the media (Calvert & Jordan, 2002). To protect young people from passive exposure to the violence and crime in the adult programs, SARFT banned the programs featuring criminal case stories broadcast during prime time. It also requested TV stations to soften and delete the most violent and bloody scenes on the screens. The administrative bureau sometimes cancelled programs which are not proper for young people. For example, “Meteor Garden” was stopped in 2002 because of its misleading guidance for adolescents’ lives, such as solving problems by violence and pursuing materialism. Foreign cartoons play an important role in Chinese children’s lives. In a survey, it shows that out of the 20 most popular children’s cartoons, 19 are from foreign
countries (Yan, 2006). The State Administration of Radio Film and Television (SARFT) wanted to support domestic cartoons and to influence the young generation with its own values. So the SARFT limited the playing time of foreign cartoons and gave priority to Chinese ones. Many actions showed that the SARFT tried to create a positive media culture for young people, which was embodied fully in its official document Implement Plan to Strengthening and Improving Minors’ Ideological and Ethical Construction on Radio Film and Television, published in 2004. This plan was made from the standpoint of improving the adolescents’ ideology and ethics. So it not only advocated the construction of a clean media environment for adolescents, it also mentioned the defense againsts infiltration by bad-taste foreign cultures and thoughts via media as well.

The China Internet Network Information Center (2007) issued a Report on Statistics of Chinese Internet Development. In the report concerning internet use in mainland China, it was noted that 137 million people over the age of six used the internet for more than an hour every week, minors making up 17.2% of internet users. Whereas the State Administration of Radio Film and Television regulated TV programs, there appeared more serious issues with internet use by young people. In 2002, two adolescents quarreled with the staff in an Internet Café and they set fire to the café. More than 20 people were killed and most of them were students. This case became the last straw for the state, causing them to make great efforts to manage the internet services market. The state limited the development of internet cafés and prohibited minors from entering them. The state hopes that schools can provide non-profit internet service for their students if feasible. Another effort is to investigate anti-addiction software to prevent young people from becoming addicted to the online games. Though it is said to be installed in popular games in 2007 after a two-year experiment, many people, including the game players, hold different opinions.

From the perspective of the state, the role at present is to regulate media to provide the best possible media environment. Regulating and limiting access to programs or internet to some degree can be helpful. Considering the nature of mass media, it is very hard work to prevent negative material such as violence, materialism and low-brow culture from influencing our young people. It is also difficult to compete with the pleasures from mass media. The current environment of the information age allows the individual many ways to get the information and programs he or she wants. On the contrary, students are not as ignorant or as vulnerable as we imagine in a media-saturated world. Many educators realize that students have gained media awareness before they enter the classroom. We have to transfer to an instructive or better way to make young people consume and take advantage of media in a positive and critical way. That is why we advocate media education in mainland China.

At the end of 2004, the Communist Youth League, State Administration of Radio Film and Television, Ministry of Education, General Administration of Press and Publication, All-China Women Federation, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, and Chinese Young Pioneers Commission held a Forum on Media and the Development of Minors in Shanghai. They discussed the influence of mass media and the
growth of Chinese minors. Media educators advocated media literacy in the forum. Because of the great lineup and strong participation from different parties, we can easily get the impression that media education is now being recognized on the governmental level. In 2007, the China Children Press & Publication Group, which is the biggest and most authoritative publisher of specialized children’s reading, and the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) began a new project on media education for Chinese children. They planned to make children know what media literacy was and how to express children’s voices by media. Some videos relating to school affairs have been produced by students. Producing videos and attending the program make students more concerned about the community and social development. It is a long term project and they are now at the initial stage of their program.

Research and Practice in the University

In mainland China, media education was introduced and advocated mostly by scholars from the disciplines of communication, journalism and education. At the beginning, scholars introduced definitions, key concepts and the principles of media education from the U.K., Canada and the U.S. Media education as a new topic arouses great interest. But on the other hand, there is still no dominant definition and clear framework for this new field of research in mainland China. The term media in Chinese has at least three versions of translation, let alone the terms media literacy or media education. Therefore, there are many definitions in academic journals on media education or media literacy. For example, Kai Zhang, a professor at the Communication University of China who teaches media literacy as an undergraduate course, writes:

Media literacy is the extension of traditional literacy (listening, speaking, reading and writing). It includes the skill to understand various media information, to critically viewing and listening to media information from movies, TVs, broadcasting, internets, newspapers, ads and other media, and also it includes the skill of using broad information technology to produce media information (Zhang, 2003, p. 116–118).

Zhi’an Zhang and Guolin Shen, teachers at Fudan University, noted:

Media literacy is the ability to understand and analyze media information critically; it includes the skill of taking advantage of media information to develop personal life and society (Zhang & Shen, 2004, pp. 11–13).

With many other different interpretations about what media literacy or media education is, these definitions mostly focused on:

- Critically understanding the media information;
- Taking advantage of media information to develop individuals and society; and
- Media production is a necessary skill for media literacy.

These definitions regard media literacy not only as just a system of knowledge, but it is also a kind of skill. There are also a few other definitions including training
for professional journalists or staff in the media industry. As the term *media education* is easily confused with professional training, the term *media literacy education* or *media literacy* is more popular in most articles. As for the basic issues for media education, even in America, they is still under debate. As Hobbs and Grieco (2007) said on The National Media Education Conference in 2007,

> It will be for quite a few years to come. Is it a skill? A competency? A set of tools? A knowledge base? Does media literacy have a particular perspective or point of view on media culture? Is media literacy a lifestyle? What about the uses and purposes of media literacy? All these different perspectives were presented – and argued about – at the conference.

Defining media literacy, its key concepts and basic principles is a sticky task for Chinese scholars. Though many scholars prefer to carry on in practice while fumbling with the theory, it is imperative to establish some relatively authorized or clear frameworks which can direct practice in reality at least.

At present media literacy exists in some universities as a selective course for undergraduates as in Shanghai Jiao Tong University and Shandong University. While some scholars do media literacy research, they deliver media literacy lessons to the undergraduates. Several universities established research centers for media education such as Communication University of China and Fudan University. Though they all do media education research and practices, they have different features.

The Media Literacy Group of Fudan University (http://www.medialiteracy.org.cn) took the project *Theory and practice of media literacy* issued by the Ministry of Education and made various media literacy reports and practices for this national project. They also wrote a report on the *Action of media literacy for minors* with the Shanghai Communist Youth League. It tries to bring media education into Shanghai adolescents’ studies and lives. They developed their media literacy practice based on the project.

The Communication University of China established the Center for Media Education in 2004 and tried to cultivate graduates majoring in media education. The University held the *First International Forum of Media Literacy* in 2002. Media educators from Canada, Britain, Taiwan and Hong Kong, as well as administrators from the State Administration of Radio Film and Television were invited to the conference. Though there were diversified opinions toward media literacy during the conference, it was really a golden chance for so many scholars and administrators interested in media education to gather together and discuss the issue. The Communication University of China stresses the theory and international communications a lot. In the past two years, they invited foreign media educators to deliver speeches and talk with graduates continually. They also assigned teachers abroad to communicate about media literacy with well-known scholars in this research field, which enriched the study and improved the quality of graduate training.

There are also other groups or individuals working in the field of media literacy. For example, media literacy is a main research area under the instructional technology subject for graduate study in Nanjing Normal University. The visual literacy in the Nanjing Normal University is an important feature of their research (http://www.fromeyes.cn/). The South China Normal University puts media literacy
under the Communication subject to enroll graduates. There are other groups studying information literacy or other forms of literacy related with media. Though media literacy is on the agenda of a few universities, there are inadequate communications between these institutions. Therefore, there are inevitably estrangements and divergences and more efforts are required to make these research and practices intellectually communicate mutually with a broader field of vision.

Media education develops rapidly especially at the beginning of the new century. There are thousands of articles on media education and most of them appeared after 2004. This is because of some important gatherings to deal with media literacy like the academic conference on media education in Beijing and mass media and a minors’ development forum in Shanghai. However, most of the articles have more emphasis on the introduction of media education than on new explorations. Usually articles are more on qualitative descriptions than on quantitative research, relying on a single case study to stress the necessity and importance of media literacy. Academic books on Chinese media education are rare. The book *Fundamentals of Media Literacy* by Zhang (2006) focuses on the development of media literacy, including the definition of media literacy, the communication effect of media, and finally a description of issues relating to media literacy in other countries. Other books include *Chinese Media Education* (Shao, 2006) and *News, Media & Media Literacy* (Xie, 2004). There is a realization from these books that media education in China is different from that in other countries. These books want to improve media literacy theory and try to establish new paradigms or practical ways in mainland China. However, all they could do is mere promotion of the development of media education in mainland China. That is not enough and a further promotion requires a deeper and more thorough discussion of the theoretical framework and practice.

**Situations for Primary and Secondary Education**

Media education does not exist in the present primary and secondary curricular in mainland China. The nearest to it is the course Information Technology with the main emphasis on the teaching through media, but teaching about media, which forms part of media education, is another issue. Though there is some confusion between instructional technology and media education, teaching through media can be a very useful way to aid media literacy. Duncan (2005) describes the relationship between teaching through media and teaching about media as:

> We use media for a variety of purposes and contexts in the classroom. It is important to distinguish between “teaching about” and “teaching through” the media. Many teachers use media as audio-visual aids to support subject content – teaching through – while teaching about media presupposes a critical approach, where media texts themselves are explored in terms of their form, strategies, organization, referents, points of view, and so on. However, there is no reason why both approaches can’t co-exist to generate a more thoughtful, culturally relevant curriculum.

In most schools, teachers are not familiar with the term media education. They misunderstand it as teaching through media, linked to the context of information technology. Even if they understand the distinction, they lack great motivation to
make changes, partly because of the national education system. From kindergartens to high schools, students are forced to study the traditional knowledge in order to gain high marks to be admitted to universities. So they face great pressure from society, parents and teachers while media education, which is not presently included in the school curricula for examination purposes, is left marginalized.

In recent years, there has been a new curriculum reform in mainland China. Besides the regular school subjects, there is an introduction of a comprehensive course which emphasizes the extended knowledge and practice of traditional knowledge. It is a flexible course and a good means of teaching media education. The new curriculum reform offers a great chance for the teacher to develop a school-based curriculum. They have more power to enrich the traditional curriculum with their own creativity. Media education could be introduced here but the problem is teachers do not have the knowledge to practice media education even if they have the heart to do so. That is why media literacy workshops are important for teachers if they want to carry out media education in classrooms.

**Conclusion**

Like many other countries, media education first developed in mainland China as a form of inoculative measure, protecting students from the negative media influences. For further development, there is still a long way ahead and what needs to be done is more rigorous research in this field. Many teachers and graduates from universities are doing that at present, making efforts to bring out their new ideas into practice. Some scholars also establish broad relationships with international media educators. They are the pioneer advocators during the process of media education development. At present, what they should enforce is to enrich theoretical research and also make media education more practical for the practitioners in the schools.

Though schools are not really on the same level as the state and the universities, there is much potential for them to develop media education. The schools are at the stage of making better use of information technology. It is closely related with media use. Many teachers get trained for the information technology, so it is very possible to have media literacy elements in information technology classes.

Media education will need to take into account the perspectives of the media system in China. Mass media such as TV stations assume the sole responsibility for their profit or loss, which means they encounter market pressures like other industries; on the other hand, the mass media are ruled by the corresponding administration bureau, which means it still maintains ideological control (Lee, 2003). In the U.S., media educators expect teachers and students to be familiar with media institutions and analyze the value or the ideology behind the news or popular culture. As Justin Lewis and Sut Jhally (1998) said, media education should certainly teach students to engage with media texts, but it should also teach them to engage with and challenge media institutions. But in the case of mainland China, its centralized political system would be sensitive toward those different and critical voices. It
slows the process; at least in some sense it weakens critical awareness of media literacy. So in each country, media education may be different in some ways. Just like the different educational systems around the world, we cannot separate media education from its political, economic, social and cultural contexts, where it gets rooted and takes effect. However, just as Rother (2004) said at the first international conference on media education in Beijing, the development of the Chinese economy has brought a change in the style and channel of media communication, which will push the research on media education to a new stage. The future of media education in mainland China is promising.

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Navigating Through the Mist: Media Literacy Education in Taiwan

Tzu-Bin Lin

Introduction

In Taiwan, media literacy education (the official title employed by the Ministry of Education) has been booming over the last decade. An official white paper expressing the determination of the Taiwanese government to promote media literacy education was issued by the Ministry of Education in 2002 representing the growing interest in the subject among academics, media professionals, consumer activists and non-profit organisations. Owing to the comparatively short history of practicing media literacy education in Taiwan and the fact that there are only a limited number of schools currently practising media literacy within their curricula, this chapter does not attempt to provide an historical overview. In this circumstance, it is more important to explore the possible directions – that is, of the discourse of media literacy education – which are going to influence its future implementation. This chapter aims to analyse the discourse of media education in Taiwan constructed by different social agents such as private foundations, the Ministry of Education (MoE) and policy makers. The assumption underpinning this methodological choice of analyzing the discourse is that social change is caused by a change of discourse. As Fairclough (1992) has suggested, a way of understanding or predicting social change is to explore the discourse. His approach is known as critical discourse analysis (CDA) which focuses on both linguistic and sociological dimensions of discourse (Fairclough, 1995, 2001). Rogers (2004, p. 10) points out that one crucial difference between CDA and the traditional linguistic approach to discourse is that “CDA starts with the assumption that language use is always inevitably constructing and constructed by social, cultural, political and economic contexts”.

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The Social Context

The Proliferation of Media

Nineteen eighty-seven was the turning point for Taiwan in many respects due to the lifting of martial law, which had involved numerous restrictions on the freedom of speech. Prior to 1987, there were only three over-the-air television stations, whereas there are now five over-the-air television stations together with about 69 licensed cable television service providers. Before 1993, there were 33 legal radio stations; the number of radio stations had reached 178 by 2006. The restriction on newspapers was lifted in 1988 and their number has increased enormously – from 31 to 2496.

According to the Freedom House, 1998 Press Freedom Report, Taiwan enjoys one of the freest presses in Asia (Government Information Office, 1999). The subsequent abrogation of the Publication Law in 1999 heralded a new era for the press industry and by 2006 there were 8829 publishers in Taiwan (see Table 1).

This rapid growth of media brought about anxieties in Taiwanese society. Magnier (2005) provides an insightful observation from an outsider’s perspective:

Concerned about the media’s excesses and ability to ruin reputations and lives, reformers in and outside the industry are trying to stem the sensationalism, partisanship and corruption that characterize the business. Some argue that the media are merely a reflection of Taiwanese society, which is one of the most freewheeling in Asia.

The media’s wilfulness had a deadly outcome, or so some charged, when the daughter of television star Pai Ping-ping was kidnapped a few years ago. The singer criticized the media for following the family in cars, vans and helicopters, even hounding it during the ransom drop. “Were you helping me or hurting me?” Pai asked at a news conference. When her daughter was found dead, the accusations grew more pointed. “Reporters are guilty!” screamed placards hoisted by neighbors around Pai’s house. Journalists showed little remorse, citing pressure from their editors. “If you fail to get this story, jumping from the 14th floor is too good for you”, an editor at the United Daily News was quoted – in a well-cited essay on media reform – as saying during a meeting on the newspaper’s 14th floor. “You should climb up to at least the 20th floor and jump from there.”

Table 1  Taiwan Media Profile

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Numbers</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Radio stations</td>
<td>178</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Terrestrial (wireless) television stations</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cable television companies</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TV &amp; radio programmes production companies</td>
<td>6,551</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Audio (compact disc, etc.) production companies</td>
<td>6,537</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satellite broadcasting programme providers</td>
<td>143</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satellite broadcasting service operators</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newspapers</td>
<td>2,469</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Magazines</td>
<td>4,707</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Book publishers</td>
<td>8,829</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreign media with correspondents in Taiwan</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data source: Government Information Office, Taiwan (GIO, 2007)
To gain audience attention, the “tabloidisation” of newspapers and television news has become a trend. For example, the news about the intentional spread of a sex video of a former female councillor of Taipei city became the headlines in newspapers, magazines and television news for more than a month at the end of 2001, followed by reports lasting for about four months. Consequently, the issues of ethics and the social responsibility of the media were raised: whether to provide entertainment and pleasure or take social responsibility became a debated issue among the news press and television news. The struggle is not only among news professionals; there is also a debate among different social groups in Taiwan. Moreover, the issue of protecting the younger generation has also been raised: the argument being that adults have a responsibility to protect teenagers and children from the worsening media environment. Subsequently, the media play a major role in creating collective moral anxiety in Taiwan society.

The Education Reform Movement

If the changing media environment is the father of media literacy education in Taiwan, the mother is the education reform movement. The education system in Taiwan used to be conservative, playing the role of the ideological state apparatus; and education and the armed forces (the National Army) were the two “strongholds”, ideologically and in reality, against the Communist government in Mainland China before 1987. Likewise, the whole education system was designed in accordance with the needs of the country, therefore education was seen as a means of producing high-quality manpower for the development of Taiwan.

