

II Media Literacy for Children, Young People, Adults and Media Educators

As is evident from the previous section, awareness-raising methods among parents is by no means a sufficient method to 'regulate' the media environment. We turn in this section to media literacy in and outside school. However, when talking about media literacy and media education, adults most often associate it with only children and young people – but media literacy is needed among parents, media educators, media professionals and other adults, as well.

This is supported by, among others, UNESCO that since long has worked for media education, media literacy and information literacy – and successively widened its scope.

For instance, in the early 80s, UNESCO published a book by Sirkka Minkkinen, titled *A General Curricular Model for Mass Media Education* (Paris, UNESCO, 1981). In this book, the Finnish author presents a model for mass media education programmes within secondary school curricula aiming at understanding and critical use of different media. The first part deals with 'mass media education' and its relationship to 'film education' (which in several countries had been on the agenda for decades), as well as reasons for the importance of mass media education and for connections between media education and general education in schools. The second part treats the goals of media education and teaching methods.

International symposium on education of the public in the use of mass media: problems, trends and prospects, 1982

In 1982, however, UNESCO supported an international symposium on media education in Grünwald, the Federal Republic of Germany. The participating experts said that government agencies, educational systems, community organisations and parents should not overlook the role of media in the process of personal and social development, as well as instruments for an individual's active participation as a citizen in society.

The outcome of the symposium was the 'Grünwald Declaration on Media Education'. Recommendations of the declaration include:

- Initiating and supporting comprehensive media education programs – from pre-school to university level, and in adult education – the purpose of which

is to develop the knowledge, skills and attitudes which will encourage the growth of critical awareness and, consequently, of greater competence among the users of electronic and print media.

- Developing training courses for teachers and intermediaries both to increase their knowledge and understanding of the media and train them in appropriate teaching methods, which would take into account the already considerable but fragmented acquaintance with media already possessed by many students.
- Stimulating research and development activities for the benefit of media education, from such domains as psychology, sociology, and communication science.
- Supporting and strengthening the actions undertaken or envisaged by UNESCO and which aim at encouraging international co-operation in media education.

New directions in media education, 1990

A next step was the international colloquy 'New Directions in Media Education', held in Toulouse, France, in July 1990 and organised by the British Film Institute (BFI), the Centre de Liaison de l'Enseignement et des Moyens d'Information (CLEMI), France, in association with UNESCO and the Council of Europe, and with the support of academic institutions. Above all representatives of advisory and administrative sectors of education, teachers, journalists and broadcasters from 45 countries attended this colloquy.

Themes discussed were, among others, the nature, location and support of media education; the role and influences of the media; media involvement in media education; the term 'literacy'; and the relationship between theory and practice as regards media education.

The Toulouse meeting helped many participants to realise that established definitions of media education needed radical revision in face of the changing media scenario, new communication research, and different cultural contexts. Alternative definitions were offered by participants from Africa, Asia and Latin America.

The colloquy is documented in Cary Bazalgette, Evelyne Bevert & Josiane Savino (eds.) (1992) *New Directions. Media Education Worldwide*. London, BFI, CLEMI, UNESCO.

Educating for the media and the digital age, 1999

The Twenty-Ninth General Conference of UNESCO in adopting Draft Resolution 61, approved that, for its programme in 1998-1999, support for media education should be ensured through different modalities and actions.

In April 1999, the Austrian National Commission for UNESCO and the Austrian Federal Ministry of Education and Cultural Affairs in co-operation with UNESCO organised the international conference 'Educating for the Media and the Digital Age' in Vienna, Austria. Invited representatives – media educators, researchers, administrators, etc. – from 33 countries in all continents attended the conference. The meeting resulted in recommendations addressed to UNESCO (see the box). It must be underlined that the concept of 'media education' in these recommendations equals the concept of 'media literacy', something that is understood by the definition and principles in the document.