The first wave of requests for changes in education occurred in 1988 when the 1st Conference on Education, initiated by 32 associations and foundations, took place. Then, as W. Wu (2005) argued, the education reform movement began in 1994, when “the 410 Education Reform League” initiated a fifty-thousand-people demonstration in Taipei. A blueprint for education reform was proposed and, since then, the movement has sprouted, grown and boiled over. Most of the effort went into an attempt to make the educational environment in Taiwan more open, flexible and up-to-date, whereby advocates of education reform tried to change education in Taiwan from a conservative to a democratic and flexible system in all schools, colleges and universities. Many of these ideas have now been converted into policies and put into practice. As Pan & Yu (1999, pp. 84–85) point out:

When examining educational development in most countries, the theory of a clock pendulum seems to be applicable. It keeps swinging from left to right. Taiwan swung to the extreme right of the scale when it overemphasised academic preparation for high-level institutions for years. Now, the present wave of educational reforms is aimed at moving towards the left but hopefully not too far in that direction. The main focus therefore is to implement a number of measures to lessen the pressure on students and at the same time to improve or create the conditions for educational change.

The extreme right holds the view that the educational system serves the needs of the country, while the left focuses on the development of human beings. Therefore,
different advocates have proposed many new agendas. The curriculum reform is one of these major projects allowing for more flexibility in primary and secondary schools, thus providing for new initiatives, such as the integration of media literacy education into the school curriculum.

The Birth of ‘Media Literacy Education’ Policy

The media are viewed as a corrupting force undermining the moral values of Taiwanese society. Some may call it a moral panic that reflects strong anxiety. As Brereton (2001, p. 115) indicates:

The media themselves have been the focus of moral fear, with each campaign against the dangers of a new medium always finding reasons to suppose that it is especially dangerous in its new guise.

When new media technology appears, people fear it and other media may promote this fear. The internet café phenomenon is an example that stokes up anxiety in the public. The Ministry of Education (MOE) identifies the negative aspects of prosperous internet cafés, such as an increase in dropouts, gambling, gangsters, and sexual criminals (MOE, 2001). The social issues of “the internet café phenomenon”, “the internet symptom” and “internet crime” appear to be foci of the public (for an overview please see Editor, 2001). In response to this kind of anxiety, or panic, some advocate groups, such as the Media Literacy Centre (MLC) and the Fubon Cultural and Educational Foundation (FBCEF) in the private sector, and the Centre for Media Literacy Taiwan (CMLT) among higher education institutes, suggest that media literacy education may be a possible solution. Therefore, some lobbying groups were formed by volunteers to advocate a new educational initiative.

Timing is a key element. From the late 1990s onwards the education reform movement has peaked. Many new ideas and initiatives have been proposed, media literacy education being one of them; however, it needed to compete with others such as human rights education, gender education and moral education. The acceptance of the agenda is serendipitous. Because of the unpredictable influence of the ‘sex video’ event on children and teenagers, media literacy education had been accepted by the former Minister of Education, Dr. Ovid Tseng as an agenda in education policy in 2001.

Media Literacy Education in Taiwan

The Advocates’ Discourse on Media Literacy Education

As already stated, the movement for media literacy education is a bottom–top one, which started from the private sector. Various social agents have constructed models of media literacy education, and their approaches share an astonishing similarity; typical examples being MLC, FBCEF and CMLT who responded to public anxiety
about the worsening media environment before the government became involved. MLC, in fact, was the first organisation to promote media literacy education in Taiwan.

MLC is the former ‘Committee of Television Culture Study’ established in 1992 as a quasi-official organization subordinate to the National Cultural Association (NCA). The main concern has been to decrease ‘the ill effects caused by television’ by its portrayal of the ‘stereotypes existing in programmes’ (MLC, 2001a) and the strong influence they were having on children and teenagers. Therefore, they have been concerned with how to decrease these bad effects by fostering ‘correct viewing skills’ and by allowing children to ‘distinguish the differences between media content and reality’ with the ultimate aim of making the public wise viewers with ‘supervisory and critical abilities’ (MLC, 2001a). In the preface of the ‘Smart Remote Controller – the toolkits of teaching media literacy in primary schools’, published by MLC, Dr. Lai, the director, used statistical data to show that television makes a big impact on children’s lives. He wrote: “The average time that children spend watching television is 1040 hours per year” and “there are many children and teenagers committing crimes because of the ill effect of television” (Lai, 2001, p. 2).

Also, one of the consultants of MLC, C. Wu (2001, p. 3) states:

The origin of media literacy education in foreign countries is the public’s fear and distrust of media and their wish to assist children to consume media wisely. ... There is no doubt that juvenile crime and social problems are increasing because the quality of television is getting worse. The younger generation is saturated with sensational, bloody, violent and horrific television programmes.

Another consultant, Kuang (2001, p. 4), also makes his position explicit by saying:

It has been proved by long-term research that saturation with television programmes will influence an audience’s behaviours and reshape their concepts. ... People who are taught media literacy can become active audiences.

The rhetoric is typical in some discourses of media literacy education – that is, making the media responsible for social problems; blaming the media for complicated social phenomena and using statistical data to prove the influence of media on children. Moreover, the MLC (2001b, p. 10) describes children in the following ways:

Children only have limited cognitive abilities. ... they are good at imitation. ... they receive the media message without the thinking and selecting ... therefore, they will be affected by negative influences.

‘Cognitive’ is a typical term that applies a psychological perspective to children and childhood. By describing children as having ‘limited cognitive abilities’ a psychological approach to media literacy education is adopted, suggesting that children are immature human beings in the developmental stage of becoming adults. This rhetoric appears repeatedly in the discourses on media literacy education in Taiwan.

Compared to MLC, FBCEF plays a more important role in drafting media literacy education policy in Taiwan. The Ministry of Education (MoE) assigned FBCEF
to summon the committee and to be responsible for producing the White Paper. As a result, its discourse on media literacy education strongly influences the White Paper in various ways. Its promotion of media literacy education is ‘to make people interact with media with pleasure and health’ in that people need media literacy education because ‘there is much academic research indicating that television violence and sex, directly and indirectly, have influences on children and teenagers cognitively, emotionally, morally and socially’. After gaining media literacy, people may become members of an ‘active and wise audience’. FBCEF’s rhetoric and goals are, therefore, similar to MLC’s.

Also, some metaphors contribute to FBCEF’s discourse on media and media literacy education. A leaflet, *Media Environmental Protection, DIY*, published by them uses a typical metaphor – ‘environmental protection’. Like the natural environment, which needs to be protected from industrial pollution they state, the media environment must be protected from cultural pollution. This leaflet offers tips that parents can use to create a good ‘media environment’ within the household. The main theme is that parents can follow the ‘good quality programme guide’ in order to filter television programmes for their children to watch.

Another metaphor adopted by FBCEF is ‘health’. When a cartoon has been linked to a ‘symptom’ that usually relates to physical and mental diseases, watching a cartoon becomes a ‘health’ issue. Moreover, using the term ‘brainwash’ to describe the effects of media is a distinctive psychological approach in that it assumes that young people constitute a passive audience. Although the cultural dimension has been mentioned by FBCEF in its environmental protection metaphor, its main rhetoric emphasises the psychological view of children and media.

The FBCEF has also produced various posters to promote media literacy education. As Fairclough (2003) has argued, visual images are a contributor to the construction of discourse. Therefore, analysing the visual image can reveal hidden ideological stances.

The image in Fig. 1 shows a demon’s hand holding a mouse with red as the background colour. In the above image and caption the Internet is portrayed as a dangerous place. ‘You’ and ‘your kids’ makes it clear that the text is written for parents rather than for young people. This poster is significant in two respects: firstly, the MLC and the FBCEF focus on television, especially in their written texts. To some extent, new media, such as the internet, plays a minor role in their arguments. However, this poster is about a new medium, which is rarely mentioned in their discourses on media literacy education. Secondly, its target audience is the parent, thus characterizing the approach that parents have the responsibility to protect their children from the demons on-line.

Unlike the MLC and FBCEF, which are non-profit organisations, the CMLT is located in the higher education sector. The director of the CMLT, Dr. Sophia Wu, is one of the co-ordinators of the committee drafting the media literacy education

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1The citations are from FBCEF’s website: www.fubon.org/media/item_show.asp.
policy, and she plays a key role in its development in Taiwan. To some extent, her view of media literacy education has been broadly adopted by MLC and FBCEF.

As with C. Wu and Kueng, Sophia Wu (2002a) provides the rationale by using statistical data such as “the average time that children spend watching television is two hours during weekdays and up to five hours at weekends” and “it constitutes 38% of children’s waking hours”. Moreover, she wrote:

Television has become the most intimate friend of human beings from cradle to grave since its appearance in the world. Conservatively speaking, a man who lives for 75 years spends nine whole years just staying in front of the television set. If we agree that polluted water and air will do some damage to our health, then spending about 80,000 hours watching television may influence our minds. In particular, when television is full of sexual images, violence and strong language, this kind of influence makes us worry.

She makes the target of media literacy education explicit by aiming at a specific medium: television. She suggests that television is currently the most influential medium, and, as with MLC and FBCEF, her stress on its importance is the most common rhetoric of media literacy education in Taiwan. According to her

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2The author wishes to thank the FBCEF for their kind permission to use the poster.
‘conservative’ calculation, a person spends at least nine years without sleep watching television. ‘Nine years’ presents her with persuasive statistical evidence to bolster her argument and this use of statistical evidence is a common strategy to make the argument appear to be more scientific. She also uses the analogy that television, like ‘the polluted water and air’ will have ill effects on our health. An article posted on the CMLT’s website makes the ‘health’ metaphor more explicit, when Chen (2006) states that “watching television may undermine your physical health”, this not only emphasises mental health, but also physical health problems caused by the media. Again, the two metaphors are adopted in order to illustrate media and media literacy education to show that the media environment has been polluted by low quality programmes and that, in terms of personal mental/physical health, media undoubtedly have noxious effects.

Furthermore, Sophia Wu (2002b) points out that media literacy education is ‘understanding the sign system and technology of media’, ‘understanding the representation of media’, ‘rethinking the meaning of audience’, ‘analysing media organisation’ and ‘accessing and influencing the media’. Wu also refers to the different dimensions of media literacy education, which approximately coincide with current trends worldwide, and she repeatedly states that the most important essence of media literacy education is ‘not refusing the media’ and that the best way to practise media literacy education is ‘to build up a defensive preparation for kids’ (S. Wu, 2002c).

Sophia Wu also suggests that media literacy is for all, while arguing that ‘many studies show a terrible phenomenon – that children spend at least 2 to 3 hours in front of the television’. Therefore, adults should protect ‘children’s human rights’ – i.e. protect them from the ill effects of media (S. Wu, 2002b). Like Wu and Kueng, Sophia Wu adopts an academic approach by using research and studies in order to support her argument; however, she does not indicate the references. She repeatedly argues that children who watch many television programmes lack ‘the ability to distinguish between real and fake’. And that, according to ‘numerous research evidence’, children consuming violent television programmes usually ‘perform behaviours associated with unease’, ‘use strong language very often’, and ‘have violent actions’ (S. Wu, 2002d). Therefore, parents need to ‘interpret the representations’ and ‘discuss them with children’ so that the ill influence of television may be minimised.

All the rhetoric and metaphors of media and media literacy education share some similarities in that they reveal assumptions about media thereby making their proponent’s approach to media literacy education explicit. In the above extracts, the rhetoric describing the passive audience is overt. Kuang’s use of ‘active audience’ to describe those who have accepted media literacy education, and Sophia Wu’s indication that children are imitating strong language and violent actions, suggest that the audience is passive before being taught media literacy. The ‘passive audience’ rhetoric means the agency of audience is underestimated and usually indicates a psychological approach to media literacy education.

Media are often represented as having overwhelming power, with the audience being passive, which is an explicitly psychological/’cause-and-effect’ rhetoric. This rhetoric neglects the individual agency, especially the agency of young
viewers. Buckingham (2000, pp. 14–15) has pointed out the danger of adopting a psychological approach, which views children from an isolated, individual perspective, rather than from within their social context, suggesting that children are preparing for adulthood rather than as social beings in their own right.

A ‘defensive preparation’ proposed by Sophia Wu produces a more complicated rhetoric. ‘Preparation’ usually appears in the liberal agenda found in contemporary discourses on media literacy education, which places more emphasis on the socio-cultural dimension, rather than on the psychological (Buckingham, 1996a, 2000, 2001, 2003; Goodman, 2003; Lavender & Tufte, 2003; Ofcom, 2004). The premise of this liberal approach is that media are part of our lives, therefore media literacy education is preparing learners to understand more about the media – that is, to gain ‘literacy’ – in order to live in a media era. However, ‘defensive preparation’ also tells another story in that it represents the protection of the individual from the effects of the media. Essentially, preparation is a neutral rhetoric. However, this hybrid of ‘defensive’ and ‘preparation’ contains an internal contradiction. When compared with the ‘passive audience’ rhetoric, its function is ‘defensive’, being closer to the protectionist account of media literacy education than is the liberal one.

Another repetitive rhetorical strategy is the use of statistical data, or ‘research findings’, to add an academic gloss in order to justify the assertion that media have ill effects on audiences. However, although their arguments appear to be straightforward rhetorically, by failing to state whose research findings uphold their conclusions, they lack the necessary evidence, thus leaving them with low credibility. Nevertheless, although their credibility can be questioned in academic reviews, their strategy is undoubtedly very persuasive, since people don’t usually question ‘scientific’ statistical data and research findings.

As has been shown in the FBCEF’s poster, the publicity of media literacy education is aimed at parents rather than children; the rhetoric being that adults should teach them how to enjoy a good media environment in order to survive. However, even though the target is young people, as C. Wu has pointed out, are adults free from the ill effects of media? And, if so, why?

The last point is about the two metaphors – environmental protection and health – used by FBCEF and Sophia Wu. The role of metaphors is, as Fairclough (2001, pp. 99–100) defines it:

Metaphor is a means of representing one aspect of experience in terms of another, and is by no means restricted to the sort of discourse it tends to be stereotypically associated with – poetry and literary discourse. But any aspect of experience can be represented in terms of any number of metaphors, and it is the relationship between alternative metaphors that is of particular interest here, for different metaphors have different ideological attachments.

One example of metaphorical usage is when social problems are seen as diseases. As Fairclough has stated, metaphors are vehicles of various ideologies and exploring them is a way of revealing the ideologies hidden behind the discourse. Therefore, the ‘environmental protection’ and ‘physical health’ metaphors reveal more about assumptions held regarding media and the practice of media literacy education. As Bragg (2001) argues, pollution is a common metaphor used to describe the
ill effects of media. This metaphor is also adopted by Gerbner (1999), who believes that media causes cultural pollution, in the founding convention of the Cultural Environment Movement. Describing media as a kind of ‘pollution’ makes an assumption that it is bad for society, thereby creating prejudice; this assumption is then reinforced by the use of the ‘disease’ metaphor. The two closely linked metaphors combine to suggest that media threatens the health of the individual and the community.

As stated previously, many advocates have been influenced by certain academics who were active in the production of the White Paper, which guides the direction of media literacy education in Taiwan. How their discourses influence the White Paper is analysed in the following section.

**The White Paper on Media Literacy Education**

The White Paper is produced by a ten-member committee that includes seven academics, one media professional, one secondary school head-teacher and one representative of the National Teachers Association. Among them, two coordinators are academics from media studies. There are three major parts in the WPMLE. The details are as follow:

<table>
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<th>Table 2</th>
<th>Content of the White Paper</th>
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<tbody>
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<td><strong>Part I: The importance of media literacy education</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Media is the ‘second curriculum’</td>
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<td>The history and current situation of media</td>
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<td>The current situation of international media literacy education</td>
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<td>Media literacy education and the future development of the nation</td>
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<td><strong>Part II: The visions of media literacy education</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Building a healthy media community</td>
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<td>Promoting lifelong learning of media literacy</td>
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<td>Fostering citizens’ abilities with regard to media literacy</td>
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<td>Constructing concrete and doable strategies</td>
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<td><strong>Part III: Media literacy education policy</strong></td>
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<td>Passing relevant Acts and Laws</td>
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<td>The organization and operation</td>
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<td>The curriculum content</td>
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<td>Pre-service and in-service teacher training</td>
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<td>Developing teaching materials</td>
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<tr>
<td>Supporting system</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Promotion</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Investigation, research and evaluation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Media profession</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Adult and continuing education</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Resources platform</td>
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</table>

The assumption about the media and media literacy education is stated in the first part. As it is written in the White Paper (MOE, 2002: 4):

The majority of educators around the world acknowledge that “the school,” the system, as the education process and educational content evolved over the past century, replaced the family, in particular, as the main source of education. However, few realized that with the emergence of television and other forms of mass communication that developed over the past four decades, mass media has become the second education curriculum for children and youth. The dominance of the media is so strong that it is possibly threatening the position of schools as the first education system. The media has also pushed the role of the family as an educator further aside and is gradually undermining the authority of schools. Mass media is not only “educating” the young, but also every member of society. It is becoming more difficult for most of us to differentiate fact from fiction in what is presented or reported in the media. Some of us do not believe that we are biased by the media, but tend to think that others are influenced. This is the so-called third-person effect in media studies. As the hours children and youth are exposed to the media (including the Internet and computer games) already exceeds that the time they spend in the classrooms of elementary and high schools, it could be claimed that the media is the first education curriculum rather than the second.

The goal of media literacy education is ‘to foster critical thinking and to enable all citizens to become people who can shape the cultural taste of the nation and communities’ (MOE, 2002:4). This illustrates the idea that the media should be the ‘first curriculum’. Because of the time that the younger generation spends in school, media might have the potential to replace the role of schools. As stated in the White Paper, it may be proper to claim that the media could be the first education system rather than the second (MOE, 2002, p. 4). After describing the current media environment in Taiwan, the policy text states that: ‘to an individual, media can bring news, entertainment, education, and at the same time, media contain the biased ideologies, single values and unreal representations of the society’ (MOE, 2002: 5). Here, media effects are seen to be overwhelming and more prominent than that of the education system. The rhetoric in the White Paper takes a step further than the discourses of the advocate groups by stating that citizens should be able to positively ‘detoxify’ and ‘decode’ messages in order to engage in the process of producing information and in exercising surveillance over the media. Thus, the importance of media is acknowledged; however, by describing it as ‘toxic’, once again it is shown in a negative light.

Some key concepts of media literacy education are also introduced. They are ‘Healthy Media Community’, ‘Health literacy’, ‘Liberating’ and ‘Empowerment’. To build a ‘healthy media community’ is the ultimate aim of media literacy education and the core value ‘through the mechanism of media literacy education’ to reinforce citizens’ abilities to ‘liberate and empower’. This idea comes from an American project, Health People 2010 where ‘health literacy’ is described as follows (MOE, 2002, p. 8):

Health literacy of modern people and the communication media are highly relevant. Therefore, the basis for promoting health literacy can be applied in promoting media literacy. Simply put, one’s media literacy is shaped by the community and social culture. That is why the key to media literacy lies in making a “Healthy Media Community.” This is the core value of media literacy education.
The metaphor of health is widely adopted. There are two elements necessary in order to pursue a ‘health media community’ strategy – ‘liberation’ and ‘empowerment’. ‘Liberation’ helps people to see through ‘the veil constructed by the media and not to be manipulated by it’, thus enabling “people to engage in the society and use media in order to express their opinions about public issues”. ‘Empowerment’ means that ‘individuals have the ability to distinguish, choose and evaluate the content of media’ in order to ‘supervise it and to ask its producers to improve its content through rational thinking and dialogue’. Furthermore, it can ‘foster the ability to produce creative, good quality, educational media texts and to establish a community standard’.

The discourse of media literacy education in the White Paper is finer and more complicated than the discourses demonstrated in the previous section. Some common rhetoric, metaphors and assumption about the ill effects of media can be identified from the above extracts by assuming that the media has overwhelming power, whereas humans do not have their own agency. Moreover, the influence of media exceeds the role of the school system. The ‘health’ metaphor suggests that any ill effects caused by the media is not only an individual problem but is also a collective one. As the White Paper states, ‘the community culture, community environment and community structure should take the responsibility for the individual’s health’ (MOE, 2002, p. 8), thereby upgrading risk to community level.

Also, the aim of empowerment is to construct ‘community standards’ and to ‘raise the cultural quality of the whole society’, which proposes the idea of ‘collective knowledge’. However, some ambiguities emerge: for instance, who has the power to decide what the community standard should be? How can cultural standards be evaluated? And, how many people are required before the sum of their knowledge can be counted as truly ‘collective’? The White Paper leaves these crucial questions unanswered.

‘Media production’ is one key dimension of media literacy education worldwide that has not entered the discourse of MLC and FBCEF, whereas it is seen in the White Paper as being a means of reaching the ‘Healthy Media Community’ (MOE, 2002, p. 9):

...providing the media production and broadcast skills, actively expressing the community opinions and constructing the media cultural taste that belong to the community. Then, the idea of ‘Healthy Media Community’ can be fulfilled.

Some advocates of media literacy education consider that ‘media production’ plays a key role (Buckingham, Grahame, & Sefton-Green, 1995; Goodman, 2003) and so do the policy makers who drafted the White Paper. Although they tried to include ‘media production’, in order to fully explore the subject in detail, more time is needed since in this policy document there is no further information about how it might really work in practice.

The basic competences that a media-literate citizen should possess have been identified in the White Paper, but they are not sufficiently detailed, appearing rather as a vague blueprint. However, it does implicitly contain most of the main aspects of media literacy education, such as ‘media text/message’, ‘audience’, ‘media
organizations/industry’, ‘media and society’, and ‘production’. As a policy document in the very beginning stages, the White Paper may be considered to be an adequate sketch of a rather vague plan, although it does not remark further on the competences required of a media-literate citizen.

Table 3  The basic competences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I. Media Literacy:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Understanding the media message</td>
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<tr>
<td>1-1. Understanding different sign systems (such as media language and conventions) in different media.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1-2. Understanding types of media and how the narrative generates meaning.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1-3. Understanding and applying media production skills and techniques.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-4. Understanding the relationship between technology and media text.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Considering media representations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-1. Identifying the stereotypes and power relations in the media content along the following lines – age, gender, ethnicity, vocation, class, sex preference.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-2. Comparing the situation, characters and events in the media and in real world.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-3. Understanding the values and ideologies hidden behind the media representations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Reflecting audience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-1. Reflecting the individual choice of media viewing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-2. Understanding the negotiating nature of meaning between individual and media text.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-3. Understanding the concept of ‘audience’ in the commercial essence of media text.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-4. Understanding the key concepts in advertising industry: viewing rate, and the social and cultural meaning of advertisements.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Analysing media organizations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-1. Understanding how the gate-keeping process of media organizations has impacted on media text production.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-2. Reviewing how the ownership of media organizations influences the choices and combinations of media text.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-3. Understanding the differences between public and commercial media.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-4. Considering the influence of privatization.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Influencing and accessing media</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-1. Understanding the meaning of ‘media right of citizens’.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-2. Accessing the media.</td>
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<tr>
<td>5-3. Distinguishing the passive consumers and active media audience.</td>
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<tr>
<td>5-4. Protecting the privacy of the individual.</td>
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<tr>
<td>5-5. Promoting the openness of public information.</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>II. Media Literacy Education:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Ensuring that People in the community should have the competency to promote the ‘Health Media Community’.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Practicing the citizen’s ‘right to access the media’ and emphasizing that this is a human and a ‘broadcasting’ rights of citizens.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Creating a public forum, or discussion opportunities in the community (or in groups). Providing the place and skills for community media production. Improving the cultural environment. Raising the living and cultural quality through collective engagement. Making the cultural quality high and becoming the core value in the future.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Various suggestions for promoting media literacy education have been proposed in the final part of the White Paper on Media Literacy Education; however, they are abstract and blurred. Also, although it provides a blueprint for media literacy education in Taiwan, and various dimensions have been covered that might be considered to be policies in their early stages, much of the rhetoric, and many of the metaphors and assumptions, are similar to those expressed by other relevant organizations. The influences of the private sector are overt and the passive audience rhetoric is an example. The rhetoric and metaphors have gone through a refining process in the White Paper, especially in terms of the metaphors, in which ‘health’ and ‘health literacy’ become the main themes of media literacy education. Although there is still unresolved vagueness, the metaphors have been expanded and explored in more detail. Moreover, the absent ‘media production’ in the discourse of MLC and FBCEF has been incorporated into the White Paper, albeit in a very brief and blurred way.

**Navigating Through the Mist – the Status Quo**

After more than a decade, there is increasing awareness of media literacy education among the Taiwanese public. More teachers are attending the workshops and informal in-service training organised by MLC and FBCEF and some teacher training institutes now offer courses on media literacy as an option. The Public Television Service works together with CMLT to produce a weekly programme – ‘Kids’ Studio’– for which teaching packs for primary school teachers have been produced. MLC, FBCEF and CMLT have contributed much to the development of media literacy education, which is making slow but steady progress.

However, some menaces lie ahead, which from this author’s perspective, include a lack of support from Central Government, a too conservative approach, the adoption of a contradictory discourse, and the lack of empirical studies on young people’s media culture. Struggling for a place in education reform in Taiwan is not an easy task. There are too many social agency supported reform agendas and the blueprint outlined in the White Paper has not achieved a great deal. The frequent change of Minister of Education is also an issue here in that the former Minister of Education took media literacy as a priority whereas his successor has not. However, whereas there has been less support from Central Government, there has been more from the private sector, such as FBCEF.

The discussion in the previous section shows that the psychological approach has a strong influence on media literacy education in Taiwan. The ‘passive audience’ and ‘ill effect’ rhetoric are repeatedly shown in the discourse of media literacy education. If the media literacy advocates view media negatively, it is highly possible that it will lead to a more conservative and protectionist approach, which is currently the case in Taiwan, as evidenced in the extracts from C. Wu, Kueng, Sophia Wu and Lai. However, the protectionist approach is problematic since many countries have been struggling to look for a way to move beyond it – the UK for example. As Buckingham (1998, p. 33) has pointed out:
Past generations of media educators tended to espouse a form of protectionism, seeking to defend students against what were seen as the negative cultural, moral, or ideological influences of the media. Such approaches have been criticized for failing to acknowledge the complexity of young people’s experiences with the media, and to equip them for a dramatically changing media environment. In recent years, however, a new approach has emerged that moves beyond the protectionism of earlier perspectives.

In the United States, Hobbs (1998, p. 19) has described the problems of the protectionist approach as follows:

The claim that media literacy can protect young people from negative media influence is problematic to many educators and scholars; and in Great Britain, this perspective has been particularly derided by scholars who believe that such approaches are elitist and based on poorly grounded social science research. ... When media literacy skills are positioned in opposition to media culture, the quality of instruction is compromised.

Also, Lavender & Tufte (2003, pp. 1–9) use ‘new media education’ to distinguish their ideal media education from the protectionist approach, while Luke (2003, p. 108) gives her vision of media education in Australia, in which validating the audience’s pleasure is an important part. She describes the ideal media literacy education as:

In the broadest sense, then, Media Education at the beginning of the 21st century can be characterized in the following ways. It aims to make students critical and selective viewers and consumers of popular culture, who are able to reflect critically on media messages, their own selection of and pleasures derived from media genres and texts, and to use those critical skills in the production of their own multimedia and/or audio-visual texts.

Here, Luke (2003) has illustrated a crucial point in the contemporary approach to media literacy education, that it is the ‘agency turn’ which validates the audience’s pleasures and selections while focusing on critical viewing and production.

In the discourse in Taiwan, teaching young people the truth about the media in the form of media criticism, takes the lead. Furthermore, it is argued that the global trend of media literacy education fits within the frame of critical theory, and the term ‘critical pedagogy of media education’ is adopted (S. Wu, 2004). Although ‘critical pedagogy’ has been well-defined in this context, it is argued by some that its practice is highly questionable (Buckingham, 1996b). Media criticism, and ideological enlightenment, is only part of media literacy education. As can be seen from the teaching materials (PTS & FBCEF, 2003; S. Wu & Zheng, 2001), the units focus mainly on decoding various stereotypes, biases and tricks, in different television genres, such as advertisements, soap opera and news. None of them mentions how to create media production or how to use production as a means of teaching about media.

The increasingly popular new media, as a global phenomenon, make the media production easier and enrich the channels of dissemination of an individual’s media text. As a result, the current trend is to focus on both media criticism and media production, which provides a possible channel for critical reflection (Buckingham, 2003; Burn and Durran, 2007). However, neither this media production rhetoric nor the importance of new media occupies a significant place in the
discourse of media education in Taiwan. The omission represents a gap in the dis-
course of media education in Taiwan.

Meanwhile, some advocates are aware that media literacy should prepare young
people rather then protect them, while many examples of media literacy all over
the world are abandoning the ‘protectionist’ approach and heading towards a ‘lib-
eral preparation’ approach (Buckingham, 1998, 2003) leading to the hybrid rhetoric
appearance of the ‘defensive preparation’, which is a mixture of different discourses
that contain internal contradictions (as discussed above). This, then, is a significant
example of ambiguous discourse, which may easily cause misunderstandings, espe-
cially when parents and education professionals know little about what media liter-
acy is. Therefore, advocate groups and academics should make their discourse clear
and accessible to the public, otherwise, misleading discourse might undermine the
foundations of media literacy education in Taiwan.

Finally, since the target of media literacy education is mainly young people it is
important to know what their experience actually is in order to inform the practice
of media literacy education. Adults should know more about the media experience
of young people so that they can develop suitable teaching strategies. It is argued
that exploring youth media experience and understanding youth media culture are
key themes for media literacy education (Buckingham, 1993, 1996a, 1998, 2003;
Goodman, 2003; Lavender & Tufte, 2003; Marsh & Millard, 2000). However, there
are only a few attempts to do this in Taiwan. Indeed, the leading research centre
on media literacy – CMLT – has done little on this crucial aspect. If adults simply
impose what they think is good for young people, it has been proved that this dose
not work (Halloran & Jones, 1992).

The Future of Media Literacy Education in Taiwan

With a group of advocates, an official White Paper, and support from the Public
Television Service, media literacy education in Taiwan seems to be in a good posi-
tion. Yet, as in the metaphor used in the title of this chapter, media literacy education
without a sound discourse and sufficient knowledge of young people’s media cul-
ture in Taiwan, is just like navigating a ship through the mist. Even though there
are many enthusiastic people, such as in-service teachers and devoted academics on
board, to find a way out is the responsibility of those who are in the lead and steer-
ing the ship. As a member of Taiwanese society who has experienced the media
environment, and as a researcher on media literacy education, I cordially hope the
ship will break through the mist and that media literacy education can become a
significant experience for all Taiwanese people.

I would like to express a positive opinion towards the future development of
media literacy education in Taiwan because there are a group of advocates, a cluster
of foundations and many in-service teachers devoting themselves to this movement.
Moreover, the public in Taiwan views the media pessimistically and they are push-
ing for the development of media literacy education. The overall environment is
supportive to its development. Meanwhile, two obstacles lie ahead – they are: the discontinuous education policy and implementation as well as an ambiguous discourse about media literacy education.

The lack of continuity between education policy and its implementation has been a long-term phenomenon while investment in education has been very dispersed. After generating the White Paper, there has been no substantial progress in promoting media literacy education from the MOE. In contrast, the foundations and the in-service teachers are more reliable as they are volunteers. The FBCEF, for example, has invested more financially than the MOE in promoting media literacy education in recent years.

However, the key responsibility is on the shoulders of academic advocates. As the MOE does not make any attempt to create a discourse that can make changes, in-service teachers are becoming increasingly passionate about teaching media literacy but they lack direction. The discourse of these academic advocates is the most influential in this field. By identifying media literacy education as a grassroots movement by key stakeholders, media literacy education needs a more solid discourse to make it work properly. Up to now, the discourse about media literacy education in Taiwan has not been well constructed.

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Media Education in Singapore – New Media, New Literacies?

Sun Sun Lim and Elmie Nekmat

Introduction

Singapore has one of the highest Internet and mobile phone penetration rates in the world. With increasing government investment in IT, media and technology are assuming an ever growing role in the lives of Singaporeans. Singaporeans use media intensively, consuming media in all forms as they acquire information essential to their education, work, social and recreational lives. Singapore is a highly mediatised country which has embraced infocomm technology in virtually every aspect of life, especially in government, business and education. Traditional broadcast and print media have converged with newer digital, online and mobile content to produce a media landscape that provides Singaporeans with greater choice, but which also presents them with more challenges. As Singaporeans navigate through this rich and vast media landscape, they are finding their media literacy being increasingly tested as they need to access different media platforms and evaluate media content of diversifying genres and varying quality.

This chapter will consider the extent to which media education in Singapore equips Singaporeans with the requisite skills to be functionally competent and critically discerning media prosumers. It will begin by describing the country’s media landscape – market development and regulation of media content and service provision. It will then discuss the need for new literacies pertaining to consuming, creating and managing media, which have arisen in light of the emerging media landscape. This is followed by a discussion of media literacy education in schools and a review of public education campaigns aimed at raising media literacy levels amongst the general populace. We then conclude by considering the challenges which such media education efforts may have to confront and seek to overcome.

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Singapore’s Media Landscape

Singapore’s media industry has grown significantly in the last ten years, spurred by the government’s interest to foster this sector as an engine of economic growth. The government also has indirect share ownership of the dominant media companies. For example, 100 per cent of MediaCorp’s shares and a majority of 56 per cent of SingTel’s shares are owned by Temasek Holdings, an investment company owned by the government of Singapore (Temasek Holdings, March 2007). In the case of StarHub, two of four major direct shareholders are MediaCorp and Asia Mobile Holdings, the latter constituting a subsidiary of Singapore Technologies Telemedia (ST Telemedia) which is 100 per cent owned by Temasek Holdings (StarHub, n.d.; Temasek Holdings, March 2007).

At the same time, the increasingly affluent, educated and well-travelled populace is also demanding greater choice and diversity in media options. Table 1 summarises the main offerings in the newspaper, magazine, radio, television and Internet markets.