In brief, this definition and these principles signify that media education must deal with *all communication media*, should be aimed at empowering *all citizens*, and should be present in all possible contexts during *the whole life*. Furthermore, media education should enable people to gain *understanding of how* and for what reasons *the media act* and operate in society, and to learn to analyse and *critically reflect* upon media messages. Since these processes are, among other things, obtained by people's own media production, individuals and groups must gain, or demand, *access to media for own production*. They must acquire *skills in using the media* to communicate with others, and to communicate *their own messages or stories*. It is, namely, the case that everyone not only shall have the right to information but also the right to *freedom of expression*, to *participation in society* and to building and sustaining *democracy*. In this context, media education also has a critical role in, and should be responsive to *situations of social and political conflicts*, war, natural and ecological disasters, etc.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Addressed to the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation UNESCO adopted by the Vienna Conference 'Educating for the Media and the Digital Age' 18-20 April 1999

General definition, principles and statements of policy

Media Education . . .

- deals with all communication media and includes the printed word and graphics, the sound, the still as well as the moving image, delivered on any kind of technology;
- enables people to gain understanding of the communication media used in their society and the way they operate and to acquire skills in using these media to communicate with others;
- ensures that people learn how to
 - analyse, critically reflect upon and create media texts;
 - identify the sources of media texts, their political, social, commercial and/or cultural interests, and their contexts;
 - interpret the messages and values offered by the media;

- select appropriate media for communicating their own messages or stories and for reaching their intended audience;
- gain, or demand access to media for both reception and production.

Media Education is part of the basic entitlement of every citizen, in every country in the world, to freedom of expression and the right to information and is instrumental in building and sustaining democracy. While recognizing the disparities in the nature and development of Media Education in different countries, the participants of the conference "Educating for the Media and the Digital Age" recommend that Media Education should be introduced wherever possible within national curricula as well as in tertiary, non-formal and lifelong education.

- Media Education addresses a wide range of texts in all media (print, still image, audio and moving image) which provide people with rich and diverse cultural experiences.
- In countries moving towards the introduction of new technologies, Media Education can assist citizens to recognise the potential of the media to represent/misrepresent their culture and traditions.
- In situations where access to electronic or digital technologies is limited or non-existent, Media Education can be based on available media texts in that context.
- Media Education should be aimed at empowering all citizens in every society and should ensure that people with special needs and those socially and economically disadvantaged have access to it.
- Media Education also has a critical role to play in, and should be responsive to, situations of social and political conflicts, war, natural disaster, ecological catastrophe, etc.

In the light of these general definitions and statements of policy, the Participants of the Vienna Conference recommend that

1. UNESCO should facilitate several forms of research at local and international levels to address different aspects of Media Education, including:
 - exploratory projects in locations that wish to introduce or to develop Media Education programmes
 - comparative international studies
 - rigorous evaluation to provide evidence about the efficacy of Media Education programmes and practices
2. UNESCO should facilitate cross-cultural evaluation of initial and in-service teacher training methods and programmes, and ensure the sharing of experience in their utilisation.
3. UNESCO should develop appropriate guidelines, based on ethical principles, that address corporate sponsorship of Media Education initiatives and programmes to ensure that the educational integrity of curricula, pedagogies and resources are not compromised
4. UNESCO should facilitate partnerships and finance to fulfil the recommendations of the Vienna Conference and help to design an action plan.

5. UNESCO should make better known the existing copyright conventions and should encourage the development of national and regional copyright instruments which take full account of the needs of Media Education and which provide that the right to copy audio-visual and digital media for educational purposes is no less than for print material.

6. To facilitate and co-ordinate all these actions, UNESCO should set up an international Clearing House for Media Education.

This Clearing House should collaborate with functioning national and international networks and organisations that deal with Media Education. It should stress co-operation among all experts and organisations dealing in a formal or informal way with Media Education. It should:

- share strategies, disseminate Media Education materials, promote and stress awareness of Media Education;
- be a permanent observatory for the development of Media Education;
- give special attention to wide dissemination in order to encourage equality in development of Media Education in all countries and languages.

The Clearing House should be set up as soon as possible to fulfil all the recommendations adopted during the Vienna Conference

The participants urgently recommend that UNESCO review its programme for Media Education and allocate the resources required to implement these Recommendations.