Print Media

Currently a total of 16 newspapers are in active circulation in Singapore. The newspaper industry is dominated by the print media behemoth Singapore Press Holdings (SPH) which publishes 14 newspaper titles. The other two titles, “Today” and “Weekend Today” are distributed free-of-charge and published by Media Corporation (MediaCorp) Press, which is incidentally 40 per cent owned by SPH. Besides newspapers, these two major print players also produce the bulk of the magazines in Singapore, with SPH producing more than 100 titles whilst MediaCorp Publishing has 30 wide-ranging titles under its belt (MediaCorp, n.d., MediaCorp publishing; Singapore Press Holdings [SPH] magazines, n.d.). SPH has also been very active and successful in ‘virtualising’ news and leveraging the Internet. Its online editions of key newspapers, enjoy over 110 million pageviews with seven million unique visitors every month (SPH, n.d.). On top of this, its ‘revolutionary’ online news portal, STOMP (Straits Times Online Mobile Print), engages readers by involving them in the creation of news by uploading and submitting their ‘newsworthy’ articles and pictures online. Singapore’s print publishing has thus evolved to meet the needs and expectations of Singapore’s ‘virtual’ citizens.

Broadcast Media

Singapore’s main radio broadcaster, MediaCorp Radio operates 13 local FM stations and broadcasts in the four main languages in Singapore (MediaCorp Radio, n.d.). The MediaCorp Group also monopolises local television broadcasting through its three TV-focused units, MediaCorp TV, MediaCorp TV12 and MediaCorp News
Table 1  Offerings of major print, broadcast and Internet service companies in Singapore

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Print media</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Newspapers</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>MediaCorp</td>
<td>Two titles in English language <em>Today</em> and <em>Weekend Today</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Magazines</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Singapore Press Holdings</td>
<td>Over 100 titles in different languages and categories including <em>Nuyou</em> (Chinese-language women’s fashion), <em>Her World</em> (women’s fashion), <em>The Peak</em> (Business), <em>Men’s Health</em> (Health), <em>Carma</em> (Vehicles), <em>Golf Digest</em> (Sports), <em>First</em> (Infotainment), <em>Game Axis</em> (Gaming), <em>Home &amp; Decor</em> (Home), <em>Young Parents</em> (Parenting) and <em>Seventeen</em> (Young people)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MediaCorp</td>
<td>Over 30 titles in different languages and categories including <em>I-Weekly</em> (Chinese), <em>Manja</em> (Malay), <em>FHM Singapore</em> (Men’s interest), <em>ELLE Singapore</em> (women’s fashion), <em>ARENA Singapore</em> (Men’s fashion), <em>8 Days</em> (Infotainment), <em>Electronic Gaming Monthly</em> (Gaming) and <em>Mother and Baby</em> (Parenting)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Broadcast media</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Radio</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>MediaCorp</td>
<td>Thirteen stations in various languages and categories including <em>Gold 90.5FM</em> (English), <em>Y.E.S 93.3FM</em> (Chinese), <em>Warna 94.2FM</em> (Malay), <em>Oli 96.8FM</em> (Tamil), <em>98.7FM</em> (Contemporary), <em>Symphony 92.4FM</em> (Classical) and <em>93.8Live</em> (News)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPH UnionWorks</td>
<td>Two stations <em>The New 91.3FM</em> (English) and <em>Radio 100.3FM</em> (Chinese)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAFRA</td>
<td>Two stations <em>Power 98FM</em> (English) and <em>Jià 88.3FM</em> (Chinese)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Television (Terrestrial, Cable and IP)</strong></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>MediaCorp</td>
<td>Nine free-to-air channels in various languages and categories including <em>Channel 5</em> (English), <em>Channel 8</em> (Chinese), <em>Suria</em> (Malay), <em>Vasantham Central</em> (Tamil), <em>Okto</em> (Children), <em>Arts Central</em> (the Arts) and <em>Channel News Asia</em> (News)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>StarHub Cable</td>
<td>Over 100 different channels from more than 10 categories including World News, Entertainment, Sports, Education, Kids, Lifestyle, Chinese infotainment, Chinese Entertainment and Asia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SingTel Mio TV</td>
<td>Over 30 different channels from more than 8 categories including Entertainment, Kids and Family, Infotainment, Asia, News, International, Chinese and BBC3.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Internet</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SingTel, StarHub, Pacific Internet, MobileOne</td>
<td>Connections through <em>Broadband</em> (ADSL, wireless), <em>Wireless@SG</em></td>
</tr>
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</table>
which provide entertainment and news programmes catering to different viewing segments across ages and ethnicities. In all, MediaCorp provides nine free-to-air terrestrial TV channels and one digital channel to Singaporeans (MediaCorp, n.d., *Core business*). In 2001, MediaCorp TV introduced the pervasive TVMobile. Utilising Digital Video Broadcast (DVB) technology, programs are delivered to viewers on the move and in shopping malls, food courts, academic institutions and on public transportation. As for cable television, StarHub Cable Vision Limited is the only provider, offering over 70 analogue and 100 digital channels. Launched in 2004, digital cable also provides added services such as interactive games and Video-On-Demand (StarHub Cable TV, n.d.).

**Internet**

The Infocomm Development Authority launched the Intelligent Nation 2015 master plan in 2006, with the goal of creating a country which is completely wired to broadband Internet access by 2015. With broadband connection speeds of 100Mbps, Internet access in Singapore is fast and affordable, even free-of-charge depending on your location. Broadband subscription packages are attractively priced and as of April 2008, household broadband penetration was 82.5 per cent (Infocomm Development Authority [IDA], Jan–Jun 2008). Singaporeans are also benefiting from the Wireless@SG scheme which will provide free wireless broadband Internet in public areas until 2010. The most popular online activities of Singaporeans are sending and receiving emails, general web browsing and instant messaging (IDA, 2008). With regard to the regulation of Internet content, there has been a ‘symbolic ban’ of 100 websites with ‘objectionable content’ to signal the government’s interest to preserve Singapore’s traditional Asian values, maintain racial harmony and religious tolerance, and protect young persons from undesirable content (Ministry of Information, Communications and the Arts, 2003). In May 2008, two more pornographic file-sharing websites, YouPorn and RedTube were included in the stable of banned websites (Chua, 23 May 2008).

**Mobile Services**

Mobile phone subscription has seen a phenomenal rise, from 200 per 1000 residents in 1997 to 1225 per 1000 residents in 2007. As of April 2008, mobile phone subscriptions had risen to over 5.9 million (IDA, Jan–Jun 2008), exceeding the country’s population of 4.6 million (Statistics Singapore [SingStats], 2007, *Key annual indicators*). Mobile phones are used predominantly for communication via voice calls and text messages. However, with faster speeds and increased variety, newer services such as mobile television and mobile Internet are seeing growing consumer interest.
New Literacies for the Emerging Media Landscape

Hitherto, the print and broadcast markets in Singapore have been closely regulated through a combination of licensing laws, indirect government ownership, content restrictions and censorship. [For a discussion of such regulations and their impact, see George (2006).] Given the high level of government involvement in media industry controls and content regulation, Singaporean media consumers have arguably been rather sheltered. With the domination of Singapore’s media landscape by two well-respected government-linked companies, Singapore Press Holdings and MediaCorp, consumers have also come to expect reliable and accurate information from these two sources. Singaporean parents have also been able to leave their children largely unsupervised when watching television or reading newspapers and magazines, knowing full well that any violence, nudity, coarse language and extremist views would already have been filtered out by government censorship.

With the advent of new media like the Internet and mobile phone, typically personally-owned, individually-used and delivering unregulated content directly to the user, such assumptions about the veracity, reliability and acceptability of media content in Singapore can no longer hold. Furthermore, while the convergence of “older” media like television, movies and print with “newer” media like the Internet and mobile phones provide exciting possibilities for media consumption, they also vest in individuals the powers of media content production and dissemination. With greater powers come increased responsibilities. Hence, the emerging media landscape demands new literacies which pertain broadly to consuming, creating and managing media.

Literacies for Consuming Media

First, consuming media can take many forms including accessing media for information/entertainment, communicating with others via different media channels and engaging in transactions through media services such as online shopping and e-government portals. When accessing information, it is important to be able to critically assess media content given that online information is so copious and of such varied provenance that both adults and children alike need to be astute enough to sieve out less credible information. In addition, when using media platforms to communicate and socialise with others, it is integral to possess a critical awareness of the risks and possibilities of online social interactions, friendship formations and community building in MMORPGs and social networking sites. Broadening one’s circle of friends that transcends cultural and geographical barriers is gaining popularity amongst Singaporean youths. Of these services, five sites have established their own niches amongst Singaporean netizens; Facebook – for school communities, Friendster and MySpace – where younger and aspiring personalities dwell, Multiply – where close-knit acquaintances maintain ties, and LinkedIn – for working adults and young professionals.
The value of these social environments in people’s lives has been popularly conceptualized as ‘social capital’, which is regarded as a resource and potentially opens up avenues for profit from their association. More significantly, social capital has been argued to affect individuals’ cognitive development, especially those of children (Portes, 1998). Thus, other than having the skills to access and use the Internet to participate in and benefit from this experience, emphasis has to be placed on the possession of knowledge of the relational aspects of interaction between individuals, media use and the social contexts that characterize the nature and intensity of these virtual relationships. Also, the importance of critical awareness cannot be overemphasized in an individual’s foray into online social networks as threats such as online grooming may present themselves.

**Literacies for Creating Media**

Second, as more users are not just consuming but are creating and sharing media, a “new ethos” in literacy is needed to aid one’s “participatory”, “collaborative” and “distributed” involvement (Lankshear & Knobel, 2007). Possessing such literacy is critical in light of the growing popularity of file-sharing programs and services amongst Singaporeans, such as YouTube (for videos), Flickr (for photographs) and Gnutella (for music files and software). Apart from these services, podcasts, webcasts and especially blogs are also increasingly popular in Singapore. In 2006, Singaporeans aged between 15 to 29 years were found to be the most active in reading others’ blogs and in producing their own blogs, constituting 26 and 17 per cent of the Internet users in that age group respectively (IDA, 2007). Interestingly, Singaporeans aged 60 years and above were also involved in the same activity, albeit still at low figures of 9 per cent and 5 per cent respectively. The fact that such sites and programs endow the individual with greater semiotic democracy and almost complete creative license provide the freedom for individuals’ personal values and ideas to be reflected in their content creations (Lim, 2007). Users need to be mindful that media creations which are shared online are likely to enter the public domain, may cause offence if reference is made to particular groups or individuals and can invite feedback or criticism. Therefore, being at the ‘centre of production’ in this new media age, critical media literacy (Buckingham, 2005) requires one to possess the aptitude to assess the potential public response to one’s own media creations and to evaluate media content created by others.

There have been a few landmark cases of Internet misuse by Singaporeans where a glaring deficit of such critical skills was displayed. In September 2005, three people were arrested and charged under the Sedition Act for posting racist comments online, two of whom were sentenced to imprisonment (Chong, 5 October 2005). Besides the Sedition Act, laws on defamation have also been applied in cases where some ‘inconsiderate’ comments were posted over the Internet. In May 2005, a blogger who was then a graduate student at an overseas university was made to apologise and to shut down his blog containing criticisms on government agency A*STAR after he was threatened to be sued for defamation by the agency’s then-Chairman
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(Lwee, 10 May 2005). Most recently, in 2008, a 24-year old blogger was arrested for allegedly posting offensive comments targeted at a particular racial group. Interviews with the blogger revealed that he did not expect his message to be ‘cut and pasted’ onto different webspaces and hyperlinked to multiple others. His defence that “I meant what I wrote in a different way. If people read it in another way, there is nothing much I can do” (Liew, 21 May 2008, p. 2) also displayed a lack of the critical understanding of the social context of the communication and consumption of information via mass media, an important literacy component in this new media age (Kress, 2003; Livingstone, 2004).

**Literacies for Managing Media**

With the pervasiveness of media in Singaporeans’ everyday lives, the ability to manage media and not be overwhelmed by it should also constitute an important form of critical media literacy. The growing trend towards always-on, always-available media is making it more complicated for people to draw the lines between work and rest, office and home. The need to be constantly connected and contactable can also take its toll. At its most extreme, some people find themselves addicted to particular media devices or services (Griffiths, 2000). Gaming addiction is of particular interest. The popularity of online gaming is evident in Singapore especially amongst children. In 2006, an astounding 58 per cent of young children between the ages of 10 to 14 had used the Internet to play or download computer or video games. Meanwhile, an average of 37 per cent of total Internet users had engaged in the same activity during the same year (IDA, 2007). In particular, massively multiplayer online role playing games (MMORPGs) are especially popular, with fantasy-styled games such as World of Warcraft (WoW), Defence of the Ancients (DotA) and MapleStory as frontrunners.

In light of several high profile deaths of teen gamers in South Korea and China, concerns have been raised that the rising interest in online games in Singapore may be accompanied by a growing gaming addiction problem (Oo & Siew, 2007). Besides the ability to control one’s excessive usage of online games, managing one’s engagement with the virtual game world is also important. The experiential element in games facilitates not only the engagement of social interactions and communality in virtual worlds (Friedl, 2003; Lazzaro, March 2004) but also leads to explorations of personal identity and self (Turkle, 1995). Consciousness of the interactions between virtual and real existence in the game playing process is yet another form of critical media literacy. Gamers, and all other Internet users for that matter, must have the skills and self-awareness to negotiate and make meanings within the different worlds to achieve a stable and consistent sense of self-identity (Adams, 2005).

**Media Literacy Education in Schools**

While teachers in Singapore have been known to use media content and platforms as classroom teaching aids, formal media education is not part of the primary,
secondary and junior college curriculum. At the tertiary level however, most of the polytechnics offer diplomas in media-related areas and Singapore’s two top universities have media programmes, each with a different focus. For example, Nanyang Polytechnic offers a Diploma in Media Studies & Management (Nanyang Polytechnic, 2008) while students at Ngee Ann Polytechnic can pursue diplomas in Digital Visual Effects, Film or Mass Communication (Ngee Ann Polytechnic, n.d.). The National University of Singapore’s Communications and New Media Programme concentrates on theoretical and critical media studies, communications management and media design, all with a strong emphasis on new media (Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, 2008). The Wee Kim Wee School of Communication and Information at the Nanyang Technological University offers training in several areas including journalism, public and promotional communication and information studies (Wee Kim Wee School of Communication and Information, 2008). At the tertiary level therefore, formal media education has depth and diversity.

The same cannot be said for the primary, secondary and junior college levels where the curricula have emphasised more traditional subjects such as languages, mathematics and the sciences. However, with the increasing ubiquity and consumption of media, there is a growing realisation amongst parents, educators and policy makers that some form of media education needs to be introduced at the junior levels. Specifically, calls have been made for *media literacy* education rather than media education in general as the former would seek to inculcate in young students the skills to consume and produce media in an informed, critical and discerning manner.

Such calls are not unexpected given the push to increase the use of IT in the classroom. While IT is already heavily utilised in Singapore schools, the plan is to further deploy IT in a greater variety of ways. The iN2015 Masterplan aims to make Singapore a world leader in educational technology, fostering innovations such as multimedia field trips, 3D interactive educational games with simulations and digital textbooks (IDA, 13 May 2008). To this end, the Ministry of Education (MOE) has named five schools as the pioneer batch of FutureSchools@Singapore to serve as testbeds for such technologies and as “pathfinders” for the wider education system (IDA, 13 May 2008).

In light of this shift towards technology-oriented classrooms, parents are understandably concerned about their children’s ability to use technology wisely. To allay such fears, the MOE has created two Cyberwellness starter kits to support primary and secondary schools in their efforts instil in students an appreciation of the benefits and potential pitfalls of Internet use (MOE, 2008). The kits cover topics such as online grooming, pornography, cyberbullying, gaming addiction and the risks of illegal downloading. Cyberwellness was a concept introduced in 2004 by the now-defunct National Internet Advisory Committee. It posits the principles of maintaining a balanced lifestyle when using the Internet, exploiting the powers of the Internet to inspire others, being astute in one’s Internet use, and using the Internet responsibly while respecting others (Media Development Authority, 2006a).
Media Literacy Education for the Public

Apart from schools, various government agencies have also introduced a slate of media education programmes targeted at the general public. Some notable government-initiated campaigns include IDA’s InfocommMyWay which comprised a media campaign, dedicated web portal, advertising collaterals such as posters in subways and on foodcourt tables, as well as roadshows, raising the observability and visibility of new technologies (IDA Singapore, 2008). The campaign covered themes such as online safety, e-government services and commercial online services such as online auctions. The MDA has also introduced the ongoing MediaAction programme which attempts to raise the knowledge and skills levels of Singaporeans relating to new media. Hence, courses are conducted at affordable prices to ramp up public interest and to raise skills levels in areas such as blogging, digital photography, computer animation etc (Media Development Authority, 2006b). However, while these campaigns have focused strongly on the technical competencies of Singaporeans, critical media literacy has not received as much emphasis.

In this regard, two organisations made great strides in raising public awareness of critical media literacy – the Parents’ Advisory Group for the Internet (PAGi) and Touch Community Services (TCS). The now defunct PAGi conducted multilingual Online Safety Workshops for parents, ran a popular website providing online safety tips and resources and conducted roadshows at schools and workplaces to spread the word on safe and beneficial Internet use (Media Development Authority, 2005). It was subsequently subsumed under the National Internet Advisory Council’s Community Advisory Committee, which has since been replaced by the Internet and Media Advisory Committee (INMAC) whose remit is to advise on media literacy programmes and related policies (Government of Singapore, 2007a). TCS is a non-profit charitable organisation which seeks to offer assistance to less advantaged members of society and provide guidance to youths and families to strengthen family units (Touch Community Services, 2004a). A key initiative of its Youth Services Group is its CRuSH (Cyberspace Risks and where U Seek Help) programme which aims to promote cyber wellness amongst youths. It offers counselling, parenting skills courses and even a GamesLab which promotes healthy online gaming habits (Touch Community Services, 2004b). Some private sector initiatives to raise critical media literacy have also been introduced. Notably, the Business Software Alliance has established a website titled “Before You Surf” which provides information on how to raise one’s level of online safety and how to steer clear of online activities which may lead one to incur legal liability (Business Software Alliance, 2008).

It should also be noted that the Ministry of Information, Communication and the Arts set up a high level Advisory Council on the Impact of New Media on Society (AIMS) in 2007. Comprising community leaders, academics, senior civil servants, journalists and CEOs of major media and telecommunication companies, AIMS was tasked with preparing a landmark policy paper to advise the government on how best to regulate new media so that it is societally beneficial, facilitating public
expression and creativity and stimulating the growth of the interactive and digital media sector, while considering the ethical and social implications (Government of Singapore, 2007b). The establishment of INMAC and AIMS clearly signals the Singapore government’s realisation that new media can have significant societal impact which must be monitored and managed through the promotion of critical media literacy.

The Challenges Ahead

As Singapore presses on in its efforts to transform itself into an “intelligent nation” where technology will be in intensified use in schools and workplaces, it needs to further fortify its efforts to vest its citizens with media literacy so as to better cope with such changes. With high mobile phone ownership and broadband Internet penetration rates, a digital divide may not exist in the traditional sense. However, a second level skills divide (Hargittai, 2002) may manifest itself, with some sectors of society being better able to exploit the different technological and media affordances. Such a situation may translate into schisms in society where the more media literate have tremendous access to cultural and social capital while those who are less au fait with the media will be severely disadvantaged.

As seen earlier, the Singapore government has already made some efforts to narrow this second level skills divide by conducting courses and public education programmes which have sought to instil functional media literacy skills. A few trends will make this task much more difficult. First, the relentless pace of innovation means that policy responses will always be outpaced by technological advancement. Second, with the increasing variety of media platforms and growing number of media content genres, audience fragmentation is already occurring but will further intensify. In such a situation, devising functional media literacy courses which can cater to as wide a section of the population as possible will be a resource intensive affair. In this regard, the government should not seek to go it alone but should rope in private sector partners and provide seed funding for non-governmental organisations to play a role in fostering media literacy.

Beyond imparting functional media literacy which may be effectively done through public campaigns, online portals and continuing education courses, the inculcation of critical media literacy will be a more difficult task. Not least is the contested notion of media literacy and its purpose. Is media literacy aimed at democratizing media participation such that media representations are more egalitarian, or is it geared towards equipping people with the facility to discern quality, credibility and authority in media content (Livingstone, 2003)? This question is especially germane to the situation in Singapore as the government has taken a paternalistic, gatekeeping approach towards media regulation but is now grappling with the age of individualised, niche audiences to whom media content is delivered directly. Unless some consensus is reached as to the scope and level of critical media literacy required of citizens in a highly-mediatised society like
Singapore’s, developing an effective strategy for inculcating such literacy will be problematic.

As with its regional neighbours such as China, Japan and South Korea, Singapore seems to be right on track in establishing a comprehensive, cutting-edge media and technology infrastructure. At the same time though, it needs to adequately prepare its populace for the growing pervasiveness of media and technology in everyday lives through fostering in its people both functional and critical media literacy. This task is made more difficult by the unyielding pace of technological innovation and the trend towards audience fragmentation. Be that as it may, public education efforts should be stepped up and ideally, private and non-governmental partners should be enlisted in this crucial shared endeavour.

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Media Education in Thailand: Contexts and Prospects

John Langer and Nuntiya Doungphummes

Introduction

In August 2005 Thailand’s National Statistical Office released a survey announcing nearly three and a half million Thais to be ‘illiterate’. Another fifteen million, it was discovered, had the ability to read but opted not to, for a range of reasons. One of these was a preference for watching television. Of the total who could read, over twenty five percent were found to be ‘non-reading literates’. Possibly, the most revealing aspect of the survey was not its results but the intense public reaction in the following weeks: was Thailand turning into a country of passive couch potatoes; what did this say about our nation’s cultural sensibilities; where was the potential for growth and change? Letters to daily newspapers flooded in, and column inches were filled with commentary, criticism, alarm, speculation and solutions.

The amount of expressed concern raised by the release of the literacy survey is a useful counterpoint to recent work in the fields of media and communication studies that argues for a culturally different way of thinking about the notion of literacy. Media scholar Roger Silverstone (1999) has written a book called Why Study the Media? He answers his own question this way: ‘our media are ubiquitous... they are an essential dimension of contemporary experience. We cannot evade media presence, media representation. We have come to depend on media, both printed and electronic for pleasures and information, for comfort and security, for some sense of the continuities of experience and from time to time also for the intensities of experience’. If what Silverstone describes is indeed one of the conditions of everyday existence, literacy or lack of it, as investigated in the National Statistical
Office survey can no longer be conceptualized as primarily a substantive matter of reading and writing in the traditional sense.

Mapping Media Literacy

Any attempt to understand ‘literacy’ in a Thai context, possibly more than any time before, needs to focus on and address the issue of media literacy. This chapter outlines some of the initiatives and practices being mobilized by educationists, researchers, policy makers, teachers, media practitioners, community organizations and parents in Thailand to generate thinking and dialogue about media literacy in educational settings. To begin, the term itself needs clarification. One ready formulation, put forward in 1992 at a milestone media education conference the United States, specifically expands notions of literacy ‘to include the powerful post-print media that dominate our informational landscape’, and posits media literacy as the ability to ‘understand, produce and negotiate meanings in a culture made up of powerful images, words and sounds... A media literate person – and everyone should have the opportunity to become one – can access, analyze, evaluate and produce both print and electronic media’ (Provencal, 2004: 7; see also Aufderheide, 2001)

In terms of pedagogical practice, these ideas sometimes get codified into ‘domains’ of conceptual knowledge, all of which, need to be explored for a better understanding of ‘media messages’ regardless of whether these come ‘packaged as a TV sitcom, a computer game, a music video, a magazine ad or a movie in the theatre’ (Thoman, 2003). In terms of actual teaching, the Canadian based Association for Media Literacy (2006) proposed a classroom ‘framework for discussion’ that examines: (1) ‘constructedness’, the process of assemblage which selects and combines audio-visual material to create the ‘product’ received and consumed; (2) ‘media language’, the creation of meaning through rhetorical devices, metaphor and stylistic conventions; (3) differential and active interpretation accounting for social, cultural, and personal ‘subjectivities’ shaping the way media are experienced and ‘read’; (4) revenue and business contexts of media output, and the centrality of advertising; (5) values and patterned cultural assumptions circulating in media ‘subtexts’. Using a similar methodology, media educator Cary Bazalgette (1992) at the British Film Institute, suggests six ‘key aspects’ necessary for the development of lesson plans ‘supporting and progressing learning’ – media institutions and professional practices; generic forms and conventions; media language and ‘representations’ of reality; media audiences and meaning making and change in technologies of communication.

A more tactical approach comes from the Centre for Media Literacy (2003) through its checklist of ‘what media literacy is not’. Media ‘bashing’ is not media literacy, but informed criticism is. Looking for political agendas, stereotypes and misrepresentations does not qualify as media literacy but an exploration of systems of meaning that make these appear ‘normal’ does. Media literacy does not mean ‘don’t watch; it means watch carefully’. Media literacy is not sorting media texts on
the basis of ‘worthiness’ or searching for the ‘best that has been thought and said’. For example, Ed Buscombe (1992: 41) explains that ‘one cannot hope to understand television as a whole without understanding all its parts. This does not imply the acceptance of television as it is, but if we wish to have any hope of improving it we need first of all to know what kind of a thing we are dealing with. Television commercials, quiz shows, light entertainment programs, soap operas and other despised genres all repay close attention’. Responding to the resistance to media education in the United States school system Robert Kubey (2005: 7) stresses that education for media literacy is not done at the expense of ‘traditional literacy’. The two, he suggests, are in fact complimentary: ‘one of the ways to increase students’ interest in literature is to help them recognize that many of the storytelling techniques used in the classics are also used in popular television programs and films. . . ’.

Len Masterman (1985: 24), a pioneer of field of media education, goes further in his assessment of outcomes, arguing that the key objective is not simply critical awareness and understanding, but what he terms ‘critical autonomy’.

The really important and difficult task of the media teacher is to develop in pupils enough self confidence and critical maturity to be able to apply critical judgments to media texts which they will encounter in the future. The acid test of any media education program is the extent to which pupils are critical of their own use and understanding of media when the teacher is not there (italics in original).

Intensified Interest

The importance of media literacy has grown widely over the past twenty years, and those in Thailand who have, like Silverstone, identified media as an ‘essential dimension of contemporary experience’ in the organization of everyday consciousness are intensifying their efforts to get public and policy recognition for media education initiatives. Several factors seem to be driving this mobilization. Probably, the most obvious is the emergence, widespread adoption and apparent impact of ‘new media’ – the world of digital communication technologies, convergence, virtuality and interactivity according to a multitude of commentators is having far reaching consequences for structural ordering of social and personal life (see for example Turkle, 1995). A book published in 2000, entitled Reconceptualizing Literacy in the Media Age (Watts Pailliotet and Mosenthal, 2000) is symptomatic. Based on a collection of essays dealing with contemporary media education, a key theme to emerge is the way that digital technologies produce ‘networks’ that ‘flow’ across media forms creating a hybrid media culture with diverse and unstable points of entry and exit for those who might loosely be defined as an audience. Because these new technologies can operate not just as tools for reception, but provide the conditions for individualized and community based production and distribution of media – homepages, weblogs, news groups, chat rooms, podcasting, and now social networking – the line between media creators and consumers is increasingly blurred. Not surprisingly, many of the writers in this book make a case for a more elaborated
version of media literacy, one which engages with what Watts Pailliotet (2000: xxvii) describes as ‘intermediality’ – the ability of the same individual to critically ‘read’ and ‘write’ with and across multiple interconnected symbol systems, ‘reading’ defined here as active engagement with a range of media forms and ‘writing’ as the capacity of readers to generate and distribute their own media ‘texts’.

Discourses about literacy constructed by scholars, educators and policy makers, in Thailand as elsewhere, take place in social and historical moments and this wider context informs the nature of debate and discussion about the purpose of education, pedagogy and ‘learning outcomes’. In fundamental ways, media and new communication industries have given shape and sustained a process of globalization which has touched us all.

Facilitated by the Internet and other new technologies, the dominant symbolic systems of meaning of our age – such as individualism, consumerism and various religious discourses – circulate more freely and widely than ever before. As images and ideas can be more easily and rapidly transmitted from one place to another, they profoundly impact the way people experience their everyday lives. Today cultural practices escape fixed localities... eventu-

Part of rethinking notions of media literacy for ‘new times’ has, of necessity, been the attempt to address these changes. Does globalization make people around the world more alike? Is culture becoming more globally homogenized? Is cultural diversity vanishing? What are the relationships between the local, the regional and the global? The media’s images, sounds, rhetoric and industrial muscle are a central thematic in these concerns.

A related, and some argue, even more pressing issue is the ways in which globalization and the ‘flow’ of culture are generated and directed by corporate communications empires whose multi-channeled, multi-platformed media output and technological infrastructure increasingly shape social and political realities, personal identity and the structure of values and desires. For some, like Steger (2003: 76–77), it is highly problematic that only a handful of conglomerates account for more than two thirds of annual worldwide communication industry revenues, thus creating ‘global oligopoly’ which fuses finance and culture and has the economic power to control markets and vanquish competition (see also McChesney, 1997; Gerbner, Mowlana, and Schiller 1996). Efforts to reconceptualize media literacy stress the increasing importance of learning about media as a set of institutions and economic arrangements that influence structures of meaning in and reception of media messages, what Lewis and Jhally (1998: 110) refer to as ‘the circuit of cultural production’.

Conceptualization has also been pushed in another direction as educationists and teachers have begun to re-assess the very students for whom a media literacy curriculum is implemented. Social commentator Douglas Rushkoff (in Thoman and Jolls, 2004: 19) refers to current generations of youth as ‘screen-agers’ because so much of their everyday world is structured around the capacity to access, manipulate and respond to a constant and evolving flow of screen-based networked communication. According to this view, students and young people more generally have considerable ‘media savvy’ – they already bring a level of media literacy to the classroom.
As media education researcher David Buckingham (1998) explains, closer attention now needs to be paid to what students already know about the media before they come to and while they attend a formal teaching environment, an issue overlooked by earlier approaches to media literacy. This change of perspective, it is argued, opens up new approaches to teaching and learning. According to Kellner and Share (2005), media literacy as part of classroom practice should be a ‘participatory, collaborative project’ which involves teachers sharing power with students, respecting the media forms and gratifications that students see as their own, and using students’ views and tastes as a way to access and explore often generationally separated aspects of the culture and social field.

Recent evaluation of the importance and purpose of media literacy has also come from debates around the relations between media organizations and government policy in times of crisis and conflict. The centrality of what Sholle and Denski (1994: 113) describe as ‘cultural politics’ of media made a forceful appearance on the media literacy agenda as a result of the September 11 attack on the World Trade Centre in New York, the hunt of Osama bin Laden and subsequent war in Iraq. These were events, it was speculated, that would ‘change the world’. The media’s role in the representation, and indeed the facilitation of these seismic geopolitical circumstances has been acknowledged as unassailable (see Zelizer and Allan, 2002). Yet, almost from the start of these events questions were being raised about media impartiality and integrity, and in particular the way coverage of these events seemed to be less about accuracy and independence and, uncomfortably, more about government policy ‘spin’. If the world had changed, the media, especially journalism and notions of a free press had changed as well. Social commentators, media researchers and journalists began to speak openly about propaganda, censorship, and the purposeful manipulation of news and public opinion (see for example MacArther, 2003; Zewe, 2004). In the wake of these developments, educators and advocates for media literacy, have been assessing how their approaches can be made ‘responsive to young people’s and society’s real world needs’ (Kubey, 2005: 1).

Thailand – Media Education in an Era of Change

It has been especially the latter – the strained and sometimes downright antagonistic relations between government and media organizations – that has led to a sense of urgency about the importance of developing media literacy in Thailand. In October of 2005, Reporters without Borders published its annual Worldwide Press Freedom Index. Thailand’s ranking had dropped to 107th from 59th place the year before, even coming behind regional neighbours with a history of very limited press freedom. Cambodia, Indonesia and Kuwait all had a higher score. In response, the Prime Minister and leader of the governing Thai Rak Thai party, Thaksin Shinawatra, claimed that ‘Thai journalists have the maximum amount of freedom to do their work’, and invited delegates from Reporter without Borders on a tour of newspaper offices so they could see for themselves that journalists enjoy ‘real freedom’.
Refusing the invitation, Reporters without Borders (2005) instead published an open letter outlining the need ‘to take a number of measures that would enable Thailand to improve its ranking in the 2006 index’ and announcing that, for the first time in fifteen years, ‘field investigations’ were being planned to examine the erosion of media independence and recurring violations of freedom of expression.

The Reporters without Borders open letter came after nearly five years of ruling party media interference. Even in the few months prior to the publication of the Index numerous events were telling the tale – multimillion baht libel suits against journalists and NGO media activists proceeding through the courts, removal of television presenters from current affairs programs, closure of community radio stations, restrictions on the publication and scope of public opinion polling, stalled appointments for the National Broadcasting Commission, the regulatory body mandated by the Thai Constitution to oversee broadcast media, ‘hostile’ business take-over bids on major media outlets critical of government policy – all of which were judged as incriminating evidence of continued self-serving political manipulation and the corrosion of civil society under the ‘Thaksin regime’ (see McCargo and Ukrist, 2005; Pasuk and Baker, 2004).

In his assessment, Surassak Glahan (2005) from Asia Media Forum wrote: ‘Imagine an Asian country where its citizens get information from half a dozen free TV channels, scores of daily periodicals and magazines – but all are owned by a small group of people who are closely linked to one another and have good connections to the powers that be’. Human rights campaigners, academics and a range of public intellectuals long recognizing the crucial relationship between the workings of a democratically based culture and the media’s capacity for comment and scrutiny began to talk of the ‘Shinawatra model’ (Glahan, 2005: 1), which appeared to include routine silencing of critical voices by government harassment, intimidation and if necessary the use of state violence. For Pasuk and Baker (2004) such tactics were a grim reminder of Thailand’s past military regimes.