UNESCO and all the participants of the Vienna Conference should endeavour to transmit and disseminate these recommendations to the national representatives of UNESCO and other interested institutions.

Approved unanimously by the participants of the Vienna Conference in plenary session.

Vienna, April 20th 1999

Following the recommendations of the Vienna Conference, the Executive Board and the General Conference of UNESCO in 1999 approved to integrate into its programmes of 2000 and 2001 activities concerning Media Education both in the field of the Communication and the Education Sector.

UNESCO seminar on youth media education, 2002

In the light of the previous above-mentioned – and other – conferences on media education and media literacy, UNESCO's Communication Development Division, Paris, started to more radically reorient its actions in this field. The fact that media education, media literacy, community participation, etc., in practice is locally anchored, and differ markedly over the world, implies that most successful for promoting the realisation of media education or media literacy will probably be strategies of *regional and*

decentralised sustained actions among researchers, practitioners, national regulatory authorities, media professionals, educationalists, etc., and networks between them.

Therefore in February 2002, UNESCO – together with the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, Spain, the European Observatory on Children and Television, Spain, the University of London, U.K., and The UNESCO International Clearinghouse on Children and Violence on the Screen, Nordicom, Sweden – arranged a seminar in Seville, Spain, hosted by Andalusia Television and the International Association of Educational Televisions (AITED). Experts from fourteen countries were invited to formulate recommendations addressed to UNESCO on how to bring about media literacy programs through decentralized actions and synergies of relevant groups (Buckingham, Frau-Meigs, Tornero and Artigas 2002).

A range of regional activities

UNESCO's website now presents a range of regional media development activities in the information society. UNESCO helps to strengthen the capacities of communication institutions to improve the training of media professionals and to raise awareness among the public in making best use of communication resources.

Particular attention is given to

- training of media specialists, particularly *women journalists*, in developing countries
- strengthening news agencies, *public service broadcasting* and *community media* in developing countries
- assisting media in improving the quality of their *local contents* by providing training, production and distribution opportunities
- training in *media literacy* for users, particularly children and youth.

UNESCO, through its Communication and Information Sector, is therefore actively assisting young people to produce information themselves by supporting *youth media*, by facilitating the creation of media education and of youth information and communication networks, and by providing appropriate technologies to youth organisations.

UNESCO further says: 'Indeed, *media education* for youth should be part of the basic entitlement of every citizen. While recognising the disparities in the nature and development of media education in different countries UNESCO is encouraging efforts to introduce media education wherever possible within national curricula as well as in tertiary, non-formal and lifelong education.

Another important initiative for UNESCO is *INFOYOUTH*, a worldwide information network of government authorities, relevant agencies and youth organizations on youth-related issues. The establishment of various information structures all over the world is a high priority, reflecting a key concern to secure better conditions with which young people can access information.

By collecting information concerning different youth activities and projects and providing training, these info-structures meet the constantly increasing needs of young people and youth NGOs for an increased access to information for education and development. INFOYOUTH also supports the global preventive effort against HIV/AIDS.'

Source: http://portal.unesco.org/ci/en/ev.php-URL_ID=4625&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html

Information literacy

Furthermore, UNESCO is to an increasing extent using the concept of 'information literacy'. The organisation says: 'Empowerment of people through Information Literacy is an important prerequisite for harnessing ICTs [information and communication technologies] for education and fostering equitable access to information and knowledge. Information literacy enhances the pursuit of knowledge by equipping individuals with the skills and abilities for critical reception, assessment and use of information in their professional and personal lives.

UNESCO's main strategy in the area of Information Literacy consists of awareness-raising about the importance of information literacy at all levels of the education process – basic education, primary and secondary education, technical and vocational training and lifelong education – and of establishing guidelines for integrating information literacy issues in curricula.

A particular focus will be on training teachers to sensitize them to the importance of information literacy in the education process to enable them to incorporate information literacy into their teaching and to provide them with appropriate pedagogical methods and curricula.