As we know, the political situation in Thailand has changed dramatically. Back in January 2001, the national election was heralded as the beginning of a new era of governance and civil society, the first following the launch of the new ‘people’s constitution’ in 1997. By September 2006, after considerable political uncertainty, including an annulled election earlier in the year boycotted by opposition parties, sections of the military elite staged a non-violent ‘yellow ribbon coup’, dislodging the Thaksin stranglehold on government and promising a revitalized democracy. Despite efforts by the provisional military leadership to diffuse political strife and promote a climate of reform and reconciliation, including the adoption of a new constitution and the staging of another election to re-establish some semblence of democratic process, media independence and freedom of expression seemed no further advanced than under the ‘Shinawatra model’. A number of public statements released to coincide with World Press Freedom Day in May 2008 revealed the depth of the ethical and ideological fault lines. In a joint communiqué, Thai print and broadcast journalists (Thai Journalist Association, 2008) pointed to the spread of a ‘hostile and threatening climate’ confronting working media professionals on a daily basis, cultivated by the recently elected Prime Minister, Samak Sundaravej and
proliferated through the ranks of the country’s elected officials. This theme was re-iterated in The Nation, a national English language daily (2008), in a commemorative editorial as it bitingly declared: ‘the state of press freedom in Thailand today is a disgrace’ with currently elected politicians merely carrying forward the ‘contaminated’ anti-media ‘habits’ of the Thaksin period. In several broad ranging overviews of the ‘media landscape’, published to alert readers of an expanding regime of censorship and message manipulation, through both government directives and media organizations doing it to themselves, a disquieting, but all too familiar catalogue of interventions was spotlighted: surveillance and blocked websites, banned films, news programmes taken off air, politicization of public broadcasting and community radio, winding back of critical commentary in traditional media, criminalization of internet users (Corporal, 2008). Running through all these public comments was the grim conclusion that the post-Thaksin era had seen no genuine change in the process of democratization and in fact, where some potential could be found – in the expansion of the discursive location of political culture through the internet – government instrumentalities and monitoring mechanisms had been quick to swoop and criminalize.

So, where, in this march of events, (which, as we write are still unfolding) does the development and implementation of a program of media literacy fit? Why does studying the media matter? Perhaps the lead up to the changes in the political landscape and the change itself offers an historical moment of reflection – about the process of democratization, and the formation of an active citizenry as these are inextricably connected to what communications researcher Peter Dahlgren (1995: 2) calls ‘issues of the media’. Thailand, according to McCargo and Ukrist (2005: 1), has long been characterized by competing tendencies towards democracy and authoritarianism, a tension in existence since the absolute monarchy was brought to an end in 1932. To avoid the slide towards authoritarianism as witnessed over the recent past, to tip the balance permanently in favour of an on-going realization of democratic culture requires investigation into ‘how the media attempt to function as consciousness industries; how they attempt to manage opinion, set agendas, construct identities, make social meanings, and how audiences make sense of and negotiate these meanings’ (Masterman in Quin and McMahon, 2007). Clearly this is no short term or straightforward task but it might be argued that in a small but significant way the inclusion of media literacy as an objective in contemporary educational experience could make some difference. Sholle and Denski (2004: 150) provide a starting point:

… media play a principal role in disseminating the images and ideas that shape contemporary life. What is crucial is that our students understand how the media are historically situated and how political, economic, social and cultural decisions have led to the type of media we now have [nationally] and around the world. In the light of the media’s ubiquity, this knowledge is vital in recognizing the enormous cultural power of media institutions. …

For Lewis and Jhally (1998) media education that promotes an understanding of such cultural power is a first step to challenging and changing it and their stated goal is not to have students evaluate media messages ‘simply as true or false, realistic or misleading, stereotypical or positive but as authored voices with certain interests
or assumptions about the world, voices that could be influenced or replaced’. These kinds of pedagogical strategies inevitably have implications for that ‘space’ of political and social discourse which Jurgen Habermas calls the public sphere (1989), and their relevance for Thailand, as an growing chorus of community voices point out, can no longer be overlooked.

Starts . . .

The kind of focus specified by media educators like Sholle and Denski (1994) and Lewis and Jhally (1998) has been taken up largely in the tertiary educational sector. Most commonly found in ‘communication arts’ programs, notions of media literacy have been part of the university curriculum in Thailand since the 1970’s. (see Neunghathai, 2004). Much less typical are programs of study where media education has become part of curriculum in secondary and primary schools. Media literacy educators and advocates in countries like Britain, Australia and the United States have argued that, given the pervasiveness and centrality of media culture in young people’s lives, these kinds of programs need systematic introduction in schools as early as possible (see Alvarado and Boyd-Barrett, 1992; Watts Pailliotet and Mosenthal 2000; Australian Screen Education). This view has not been entirely absent in Thailand, and over the past few years concern and discussion about the growing profile of a media driven environment and its influences have seen the development of several initiatives devised by individual schools or teams of educators to introduce some form of media literacy into the curriculum. Without wanting to take away from their pioneering spirit, it needs to be noted that these school based start-up programs tend to emerge in a rather ad hoc and fragmented fashion so that any systematic application of conceptual frameworks, like the ones recommended by the Association for Media Literacy or Bazalgette (1992), have been absent. If there has been an overarching epistemology loosely tying these scattered programs together, it comes from a recognition of the increasing centrality of media culture in Thai student outlook and identity formation, and that this ought to be a focus of educational attention and pedagogical action.

Foundation for Child Development

Concentrating primarily on preventing and solving problems relating to children, the Foundation for Child Development was first established in 1982 as a private development organization and later registered with the Ministry of Culture as an NGO in 1989. With a staff of thirty, the Foundation’s aims include the study and promotion of child focused issues and the support of community based activities for enriching early learning and development. As one of the first NGO’s to adopt a media education focus in Thailand, a number of staff formed the Group for Mass Media Promotion for Children in order to investigate connections between problems in childhood
and patterns of media consumption and then to campaign for the development of media more suitable for child viewers and readers (Foundation for Child Development, 2004). Radio programs were also produced to provide advice and information for parents in an attempt to counter what was seen as the pernicious influence of media output and the decline of family-based authority. In an attempt to demystify the actual production process, a further effort focused on young people making their own programs for community radio (see www.childmedia.net).

Recognizing the pervasiveness of all forms media in more areas of everyday life, the Foundation began to look for a broader approach that would, in the words of the Director of the Foundation, ‘fight with the mainstream media who are equipped with capital and technology’ (see Sawasdipanich, 1991). With the aim of promoting media education nationwide, in 1995 the Foundation in collaboration with the Faculty of Education at Chulalongkorn University organised a seminar entitled ‘Direction of Media Education in Thailand’. This was the first attempt by the Foundation to introduce a media education course into teacher training programs. Although several high-ranking officials from the Ministry of Education and many well-known scholars attended the seminar, the proposal to set up media education courses proved to be short-lived. Undeterred, the Foundation, with assistance from media researchers, completed writing a media education curriculum for classroom teachers (see Lavender, 1995). The up-take, however, was minimal, as teacher perception tended to equate media education with the use of teaching aids. In 2003, the Foundation received funding from the Thai Health Promotion Foundation to run a program to develop children’s media literacy in relation to advertising, and more recently significant advances were made when a provisional media education curriculum as well as a teaching activities book were introduced as a pilot program in fifteen schools in Bangkok.

The Daughters of Mary Help of Christians (Salesian Sisters)

One church-based organization has taken a particularly active part in promoting media education in Thailand. Founded in 1872, the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians or as it is sometime known, the Salesian Sisters, is an international Catholic missionary organization with headquarters in Rome. Its ‘core’ commitment is education for girls who are especially disadvantaged in societies where gender differences tend to dominate social and cultural life. (The Salesian Sisters unpublished document, 2004; see also Sivaraksa, 1987). The Salesian Sisters came to Ratchburi province in 1931 and eight years later set up their first ‘home’ (a boarding school). At present, with headquarters in Bangkok, the organization has eleven ‘homes’ (schools and centers) and around one hundred staff nationwide. Many of these work as qualified teachers and it was in this context that the significance of media culture in student life experience became an educational issue.
In the mid 1990s, a specialist area was set up to promote media literacy. Currently emphasis has been placed on the widespread use of the internet by young people, a pedagogical response to the view that relevant government instrumentalities and the Ministry of Education have been too slow to act on the problem of easy accessibility to ‘unscrupulous’ media (Interview, Sister Yupadee Jaruvibhak, September 2004). In 1999 a teacher’s handbook for media education was developed and introduced into Salesian Sisters’ schools to enable students to study, analyze, classify and produce their own media in order to improve quality of life, ‘spirituality’ and ethical thinking (Interview, Sister Yupadee Jaruvibhak, September 2004). Weekly lessons were devised for primary level, secondary level and high school students with teaching plans to suit different levels of learning through a range of media formats (broadcast, print, digital).

**Catholic Social Communications of Thailand (CSCT)**

A non-profit organization operating under the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of Thailand, this organization was set up in August 1967 initially for the purpose of religious teaching. CSCT now comprises three divisions – Printing (UCIP), Broadcasting (UNDA) and Filming and Audio-Visual (OCIC). With a total of around thirty staff, stated objectives include the dissemination of religious teachings, support for Catholic mass media, and the ‘enhance[ment of] mutual understanding and unity in Thai society’ (see www.udomsarn.com/index.html, 2004). A key activity for CSCT is media production work with an emphasis on religious teaching, the promotion of ‘ethical’ mass media and the informed use of media output.

The importance of media education crystallized in 1997 after CSCT staff attended a training seminar where community-based Catholics from the Philippines outlined the role that media literacy could play in developing an ‘ethical and compassionate outlook’ in contemporary societies. There is now a specialist committee in charge of designing media education programs used in Catholic schools, sponsoring seminars and training programs for teachers and young people and organizing participation in World Communication Day (see http://www.waccglobal.com/wacc/about_wacc). Using strategies developed by the Philippines Association of Media Education, where teachers are trained in integrating a media focus into different school subject areas, by the end of 2004 a staged plan for the introduction of media education had evolved including a draft syllabus, and provision for implementation, evaluation and follow up modifications. Enacting this plan in selected Catholic schools, however, has been patchy at best, the result of uncertain funding and resources.

**UNESCO Connections**

In 2004, UNESCO’s branch in Thailand along with scholars from Thai universities commenced a media education project designed for secondary school students.
A media literacy teaching package was developed, the contents of which were directly taken and translated from a publication entitled *Media Education in the Pacific: A Guide for Secondary School Teachers*, a handbook launched at a workshop in Fiji in 2003 sponsored by UNESCO-Apia and the network of Associated Schools in the Pacific. Eight secondary schools in Bangkok were chosen to assess whether the handbook was suitable for Thai classrooms. Following an evaluation of student and teacher responses to the curriculum which indicated a need to make content more Thai specific, a UNESCO led conference was held for teachers in order to introduce and discuss the relevance of media education and to explain the way the handbook could be used for curriculum development. Over one hundred and fifty teachers attended and several schools incorporated media literacy programs into their teaching programs. Those involved in the UNESCO initiative also lobbied the Ministry of Education to consider a nationally based media literacy curriculum.

**ThaiHealth (Thai Health Promotion Foundation)**

Although not formally connected to any school-based curriculum, it is worth noting early media education initiatives developed by ThaiHealth. Established in 2001, the Foundation addresses health problems resulting from preventable causes such as smoking, excess alcohol consumption, lack of exercise, poor eating habits and substandard driver safety. With a generous budget derived from excise tax on tobacco and alcohol and considerable autonomy from government bureaucracy, among its many projects ThaiHealth has been building a ‘social marketing and communication plan’ to facilitate the type of media literacy, especially among young people, that will be ‘counteract’ the deleterious effects of media advertising. (see ThaiHealth, 2006). As part of this initiative, on-going discussions have been held with the Ministry of Education about a new broadcast outlet, Education Television Channel (ETV), that would have as its mandate the production of television programs with a family and child friendly focus, the objective of which would be to provide alternative television content and ways of using that content as well as to encourage emerging creative talent to engage with a different type of broadcast philosophy when making programs (see Wongpiromsan, 2004).

**Makhampom Theatre Group**

Actively working around the issue of media literacy through the use of theatrical performances since 2004, this community theatre troupe has staged interactive drama workshops and plays throughout Thailand. Most recent work, funded by Thai Health Promotion Foundation, has a focus on health and media literacy. Called ‘Media Literate Teens’, the project involves practical participatory performance-based workshops in schools and community settings, with the emphasis on developing awareness about the impact of consumer culture and advertising. Makhampom has also devised similar projects using local print media outlets and community
radio in order to involve young people. Current plans include curriculum development for schools with the stress on the use of performance to enhance critical assessment of media culture (Makhampom, 2007).

Centre of Communication Development and Knowledge Management

Located and partially sponsored by Sukhothai Thammathirat Open University in Bangkok, CCDKM has been the concrete organizational result of scholars, NGOs, policy analysts, educators and public commentators from different institutes, universities, knowledge frameworks, interests, and national backgrounds wanting to contribute to ‘positive and sustainable social and cultural change’ (see http://www.ccdkm.org/CCDKM/webpages_english/home.htm). The Centre’s work is participatory and interdisciplinary, combining relevant approaches from the humanities, creative arts, and social sciences with practitioner and community-based perspectives. CCDKM’s project development plan includes: investigations promoting new knowledge about the processes of social, cultural, political and personal development and change at local, national and transnational levels; research connected to practical application and field work; promotion of participatory learning and sharing among all ‘stakeholders and relevant networks’; special attention to new media and on-line generation and management of accessible open source information; focus on ‘non-mainstream and marginal groups and communities’, providing and developing programs and resources ‘to facilitate empowerment and a sense of self-worth’; campaigns and activities to generate public discussion of issues related to development communication; a regional outlook incorporating Thailand, the greater Mekong sub-region and ASEAN countries (see http://www.ccdkm.org/CCDKM/webpages_english/home.htm).

Although not referred to directly in its ‘mission statement’ prospectus, projects developed since CCDKM was launched in mid 2007 appear to have a major component connected to aspects of media education. For example, research on young people’s involvement in community media throughout Thailand, an ASEAN youth media producers workshop, a national audit of media use among young people with exceptional disadvantage, including illegal transnational child workers and northern hill tribes and a national network of community internet centres to support and enable isolated rural ‘homeworkers’ are specific instances of media education operating in non-formal teaching and learning environments.

Thailand Media Literacy Centre

Recently set up under the auspices of Kasetsart University in Bangkok, the Centre has been the culmination of work by a group of Thai academics and educationists over the past ten years concerned with a range of theoretical approaches to media literacy and the implementation of media education in formal school settings. One
key emphasis has been on the search for and development of teaching methodologies and classroom pedagogies best suited for a Thai context. Having produced a standardized curriculum, a media literacy program is now being piloted in forty secondary schools in the north, central, southern and north-eastern parts of Thailand, ten schools of varying sizes targeted for each region (see Thailand Media Literacy Centre, www.tmlc.info). The Centre is also engaged in awareness raising campaigns to encourage educational policy makers and relevant Thai government ministries to understand the importance of media education, the promotion media literacy programs in secondary schools and the facilitation of a media educators network. Recent initiatives have included media production workshops targeting students opinion leaders, a seminar emphasizing the impact of advertising media on teen culture and a training workshop on youth health issues aimed at teacher co-ordinators.

**Thai Media Policy Advocacy Centre**

Initially a collaboration between the Faculty of Communication Arts, Chulalongkorn University and Internews Network, an international NGO that has worked in more than seventy countries, the Centre has been set up specifically to improve access to information and to promote ethical and transparent decision making in relation to the development of communications policy. Motivated by the conviction that the rule of law and policy building for the public interest are vital to the existence of free and independent media as well as an informed citizenry, the overall aim of the Centre is to be a premier clearinghouse and ideas formulator for media law and policy in Thailand (see Thai Media Policy Advocacy Centre, http://www.thaimpac.net.index). TMPAC argues that as ‘an emerging democracy, Thailand has neither a legal infrastructure that would allow its media to fulfill a watchdog role nor a forceful enough public discourse that could be mobilized to defend media freedom of expression. As the country is at ‘the crossroads of media reform’, TMPAC intends to play an integral role in advocacy as well as in research programs related to legislation and policy formation affecting media and communications in Thailand (see http://www.thaimpac.net).

**... and Stops**

There may be an unwritten law framing attempts at social and cultural change. Early initiatives are always confronted with seemingly insurmountable blockages, and media education in Thailand is no exception. In varying degrees, all the ‘starts’ summarized above have been seriously hampered by substantial deficits in the required human and financial resources needed to develop and deliver successful and ongoing media education programs. When funding does become available, typically there are no guarantees for continuing financial support and in consequence, teaching programs and curriculum development lack consistency and follow-through. If Ministry of Education officials claim to be very concerned about impact of media
on the lives and outlook of students, publicizing these views regularly through news reports and other public outlets, there has been no real evidence so far to suggest any tangible effort to introduce media education in schools.

Teacher resistance has also been problematic. There appears to be an undercurrent of irritation and even hostility about curriculum change related to the introduction of media education. As there is no educational policy that addresses the issue of media literacy and curriculum development, teachers tend to see the possibility of such programs as an additional burden for their already demanding workload. In some cases, even in terms of the modest initiatives outlined, it has been reported that there is simply a refusal to be involved. There is also widespread misunderstanding among teachers about what media education actually is. Many, it seems, think of it as using media as a tool for teaching – showing the film based on the novel being studied. This type of misunderstanding in part relates to the professional education currently available for prospective teachers. Even though their future pupils will be living in an even more media reliant culture, students training as teachers currently do not have access to the philosophy and pedagogical practices connected to media education in their courses. Overall, these structural conditions have produced fragmented and relatively uncoordinated efforts to frame approaches to media education in schools with little in the way of networks of information exchange and professional support. More broadly, a relatively low level of public understanding about the centrality and effects of media culture in Thailand is also an obstacle that needs to be overcome. Outside of some relatively crude notions of ‘media effects’, the general lack of public awareness of the power of media forms and media ‘language’ makes it more difficult to convince policy makers to include media literacy as part of a national approach to education and the development of social knowledge.