An essential element of the strategy is the integration of libraries into information literacy programmes as they provide resources and services in an environment that fosters free and open inquiry and serve as a catalyst for the interpretation, integration, and application of knowledge in all fields of learning.'

Source: http://portal.unesco.org/ci/en/ev.php-URL_ID=15886&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html

1. Other International Meetings on Media Education

Three world meetings on media education, 1995-2000

In 1995, a 'World Meeting on Media Education' was held in La Coruña, Spain. As one result the World Council for Media Education (WCME; Consejo Mundial de Educación para los Medios) was created in 1996, an international forum of researchers, educators and non-governmental organisations committed to media education.

A Committee of WCME then organised the 'II. World Meeting on Media Education' and, in co-operation with the University of São Paulo, the 'International Congress on Communication and Education' in May 1998 in São Paulo, Brazil. More than 200 persons from 30 countries participated in the congress, besides some hundred Brazilian teachers and journalists invited by the city.

At the Summit 2000 in Toronto, Canada (see below), the WCME held its 'III. World Meeting on Media Education' and decided to sustain its work through an on-line component called the World Network for Media Education (WNME).

● **Summit 2000**

The probably biggest international event in media education ever, 'Summit 2000: Children, Youth and the Media – Beyond the Millennium', took place in Toronto, Canada, in May 2000. Summit 2000 was driven by the concerns and issues of children's media education in North America and was organised by The Alliance for Children and Television, Canada, The American Center for Children and Media, USA, The Association for Media Literacy, Ontario, Canada, and the Jesuit Communication Project, Canada. However, the event became an opportunity for those who create and distribute media television, film and new media for young people to meet with media educators from the whole world. The conference program consisted of three pillars:

- Media section – with topics such as: creative development, global business, social issues, changing technology, and research and education.
- Media education section – workshops, panels and papers on themes such as: marketing to youth audiences, media and multiculturalism, reading audiences, identity and cyberspace, debates in media education, television's representation of young people, etc.
- Academic section – with papers related to media and media education.

Some 1,400 participants from the media, media education, and the academic sectors and representing 55 different countries participated in plenary sessions and parallel seminars including nearly 250 presentations.

An overview of Summit 2000 is given in *Clipboard – A Media Education Newsletter from Canada*, Vol. 14, No. 1-2, 2000, edited by John J. Pungente, SJ, Jesuit Communication Project, and also chairperson of the Canadian Association of Media Education Organizations (CAMEO). Of special relevance from a researcher's view-point is the fact that almost thirty academic papers written for the Summit 2000 are available on CD.

● **Two international forums of children and media researchers**

The need for researchers active in the field of children and media to exchange theories, methods and findings also led to their first major international meeting ever – The International Forum of Children and Media Researchers, 'Youth and Media – Tomorrow'. This Forum was held in Paris in April 1997 and organised by a small network in France, GRREM (Group de Recherche sur la Relation Enfants/Médias; Research Group on the Relationship between Children and the Media). UNESCO undertook patronage of the Forum, which was supported by France Télévision and others, and attended by 350 participants, not only researchers but also teachers, media professionals and regulators from nearly 40 countries.

GRREM underlined the need to better understand – in light of information provided by researchers – what positive role the media might play in children's lives, and what children and young people are making of the media that surround them. Research presented related mainly to the daily themes: beyond media effects?; media and social concerns; the why and future of research; and media education, media literacy.

The Second International Forum of Children and Media Researchers, 'Young People and the Media – Tomorrow. Issues and Outlook', in November 2000 in Sydney, Australia, was hosted by the Australian National Commission for UNESCO with organisational support from the Australian Broadcasting Authority. This Second Forum of Children and Media Researchers promoted discussions on a diversity of research and policy issues in all areas of the media, including television, print, radio and the Internet. It also provided an occasion for dialogue and interaction between members of the research community and representatives of research user groups, such as regulators, producers and educators.

The Forum was attended by some 300 participants. Papers and posters focused on the main themes given in advance: youth production and consumption of media; globalisation and socialisation; policy and regulation of media for young people; and, interwoven with the these themes, approaches to research methodologies.

● **EU media literacy activities**

The European Commission has also been demonstrating a growing interest in media literacy. For example, media literacy is a subject that has been given priority in calls for proposals of the EU eLearning Programme launched in 2000. Projects considered

for funding have, among others, been those encouraging the production and distribution of media literacy related content, or intensifying networking around media education related issues. Several workshops and expert groups on media literacy have also been organised by the Commission, and a survey mapping the situation of media education and media literacy in the EU member states has been conducted.

One of many media literacy projects funded by EU has been Media-Educ, meaning, among other things, a conference organised by the British Film Institute's Education Department and taking place in Northern Ireland especially for media educators. The majority of delegates came from various kinds of regional and national initiatives, whether run by charities, local government, multi-agency consortia or universities, and from film institutes and government departments.

A majority of delegates expressed the strong need and desire for a media educators' network across Europe, for regular network events, for a forum to exchange best practice across Europe, for dialogue with a relevant EC department, for a coordinated European Media Education policy to reach official policy makers, and for the further development and sustainability of initiatives at a European level.

Another outcome of Media-Educ is The European Charter for Media Literacy to support the establishment of media literacy across Europe. By signing the Charter, organisations and individuals endorse a specific definition of media literacy, and commit to actions that will contribute to its development. The Charter, available on <http://www.euromedialiteracy.eu>, thus facilitates consensus and networking amongst those working for media literacy in different European countries. The website also offers a forum for discussion, and links, an archive and research listings. The aims of the Charter are

- to foster greater clarity and wider consensus in Europe on media literacy and media education
- to raise the public profile of media literacy and media education in each European nation, and in Europe as a whole
- to encourage the development of a permanent and voluntary network of media educators in Europe, bound together by their common aims, and enabled by their institutional commitment.

The European Charter for Media Literacy has been developed out of an initiative/idea of the U.K. Film Council and the British Film Institute by a Steering Group representing major institutions in a limited number of countries, who have each committed to ensuring support for Steering Group meeting costs for an initial three year period (2005-2008).

Another example of a media literacy project funded by EC is Mediapro – a comparable project in Europe and North America about the way young people (12-18) appropriate the new media in network, including new portable audio-scripto-visual media (mobile phone, Internet, video games, multimedia supports). The findings will be presented in June 2006.

Mediapro tends to contribute to a safer use of the Internet and the new portable audio-scripto-visual technologies. Its final aim is to identify relevant pedagogical orientations to help persons from the educational field (teachers, educators, parents) to develop educational practices to make young people responsible, autonomous and aware about the Internet.

2. On the Local Level

All over the world there are countless organisations, associations and networks dedicated to media education and media literacy for children, young people, teachers in school and other media educators outside school in informal settings. Many of the organisations and networks offer advice, lessons and facts and arrange conferences and seminars. (On the Clearinghouse website, we have collected a database of some 250 organisations and networks over the world engaged in children, young people and media, and many of them focus on media education/media literacy (see <http://www.nordicom.gu.se/clearinghouse.php>). In some countries media education and media literacy initiatives are initiated or supported by the state – but much more often they are run by voluntary organisations or grass-roots movements both in and outside school. It is, naturally, impossible to give an overview of the progress of media literacy across the world on this local level.

Media literacy in practice

Considering media literacy in practice – how is it realised after all? On the one hand, there are many positive reports on case studies. Here are a few different examples, of which some are supported by research:

Canada

● **Media education a compulsory subject**

Canada is often considered the country in which media literacy is most developed. In 1999, media education became a compulsory subject in Canadian schools. Before that, teachers had been networking and establishing teachers' associations for media education; they also arranged conferences, and exerted pressure on the authorities. 1989, ten years earlier, was a milestone in the Canadian teachers' struggle to include media education in the curriculum, since their book *Media Literacy Resource Guide* (Duncan 1989) was accepted and released by the Ministry of Education of Ontario, one of Canada's provinces. This book includes numerous tips about how to practise media education in the classroom.