**Momentum**

There is, however, the potential to build something enduring and beneficial out of these struggling initiatives in order to enhance the growth and vitality of the public sphere and to replace counter-democratic tendencies with genuine and more inclusive ‘societal dialogues’ (Dahlgren, 1995: 9). In 2001 at the 56th session of the United Nations General Assembly, it was resolved to designate the next ten years ‘United Nations Literacy Decade’ with the theme ‘education for all’ (see United Nations Literacy Decade, 2002). In keeping with this proposal, it was proclaimed that ‘literacy is crucial to the acquisition by every child, youth and adult of essential life skills... and an indispensable means for effective participation in societies and economies of the twenty-first century’. Special note is made of ‘newer and innovative technological means of communication’ and the need for ‘all people to learn new literacies and develop the ability to locate, evaluate and effectively use information in multiple manners’. Literacy, explains the summary of Resolution 56/112, is ‘central to all levels of education’.

Around the same time, in response to deep concerns that the provision of information across the world and access to knowledge through media was an
arena largely controlled by very powerful government and commercial interests, a ‘People’s Communication Charter’ was launched (Hamelink, 1999). Framed by the Third World Network (Penang), the Centre for Communication and Human Rights (Amsterdam), the Cultural Environment Movement (USA) and World Association of Community Radio Broadcasters (Peru/Canada), the Charter was an attempt to express the core principles and dimensions of what was referred to as ‘the right to communicate’. This issue became the key focus of the Civil Society Declaration submitted to the UN sponsored World Summit on the Information Society held in Geneva in 2003. Taking as its starting point an international human rights framework, the Declaration stressed the need for communication as a fundamental social process and the foundation of social organization: ‘Everyone, everywhere, at any time should have the opportunity to participate in communication processes and no one should be excluded’ (in Calabrese, 2004: 325). Particular emphasis was given to issues of literacy and education: ‘capacity building’ needs to facilitate ‘media and information literacy and the skills needed for active citizenship including the ability to find, appraise, use and create information...’ (Civil Society Plenary, 2003: 3).

The assessment driving these interventions seems to be a belief that the power of media, in its many and complex modes of production and reception, and the ‘language’ through media communication takes place, have profoundly reshaped the way we conduct our everyday lives and make sense of the world around us, and that media power and ‘language’ need to be distributed fairly and equitably. Indeed, any understanding of power itself, as it pertains to the media’s ‘language’, must be become a cognate feature of individual life skills and community knowledge. If literacy and education are basic for ‘active citizenship’, in the age of communications, a contemporary ‘new times’ focus, of necessity, has to be on media literacy and education. The work done towards fostering and consolidating media education in Thailand is still at the level of what Cortes (cited in Silverblatt and Enright Eliceiri, 1997) describes as the ‘small scale initiative’, but the momentum is there. Significantly, there now appears to be a view circulating globally that has a degree of moral force - media education and the media literacy are no longer optional. The power of media and the ‘language’ in which it ‘speaks’ and is ‘heard’ are too important and too central to the ‘the continuities of experience and... the intensities of experience’ to be left to the corporations and the politicians. The past seven years of political life in Thailand, starting out in the democratic glow of the new constitution and ending in the dark shadows of creeping authoritarianism, arguably gives additional weight to this moral force. Historically, this may be a watershed moment.

References


The Significance of Media Education: Current Realities and Future Possibilities

Chi-Kim Cheung

The foregoing chapters examine the development and implementation of media education in various Asian societies and identify the themes and issues that have arisen in the process. As we have seen, there is considerable variation among Asian societies in terms of the level of development of media education, the degree to which it is integrated across the curriculum, and more generally, the social, economic, educational and political circumstances relevant to its implementation. Such diversity certainly calls for each society to face its own unique challenges and find solutions for itself. Nevertheless, the author believes that there is also a common set of issues and questions that will continue to dominate the field for years to come and which deserves serious attention among media educators both in Asia and beyond. This remaining chapter explores these issues in broad outline, in the hope that they may stimulate debate and further research.

When Shall We Start

Mass media exert influences across all sections of humankind from infancy to adulthood. Such influences have increased in intensity and variety following the advance in information technology so common worldwide. Mass media not only reflect peoples’ values, attitudes and norms but also shape the same (Wayne, 2001). For this reason, mass media have being described as one of the “four educators” others being teachers, parents and the physical environment (Edwards et al., 1998; Elkind, 1991). Today even a three-year-old child is able to turn on the TV and sit in front of it for hours and a study by Cheung (2005) even noted media as the first curriculum while schooling comes in second.

There is sufficient empirical evidence that children’s encounters in their early lives stay for a life time (Young, 2002). Insufficient or improper stimulation and experiences have been found to have negative effects that persist despite remedial actions and vice versa (Heckman, 2004, 2006; Loeb et al., 2004). These findings

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suggest that whatever young children are exposed to leave behind permanent or hard to die behaviours. Mass media as “another teacher” could be viewed as a tool for enculturation (Minkkinen & Liorca, 1978). To prevent “unacceptable” media messages from reaching children, some countries have enacted laws to deter media producers from the delivery of media such as advertisements that negatively affect children (Wayne, 2001). While this strategy could work in some way, the implementation of media education is a powerful alternative leading to development of critical minds that last for a lifetime. It is therefore important to provide young children with the necessary critical analysis tools suitable to their developmental level to prevent them from becoming victims of the “unsorted media messages”.

Media education is an important curricular intervention for preparing young children for effective participation in their respective societies and the world in general. Media education has been found to be useful in the development of critical minds in young children (Wayne, 2001) as one aspect of multiple literacies (Bonanno, 2002; Harste, 2003; Kellner, 1998).

The media-rich environment in many countries needs a media education pedagogical intervention early in children’s life for best results. The sooner the better and the later we attempt to introduce media education the less the results. Isaacs’ (2007, p. 13) characterisation of the environment and the role of adults and children in it is worthy quoting:

As the child responds to the stimuli within a given environment, be it at home, school or nursery, the adults present should observe and interpret behaviours according to the developmental stage of the child. With this in mind, they should ensure that the activities, materials, objects and occupations in the environment are brought to the attention of the child to facilitate, scaffold and extend developmental opportunities for the child. Adults, as well as child’s peers, act to some extent as a catalyst in the maturation process, while the materials, objects and occupations within the environment scaffold the child’s learning.

The influences of media on children’s lives are immense. The media-rich environment would be expected to exert tremendous influences on young children’s lives. Probably, the younger the child, the stronger the effects. As experiences in children’s early lives have been found to have effects that last a lifetime, a curricular intervention on media education early in children’s lives is a prudent strategy.

**Globalization and the Implications of Branding**

In *No Logo: Taking Aim at the Branded Bullies* (2001), Naomi Klein argues that the unregulated globalization of capitalism has ushered in a “new branded world.” According to Klein, corporations used to focus on making things, but nowadays the emphasis has shifted from manufacturing to marketing. Mega-brands like Nike and Hilfiger routinely outsource all manufacturing operations to so-called “export processing zones” in developing countries and instead focus all their efforts on brand promotion. One result is the over-saturation of public spaces by advertising as companies look for ever more intrusive ways to promote their branded images. The ubiquitous logo appears not only in television and movies, but increasingly on
park benches, street graffiti, music concerts, and sports arenas. It even manages to
creep into public schools and universities, appearing on everything from textbooks
to library cards and toilet cubicles.

Global brands also lead to more disturbing consequences than the invasion
of public spaces. Klein discusses an example in which researchers who found
potentially life-threatening side effects in a university sponsor’s products were dis-
missed by the administration for fear of losing sponsorship money. Most corporate-
sponsored educational materials paint a distorted picture of the world to promote
the sponsor’s brand image; one study by the Consumer Union found that 80 per-
cent of such materials “contained biased or incomplete information, and promoted
a viewpoint that favored consumption of the sponsor’s product or service or oth-
erwise favored the company and its economic agenda” (What is Commercialism,
nd.). Finally, “the lavish spending [on marketing, mergers and brand extensions]
has been matched by a never-before-seen resistance to investing in production facili-
ties and labor” (Klein, 2000, p. 196). In an effort to keep production costs as low as
possible (in order to save more money for marketing the brand), companies lay off
thousands of domestic workers and contract out jobs to third world countries where
products are manufactured under sweatshop conditions. As Klein puts it, what the
executives of these multinationals really care about is “the needs of their brands, as
opposed to the needs of their workers (ibid., p. 199)”. Why do corporations shift their focus to promoting brands? The obvious answer
is that investments in brand campaigns are more effective in getting consumers to
open their wallets than investments in production. But why should they be more
effective? One important reason, as pointed out by Klein, is that today’s brands are
much more than mere names on products. Brands have moved from denoting prod-
ucts to denoting “a way of life, an attitude, a set of values, a look, an idea” (ibid.,
p. 23). Corporations spend vast amounts of money associating their brands with
such qualities as coolness, intelligence, individuality, and athleticism, things that
consumers – especially the young – are much more likely to identify with than mere
products. For example, Nike commercials rarely feature any particular product, but
simply celebrate the “swoosh” that has come to be identified with sporting spirit.
Consumers who are bombarded with such “lifestyle commercials” make their pur-
chasing decisions not based on quality considerations, but based on social consid-
erations such as how they want to be perceived by others. They become addicted to
their favorite brands as their tastes, attitudes and values are increasingly defined by
which brands they choose. Indeed, to some American teenagers, Nike has become
“the number one thing in their life – number two is their girlfriend” (ibid., p. 75).

In a sense, then, today’s advertisements are much more deceptive than in the
old days. Their ultimate goals remain the same: to generate profit, to boost sales of
product. But they accomplish this not by blatant, sensational ballyhooing but rather
calls “affective marketing” and what has variously been called “lifestyle market-
ing”, “associative advertising” and “relationship marketing”. And to say that adver-
tisements are deceptive nowadays is just to say that audiences are vulnerable to their
influence – that people lack the media literacy needed to recognize today’s ads for
what they really are. Whereas old-fashioned product commercials wore their selling intent on their sleeves, today’s ads promote brands by masquerading as lifestyle endorsements, as ordinary items in movies and reality TV shows, and even as educational programs and textbooks. In such an environment, it is difficult for adults – not to mention children – to tell the difference between ads and content and to maintain a critical, reflecting attitude.

There is thus a new argument for media education that can be derived from the anti-globalization movement. In order to counter the various troubling trends highlighted by Klein and her fellow anti-globalization activists – the invasion of public spaces, the exploitation of workers’ rights, the violation of academic integrity, just to name a few – it is imperative that corporations be prevented from prioritizing brand extension above all else. But how can this be accomplished? In her final chapter, Klein reports on and endorses various forms of protest activities, such as adbusting, culture jamming, the Reclaim the Streets movement, staging protest rallies at WTO meetings, and boycotting sweatshop-produced brands. But while such activities certainly are not without merit, one wonders whether Klein has not missed the root of the problem here. Being the profit-driven entities that they are, corporations are not going to give up brand campaigns simply because of pressure from a few protest groups (whose members, as one critic notes, are often dismissed by the corporate-controlled media as “drug-crazed anti-car crusties” (Marshall, 2000)). Instead of trying to talk corporations out of profiting from brand extension, it makes more sense to try making the practice less profitable for corporations to engage in the first place. As has been seen above, it is in great part the consumers’ lack of media literacy vis-à-vis today’s marketing techniques that make brand investment so attractive to companies. By educating consumers about such things as the economics of media institutions, the structure of ads, what are ads trying to sell and to whom, and how global brands try to manipulate their consumption behavior through all-pervasive media messages, consumers may become more critical, reflective, and resistant to the power of brands and come to base their purchasing decisions more on price and quality considerations, thus reducing companies’ economic incentives to invest heavily in brand-building. As one reviewer of Klein’s book observes, “What corporations fear most are consumers who ask questions.”

One might object that arguing for such uses of media education smacks of the old, simplistic rhetoric of “protectionism” that has been discredited long ago in the West (with the notable exception of the US) and that today’s educators should know better. This objection does not have much weight. The old protectionism seeks to inoculate students against the perceived dangers of media; it fails, in part, because the media does not seem to pose dangers – it certainly has no stake in promoting real-world violence or sexual promiscuity, and whether media violence actually contributes to aggressive behavior is still a matter of dispute. By contrast, what is being advocated here is the use of media education to help students resist corporations who try to influence them through the media. Unlike the media, corporations have a vested interest in producing behavioral changes in the audience: they want the audience to purchase their products, to become loyal to their brand and to bring new customers. They have a financial stake in turning consumers into blind
worshippers of their brands and inspiring in them what Saatchi & Saatchi CEO Kevin Roberts calls “loyalty beyond reason”. Given this, and the various evils that ensue from branding (as made clear by Klein), it is eminently necessary and justifiable to arm consumers with the knowledge and attitude that help inoculate them against the powers of brands.

Globalization and branding thus furnish a fresh argument for media education, an argument that is especially needed in areas (such as Asia) where the status of media education remains uncertain and educators still need to lobby hard for its inclusion in the curriculum. Moreover, in the Asian context, the argument from globalization can be made even stronger. This is because globalization is not just an economic phenomenon. To Asians, it is also a cultural phenomenon, as most of the mega-brands are Western companies who bring with them ideas, lifestyles and values that are distinctively Western. This has sparked concerns about the erosion of national identity and traditional values in many Asian societies. Arguably, this cultural conservatism is something that educators in Asian can appeal to in making the case for media education. And this is for an obvious reason: brands are cultural entities; if consumers can become resistant to the power of a particular brand (which is always marketed through the mass media), they are less likely to adopt the cultural values, attitudes and lifestyles associated with it. Whether cultural conservatism is itself justifiable is, of course, a separate question, but to advocate media education as a means of preserving national culture is at least a strategically viable option.

Media Education, Civic Education and Participatory Media

“In the twenty-first century, participatory media education and civic education are inextricable.”—Howard Rheingold (2008, p. 103)

Media educators have long touted the role of media education in preparing students to become informed and engaged citizens (Masterman, 1985; Hobbs, 1998a). According to one influential argument, the media has become the primary means by which political information is presented to the public. However, it is by no means a value-free, neutral conduit through which information flows but is vulnerable to bias, ignorance and error. By teaching students the skills to detect political biases in media messages, to separate negative, character-based coverage from substantive information (so as not to “see and hear the conflict but miss the content (Morin, 1995))”, and to seek out and compare alternative media reports about the same political issue, media educators (so the argument runs) can have a positive role to play in creating a more informed and empowered electorate. This line of reasoning found its clearest expression in the writings of Len Masterman, who argues that “in a world in which images are fast becoming of greater significance than policies, in which slogans often count for more than rational argument, and in which we will all make some of our most important democratic decisions on the basis of media evidence, media education is both essential to the exercising of our democratic rights
Such a view of the relationship between media education and civic education may be adequate in the era of (predominantly) one-way media such as television, but to continue holding it in the Digital Age would be to miss the larger picture. The participatory nature of the Internet means that contemporary media is no longer just a medium for the passive reception of civic information, but is increasingly an arena for active civic expression and engagement. Young people worldwide are now engaged in online civic activities; they write political blogs, collaborate on wiki articles about political issues, upload videos to YouTube to show support for their favorite presidential candidates, sign online petitions, participate in virtual protests in 3D game worlds, and use SMS messages to organize massive offline demonstrations. A particularly telling example occurred right here in Hong Kong: After learning that a landmark pier that had served the city for nearly 50 years was about to be demolished by the government to make way for reclamation and re-development, university students and teachers who do not know one another staged a peaceful protest organized entirely via internet postings and SMS messages (“Star Ferry”, 2006). Elsewhere, participatory media have been used to oust university presidents (“Handhelds” 2006), to expose police brutality (“Taser incident”, 2006), and even to shape election results (“OhmyNews”, 2004).

In the 21st century, therefore, the lines between people’s civic life and their media usage are becoming increasingly blurred, a situation unimaginable just a few decades ago when the only relevance of media to civics is its role as a vehicle of political information. This poses a new set of challenges for media educators: Given that students are using the media not only to access civic information, but also for active expression of civic voices (individually or through collective action), how should pedagogical intervention be conducted? In particular, what new skills are required for meaningful civic engagement online? In a recent study, Jenkins et al. (2006) propose a set of social literacies and cultural competencies needed for full involvement in the participatory landscape. Among the eleven skills listed by Jenkins et al, of particular relevance to civic engagement are Negotiation, Collective Intelligence, and Networking. Negotiation – the ability “to travel across diverse communities, discerning and respecting multiple perspectives, and grasping and following alternative norms” – is important because without such skills, young people’s online civic discourse will often degenerate into meaningless squabbles or even outright hostility, a condition that is often exacerbated by the anonymity of online exchange and the sensitive nature of civic topics. Collective Intelligence – the ability “to pool knowledge and compare notes with others toward a common goal” – is crucial to the functioning of online civic communities, which depend on the active input of and collaboration among its members. Finally, without the skill of Networking – the ability to “search for, synthesize, and disseminate information” – young citizen journalists and political bloggers may not be able to form well-researched views on civic issues or reach a wider readership for their media productions.