Other provinces in the country made similar documents. As a base the resource guide explains eight key concepts that teachers and students should focus on. These key concepts have inspired many other countries, as well:

1. All media are constructions
2. The media construct reality
3. Audiences negotiate meaning in media
4. Media have commercial implications

5. Media contain ideological and value messages
6. Media have social and political implications
7. Form and content are closely related in the media
8. Each medium has unique aesthetic forms

Many other resources have been made available for Canadian teachers, such as *Scanning Television* (Harcourt Brace, Canada 1997) consisting of forty short videos, mostly documentary, that were culled by teachers from over a hundred items and copyright cleared for classroom use. The collection was designed mostly for secondary classrooms, and deals with all of the eight key concepts. There is also a teachers' guide to the videos. Another boon has been *Cable in the Classroom* beginning in 1995 and founded by the cable operators and programmers to provide from all their shows some that are for educational use. An ongoing concern about media violence gave rise to a Metro Toronto School Board publication, *Responding to Media Violence* (Andersen, Duncan and Pungente 1999).

● Media education and at-risk adolescents

A more specific Canadian project is The Alternative Career Education (ACE) Program (Rother 2000) assisting at-risk students (16-19 years of age), who struggle with conventional educational approaches. The ACE Program is a student-centered, multi-media/technology learning environment. The ACE curriculum includes learning about the mass media and the technologies associated with it, reading/analysing and studying popular culture texts, having students write/produce their own media texts, and making connections between the English Language Arts and Media Education. Media texts are here referring to print texts, such as newspapers, magazines, advertisements, as well as non-print texts, such as videos, television and radio commercials.

The ACE students are physically and socially indistinguishable from typical high school students – but their reading levels are low and their negative experiences in the school, and at home, have left many students 'turned off' to schooling.

Rother's methodology was a single case, classroom based action research design, focusing on the ACE Program and the ACE students, from 1991 to 1997. The results demonstrated that the ACE students

- read media texts with considerable sophistication. They were not only able to read/analyse the literal denotative aspects of texts, but were also able to interpret the connotative level;
- were able to identify ideologies in a text and relate them to their own experiences;
- acquired and used specific aspects of media languages and concepts in their writings and productions;
- were more willing to undertake the kind of school writing they are expected to do, using media texts as a source for their writing;
- demonstrated a critical, reflective stance, revealing insights about themselves as individuals and learners.

The conclusion of the study is that the ACE students are literate, and that traditional practices of literacy education have prevented adults from acknowledging their literacy. Schooling's notion of literacy which uses de-contextualized print texts as the only data source to determine the ACE students' literacy reflects a model of literacy that is outdated and inadequate.

USA

● **A media literacy curriculum on media violence**

Many of the Washington State's media literacy initiatives in the U.S. have not been directly orchestrated by the state but overseen by a media literacy advocacy organisation, the Teen Futures Media Network (<http://www.teenhealthandthemedial.org>). In 1998, this organisation with support of the State undertook a four-year project to develop a media literacy curriculum to be presented in the Seattle public schools. The curriculum was designed to address the issue of media and violence. The curricular design involved six lessons: 1) defining violence, 2) examining why people watch media violence, 3) deconstructing media, 4) deconstructing media violence, 5) examining conflict resolution, and 6) developing violence prevention recommendations for a middle or high school. As part of the curriculum's design, the Teen Futures Media Network held annual instructional sessions before the start of each year for the middle and high school teachers who would be using the curriculum.

In addition to presenting this curriculum to nearly four thousand students in the Seattle Public School System during a four-year period, an evaluation team (Lisosky, Cohen and Sager 2002, 2003) assessed the effectiveness of the lessons among the student participants and the faculty instructors using both quantitative and qualitative research designs. The evaluation team gathered data from pre- and post-tests distributed to the students who participated in this media literacy instruction. These data annually revealed that after completing the unit, the students' definition of the term 'violence' had broadened in scope, and their ability to critique violent media messages in their environment had grown. Significant gains were also found in the students' knowledge of media strategies used to capture an audience's attention and in their knowledge of how to use media themselves to prevent violence around their home and school. Remarkably, a control group of students surveyed in year four exhibited no significant changes in these outcome measures.