Skills like those proposed by Jenkins et al will undoubtedly shape what it means to be an engaged citizen in the 21st century. And new skills may emerge as new
technological communities (and even new technologies) enter the scene. In the meantime, as Jenkins et al stress, there must be a renewed focus on traditional print literacies, since a lot of online civic activities – such as blogging and citizen journalism – requires high levels of reading and writing abilities. What is certain at this point is that the lines between media education and civic education will become increasingly blurred as more and more students realize and learn to tap the civic potential of participatory media.

The Place of Media Literacy in 21st Century Literacies

The world has changed; so should teaching and learning. It is increasingly recognized that our education system can and should do more to prepare young people to thrive in the ever-changing 21st century. One issue that frequently comes up in the educational literature and on policy agenda is the proper redefinition of literacy. Traditionally, literacy has been defined as the ability to read and write, but educators increasingly acknowledge that new skills are necessary for students to be successful in the digital age. Without incorporating 21st century literacy skills into teaching and learning, it appears that students are being prepared to “succeed in yesterday’s world – not tomorrow’s” (Burkhardt et al., 2003).” But what, exactly, are the essential new literacies?

As anyone faintly familiar with contemporary literacy scholarship knows, there is no shortage of “new literacies” advertised by their proponents as fundamental to what it means to be literate in the 21st century. Nowadays we hear frequent references to ‘information literacy’, ‘digital literacy’, ‘computer literacy’, ‘visual literacy’, ‘multicultural literacy’, and the like. Correspondingly, discussions of 21st century literacy often center around a list of literacies deemed to be especially important. For example, the AT&T/UCLA Initiatives for 21st Century Literacies lists information literacy, media literacy, multicultural literacy, and visual literacy under the rubric “21st century literacies” (21st Century Literacies, 2002); the Partnership for 21st Century Skills proposes a similar list, consisting of information literacy, media literacy, and ICT literacy (Framework for 21st Century Learning, 2004); and a somewhat longer list is produced by The North Central Regional Educational Laboratory (NCREL), which includes scientific literacy, economic literacy, technological literacy, visual literacy, information literacy, and multicultural literacy (Burkhardt et al., 2003).

Such diversity certainly reflects the range of new skills required for survival in the 21st century, but one might also hope for some degree of unity here. Indeed, it is the author’s contention that proponents of these new literacies stand to gain from coming together to unite under the banner of media literacy. There are two reasons for doing this, one theoretical and the other practical. From a theoretical point of view, it is desirable to adopt ‘media literacy’ as the watchword for the new literacies movement because most of the proposed 21st century literacies are intimately associated with the rise of new media technologies and because the skills they represent already figure prominently in the concept of media literacy (or some natural
extension of it). Take, for example, the AT&T/UCLA list of 21st century literacies, which includes visual literacy, information literacy and multicultural literacy, in addition to media literacy. The first two are obviously related to media technologies. Visual literacy derives its importance from the proliferation of visual images in our media culture – TV, movies, photography, video games and art, while a large part of information literacy is about training students to become competent and critical users of electronic databases and Internet search engines. Moreover, the skills and competencies stressed by proponents of these literacies are anything but foreign to media educators. Consider, for example, the definition of “information literacy” offered by the American Library Association: the ability to “recognize when information is needed and have the ability to locate, evaluate, and use effectively the needed information” (American Library Association, 2006). Compare that to Networking – “the ability to search for, synthesize, and disseminate information” and Judgement – “the ability to evaluate the reliability and credibility of different information”. These two skills are among the “new media literacies” proposed by Henry Jenkins et al (see above), but there is nothing in the definition of information literacy that is not captured by Networking and Judgement. The definition of visual literacy is notoriously contested, but most theorists agree that it has to do with the ability to encode and decode visual images. In that sense, however, it is just what any media literate individual is expected to have, since media literacy includes “the ability to both critically interpret the powerful images of a multimedia culture and express themselves in multiple media forms” (Share et al., 2005).

That there exists considerable conceptual overlap between many of the new literacies and media literacy is unsurprising if one considers the fact that the diversity of new literacies reflects more about differences in proponents’ academic background than about actual differences in subject matter. Proponents of information literacy hail mainly from departments of Library and Information Science, and a large portion of visual literacy advocates come from Visual Arts departments. Media literacy, on the other hand, draws most of its supporters from Education and Communications/Media Studies departments. Different disciplines tend to have different ways of thinking and talking about things, but that does not mean they are thinking and talking about different things. It makes no sense to speak of a media literate person who is not also information literate or visually literate. The concept of media literacy is sufficiently inclusive and flexible to accommodate both information literacy and visual literacy.

But what about multicultural literacy? One might assume that it cannot be assimilated into media literacy since it has little to do with mass media. Closer inspection reveals this assumption to be unfounded. Multicultural literacy is important in the 21st century in large part because new media technologies (especially the Internet) provide unprecedented opportunity for people from diverse cultures and societies to instantly interact with one another, via e-mail, chat-rooms, videoconferencing, and so on. Furthermore, the Internet itself is teeming with rich and vibrant subcultures, from Pokémon fans and otaku to Sci-fi geeks and Apple enthusiasts. Cross-cultural sensitivity and understanding, therefore, are skills that anyone growing up in the Digital Age must possess, which makes multicultural literacy an
essential part of media literacy. Indeed, something like multicultural literacy has been prominently featured in recent conceptions of media literacy. For example, Negotiation, one of the new media literacies that Jenkins et al. propose (and which we mentioned above), is defined as the ability “to travel across diverse communities, discerning and respecting multiple perspectives, and grasping and following alternative norms.” How is that different from multicultural literacy, the ability “to understand and appreciate the similarities and differences in the customs, values, and beliefs of one’s own culture and the cultures of others?” (Burkhardt et al., 2003).

From the theoretical perspective, therefore, most of the proposed new literacies can be seen as different components of the same set of skills falling under the umbrella term “media literacy”. But there are also practical motivations for proponents of new literacies to come together and unite. As long as the various literacies are seen as distinct from one another, the relation between them will be one of competition rather than cooperation. Everyone will be vying for policymakers’ attention and funding, and as a result everyone is less likely to get them. As soon as one kind literacy becomes an educational priority, another type of literacy will be pushed off the educational agenda. One needs only to look at the rivalry between computer literacy and critical viewing skills in the U.S. back in the 80s to appreciate how intense such competition can be (Tyner, 1991; Yates, 2004). But why should there be any competition at all? After all, from a media educator’s perspective, the proposed new literacies are not separate skills that should be developed independently from one another. On the contrary, since these skills are essential to survival in the 21st century media culture, they must receive equal emphasis and be developed in tandem. If media literacy becomes an educational priority, funding for information literacy, visual literacy, and multicultural literacy will only increase, rather than decrease. By uniting under media literacy, proponents can rest assured that they will get a piece of the 21st century literacy pie.

**Media Education and Career Training**

Ever since the beginning, media education has been an area in which theoretical study is closely integrated with practical work, yet media production has not always been perceived in a favorable light by educators. In many American and European schools, after-school programs and community-based organizations (the prominent example being Steve Goodman’s Educational Video Center), courses in media production are typically offered to low-ability or at-risk students who are not deemed well enough for traditional, print-based education. (Hobbs, 1994; Bevort and Thierry, 1997) Media production comes to be seen as “the province of non-readers” (Hobbs, 1998b) and “a means of keeping recalcitrant, apathetic, and bored students occupied.” (Ferguson, 1981, p. 41), and as a result many media educators have shunned practical work to avoid being associated with academic low-achievers. Furthermore, some scholars and educators have argued that an emphasis on production activities might undermine the critical dimension of media education
as a result of the “domesticating and enslaving” (Masterman, 1985) tendencies of vocational education. It has been worried that a vocationalist approach to media education would reduce it to a narrow kind of technical training, thereby encouraging uncritical acceptance of the ways of the media – precisely the opposite of the mission of media education. Stafford brings out this sentiment well when he writes, “The great risk with practical work....is that students will simply learn to ape the professionals, and that a critical, analytical perspective will be lost” (Stafford, 1992, p. 81).

These worries are, of course, unfounded: the critical perspective is in fact assisted, rather than undermined, by practical media production. As Buckingham (1995) writes, “the fact that that students use dominant media forms does not necessarily mean that they are doing so unthinkingly: what seems on the surface to be mere “imitation” may in fact reflect a much more active appropriation of media forms, often for quite ‘subversive’ purposes” (p. 17). Moreover, the negative associations of media production are based on little more than an elitist disdain for vocationalism that do not reflect the realities of the job market. Indeed there is a deeper worry here with neglecting practical work, which is that it fails to prepare students for the abundant job opportunities that the media industry has to offer in the 21st century. The phenomenal growth of the media sector worldwide has led to increasing demand for media specialists. A recent BBC News article reports that media students in the U.K. are the “most employable” of all recent graduates: The latest ‘What Do Graduates Do?’ survey of over 200,000 ex-students reveals that media graduates have among the highest employment rates. (Media students ‘most employable’, 2005). In Britain, the media already employ more people than the coal, steel and iron industries combined a decade ago (Buckingham, 1995); and with global media industry expected to grow at a 6.3% compound annual growth rate (CAGR) in 2008 (PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP, 2007), the job prospects for media specialists can only be better. Students who are trained in media production thus enjoy a much wider range of career options than those who do not.

Moreover, the practical career benefits of media education are not restricted to students who go on to jobs in the media industry. The kind of skills that media education tends to foster – creativity, critical thinking and analysis, interpersonal communication, team collaboration – are all highly valued in every kind of workplace (McLaughlin, 1992). Granted, other academic subjects (such as English) may cultivate these same so-called “employability skills”, but it is a testimony to the career incentives of media education that it can encourage these skills while also providing a solid training in a practical field.

Teacher Training and Educational Resources

The preceding sections deal with the new opportunities available to media educators as we move into the 21st century. This section, on the other hand, concerns two perennial headaches that have been plaguing media education ever since its
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inception and are unlikely to disappear anytime soon: the problems of teacher training and of educational resources.

The success of media education depends crucially on teachers, and thus the issue of teacher training is of particular significance. Buckingham and Domaille suggest that teachers can only practice media education in the classroom when they have the requisite knowledge and experience to do so – that is, when they have been properly trained. Unfortunately, as in the West, teacher training programs in Asia remain woefully inadequate to meet the needs of media teachers.

Many schools want to implement media education in their curriculum but are frustrated by the dearth of adequately trained teachers. Back in the eighties, many considered teacher training as a crucial factor contributing to the development of media education. A similar claim is made recently by Hart and Hicks (2002) who found that teachers with proper teacher training in Media Education tend to have better instructional methods and be more confident when teaching the subject. And a recent study of media literacy in 27 member states of the European Union concludes that “if a country adopts a policy favorable to the training of teachers in the media education and media literacy, development conditions of media competences in the population in general change radically” (Current Trends and Approaches, 2007). However, despite the near universal agreement on the importance of training, media education everywhere has been hindered by a lack of appropriate training for teachers.

In Hong Kong, a regular media education teacher training program is offered irregularly by the Faculty of Education at the University of Hong Kong. However, all an eighteen-hour crash course can do is to give participants an introduction to Media Education, some exposure to the nature of different forms of media, and some tools to conduct Media Education in schools. In Taiwan, some teaching training institutes now offer courses in media literacy as an option. In some other countries, training is provided by networks of teachers themselves. Still, though there have been efforts to conduct more teacher training in various societies, the amount of training is not enough for curriculum innovation.

In the U.K., although media education has been firmly established in the curriculum, initial teacher training still “takes little account of media, allocating maybe a day or two within the whole PGCE course” (Bazalgette, 2007). The Central School of Speech and Drama at the University of London is the only institution in the UK to offer PGCE courses specifically designed for media teachers. While Buckingham and Domaille in their chapter see grounds for optimism in the phenomenal growth of undergraduate education in media and communications, Bazalgette (2007) points out that initial teacher training departments in universities tend to admit students with undergraduate degrees in mainstream school subjects (such as math and English, but not media) in order to achieve a higher pass rate. The result is that very few teachers enter media teaching with a specialist background, which reinforces the attitude, often adopted by Government and some schools, that “anybody who can teach English can teach media” (ibid., p. 49). With the importance of specialist media training thus downplayed, funding for in-service training is hard to
come by. Only those who are passionate enough about media education to be willing to pay for training out of their own pocket come to acquire specialist knowledge in the area, and as a result media education continues to be perceived as a marginal subject, the province of enthusiasts instead of every teacher.

Enthusiastic teachers, however, are always around in small numbers. They often teach excellent courses which die when they move on to another location. Much of the initiative for teacher courses comes from sources outside of education. It should be a priority of teacher unions, ministries of education and colleges of teachers, and since it is not, any other initiative will be an uphill battle.

Generally speaking, the current lack of media education training courses can be traced to a variety of factors including but not limited to: (1) unavailability of funding, (2) unavailability of and reluctance to use technology, (3) the still dominant focus in teacher education programs on developing young people’s print literacy, (4) the feeling by some academics that media education has little value for teachers and their students, (5) a misunderstanding that media teachers need to possess broad knowledge of media and communication theory or high levels of technological competencies. Perhaps one of the principal impediments to the development of media education in teacher training at the university level may be a misunderstanding of the difference between media education/literacy on the one hand and media studies and Communication Studies on the other.

Consequently, the study of the media in higher education is often offered in faculties of mass communication and/or liberal arts, and in such departments as Journalism, English, Humanities and Media Arts, and only in a few cases in Faculties of Education. In many instances where Media Education is offered in faculties of education, it is often introduced as a small portion of a course in methods and/or English language Arts and/or technology in education. Occasionally, interdisciplinary programs are established to bridge communication and education departments. As Tyner (1992) notes, however, such programs often suffer from a lack of real cooperation since the arbitrary division of academic disciplines “encourages more competition than cooperation between university departments.

Turning now to the problem of resources, some people might find it ironic to hear media educators complain about the lack of instructional materials. After all, aren’t our everyday lives, as media educators are so fond of saying, “saturated” with newspaper, advertisements, websites and TV programs – the sort of things that media education classes examine? However, developing effective and appropriate teaching materials for media education involves far more than just cutting out newspaper ads. First of all there is the problem of selection. Some examples are better than others; for instance, to help third-graders understand the intentional imprecision commonly found in advertising, cereal ads who display the product along with an attractive array of fruits and toast are more appropriate than drug commercials employing the same technique. It takes a lot of searching to locate the best examples, ones that help illustrate the point in question but which students can also actually relate to. Then there is the problem of research. Before an ad can be used in class, the teacher must work out for him/herself the many questions that may be asked from a media literate individual’s perspective and that may come up during class
discussions. What is the design of the ad? What mood does it create? Does it reinforce cultural values or perpetuate stereotypes? What about the signs and symbols used? What aesthetic decisions are involved, such as those relating to typeface, lighting and color? These are not easy questions, and teachers must devote enough time to thoroughly researching such questions.

For these reasons, it may be thought more productive for organizations, rather than individual teachers, to shoulder the responsibility of developing quality educational materials and then distributing them to teachers. However, the unavoidable time lag occasioned by the publication process threatens to compromise the effectiveness of classroom instruction. This is because unlike the literary canon, which hardly changes over decades or even centuries, the stock of examples for use in media education classrooms must be constantly updated to ensure relevance to students’ lives. What last year’s students find relevant and engaging this year’s class may not even know about – nothing is older than yesterday’s news, as the saying goes. By the time a collection of teaching materials has been developed, published and eventually delivered to teachers, it starts to lose its relevance and soon the whole process has to start all over again.

The lack of quality classroom resources thus presents a significant problem for media educators worldwide. And it is worth noting that Asian educators face additional obstacles in acquiring teaching materials. Whereas, say, American teachers “can easily adapt those materials developed outside the country [i.e. in Canada, UK, and other English-speaking countries] until they can make their own (Tyner, 1992)”, media teachers in Asia must rely on resources in their own native languages. Moreover, the cultural and linguistic diversity within Asia means that very little educational resources can be shared across national boundaries.

Both problems – unavailability of teacher training and lack of resources – deserve urgent and continued attention from media educators. Without specialist teacher training, media education will continue to be seen as a ‘fringe’ or even ‘Mickey Mouse’ subject; without good classroom resources, teachers find it difficult to engage and motivate students. The development of media education in the 21st century will crucially depend on whether and when these problems can be satisfactorily resolved.

**Conclusion**

This book outlines media education in different Asian societies. If this book has encouraged readers to think about the challenges and future potential of media education, then it will have achieved its purpose.

Media Education curriculum enables students to construct knowledge and develop a global outlook to cope with the changing and interdependent world in the 21st century, and develop student’s lifelong learning skills (to enjoy learning, to enhance effectiveness in communication, to develop creativity, to develop a logical, critical, and an analytical mind) as stipulated in the aims of current educational thought. It is therefore an essential skill for survival in the 21st century. As we have
seen in this last chapter, global trends in the 21st century, such as globalization and the rise of participatory culture, are in turn shaping the course of development for media education. One should always be cautious when trying to predict the future, but looking head, it is almost certain that the present century will be a period of unprecedented progress, change, and excitement in the history of media education.

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