To augment the survey data, nearly one hundred student participants and a dozen faculty instructors were interviewed to assess their opinions of the media and violence curriculum. Through these interviews it was revealed that the unit on violence and media significantly influenced students who participated.

● **Less television, less aggression**

The objective of a U.S. field experiment (Robinson et al. 2001) was to assess the effects of general reduction of children's television, video films, and video game use on

aggressive behavior, as well as on children's perceptions of the world as mean and scary. Before the study, the children (mean age 8.9 years) used these media combined about 3 hours and 20 minutes a day on average.

105 third and fourth graders in one public elementary school received an 18-lesson, 6-month classroom curriculum during 1999-2000 with tips and advice on how to reduce the media use in question. At the end of the period, they used the three media on average 2 hours a day.

Compared to 120 children in a socio-demographically and scholastically matched elementary school who did not receive this intervention and used the media as usual, aggression among the 'test children' significantly decreased as measured by 'peer ratings of aggression' and 'observed verbal aggression on the playground'. ('Observed physical aggression on the playground' and 'parental reports of aggressive behavior' gave no statistically significant differences although they pointed in the same direction. The same was true of children's self-reported perceptions of the world as mean and scary.)

● **Active mediation reduced aggression-proneness after a cartoon**

An experiment (Nathanson and Cantor 2000) found that talking to children ('active mediation') reduced aggression-proneness after a cartoon. The two researchers performed the study with 351 second through sixth graders in different U.S. schools. Before viewing a 5 minutes' episode of the cartoon *Woody Woodpecker*, one group of children (of three) were encouraged to think about the consequences of violence from the victim's perspective, i.e., these children's 'fictional involvement' with the victim was increased. In the episode, Woody Woodpecker is annoyed, because a well-intentioned man, a 'tree medic', has interrupted his nap. Woody spends the episode trying to get rid of the man by committing various violent acts against him. The episode ends when Woody knocks the man unconscious and then happily returns to his nap.

The findings were statistically significant. The boys, even the oldest ones, who watched this unrealistic cartoon without the mediation were more aggression-prone after viewing. However, the boys who received the mediation did not show an increase in aggressive tendencies. Neither the cartoon nor the mediation affected the girls' aggression-proneness.

Some likely explanations, supported by the children's answers, are that children who received the mediation perceived the violence inflicted on the victim to be less justified. Rather than identifying with the more attractively portrayed and humorous perpetrator of violence (conditions that, according to previous research, encourage viewers' aggression), these children viewed the violence differently. And although the actual consequences of violence for the victim were not shown (research indicates that depiction of the negative consequences of televised violence inhibits aggressive responses), these children could imagine such consequences.

Japan

● **Media literacy for Japanese third graders**

Komaya and Muto (2002) at Ochanomizu University in Japan created media literacy educational materials to help elementary school teachers new to this area to introduce lessons to third graders. The material, *Ukkie Has Fun Exploring TV*, consists of two parts, 'Exploration 1: The media and the creation of fashion through commercials and character goods' and 'Exploration 2: Reality and fantasy on TV including the issue of violence', each consisting of a 30-minute introductory teaching video, a teacher's guidebook, a 14-minute classroom video, and children's activity sheets.

Using this material, the researchers implemented a short introductory media literacy curriculum for first and third graders (6-7 and 8-9 years of age) focusing on 'Exploration 1'. It has two building blocks: (1) to help children learn about, and gain a greater understanding of, both the process of construction and the business intentions behind making TV commercials and character goods, (2) to create an opportunity for active participation as creators of the media.

The effectiveness of the materials was verified with a pretest and a posttest in a piece of quasi-experimental research: Three classes in the first and third grades were divided into two experimental groups and one control group. Before beginning, teachers in all groups attended a four-hour orientation on the project. The children in Experimental Group 1 were given a treatment of four hours of media literacy lessons using all material. The children in Experimental Group 2 were given a short treatment, only watching the classroom video. As a control, the final class had no treatment at all.

The 'Commercials test' consisted of five categories, including the concept of commercialism, specific qualities of commercials, the purpose of making commercials and character goods, and existence of sponsors.

The findings showed that the majority of first and third graders enjoyed the lessons and classroom video much. Understanding of commercials increased significantly although many children felt the lessons were difficult. Moreover, especially the third graders came to pay attention to TV commercials, as well as those in printed media such as flyers or newspaper advertisements, and to compare goods with commercial images at supermarkets. The children wanted to make and study more commercials by themselves. In sum, the project showed that especially third grade children developed the ability to read and comprehend the media subjectively and critically.

Argentina

● **A national media education program**

The National Ministry of Education in Argentina created in 2003-2004 a national Media Education Program to coordinate various initiatives between the media and the schools across the country. The program has the media industry as its main partners and coordinates several different projects. The main goal is to consider the students as cultural producers who know how to read different texts (media contents) and, certainly, how to produce them.

The project 'The School Goes to the Cinema' allows 10,000 secondary school students (13 and 14 years old) across the country from very poor neighborhoods to go to the cinema, during school hours, to see three Argentine films per year. After the film, the director, writer, actors and other professionals who took part in the film production talk with the students about the way the film was made. For most of the students it is their first time in front of the big screen.

The project 'The School Makes Television' invites all 11- and 12-year-old primary students in urban schools to write a fictional story about a certain subject. Six stories from the entire country (one per region) are then produced as 'advertisements' and shown on all Argentine TV channels for a month. In order to produce a story, a student needs to investigate, learn about publicity (be critical), conduct research on the issue and write the story.

'Moments of Radio' invites primary schools in rural areas to write a story on 'Legends and characters in my town'. Twenty-three stories (one per province) are chosen and broadcast on all AM and FM radio stations in the country for a month on radio shows with the highest audience ratings. The project connects rural students with their roots and the elderly in their towns, and displays the value of their culture and traditions for the rest of the country (mostly the urban population, which ignores rural areas).

'Journalists for a Day' invites all 16- and 17-year-old secondary students to write an in-depth report on a subject that interests them. A jury consisting of editors of all newspapers chooses some 70 reports from across the country. The first Sunday in December, the newspapers publish on a full page a report written by the students. In order to write their report, students read newspapers and professional reports, investigate the social problems affecting their own lives – and write.

It is hoped that students through this media education program already from primary school, will learn that they have a voice, that they will be able to study how the media function, and learn how to use them. And the entire Argentine society, no matter where one lives, will be able to watch a TV campaign written by small children, listen to rural traditions on the radio selected and expressed by rural children who do not normally have a voice in the public sphere, and read about what affects, worries and interests the country's youths.

Sources: Morduchowicz (2004) and <http://mailman.me.gov.ar/escuelaymedios>

Sweden

● **Learning by making media**

A Swedish research project (Danielsson 2002) dealt with children's creation of videos and other media at school. The theoretical base of the project included experiences from aesthetic praxis, as well as children's reception and perception of images. Creativity, language and communication were key concepts.

Empirically, the project consisted of three qualitative and ethnographic studies: The first concerned pupils making videos in four schools during one term in two Stockholm suburbs, characterized by a culturally diverse population. Half were high school seniors (13-15/16 years old), and half were elementary school students in first to third grades

(7-9/10 years old). The second study was part of a broader national two-year investigation of 40 schools participating in developmental work on images and media. The third study was based on eleven seminars for teachers and media pedagogues in different parts of the country during one year.

Among other findings, the pupils' media productions show 1) the importance of creativity and its functions in an aesthetic process, 2) how children of different ages, genders and cultural backgrounds provide a rich variation of media messages, and 3) that communication can grow via the process of creating a video or in the product itself. Examples: Children and young people willingly tell about themselves and their own realities if allowed to choose subjects themselves. Especially the students in the culturally diverse school environments pointed out that they had learned more of the Swedish language and of co-operation through the video production process. Girls' activity could increase dramatically when the more technically experienced boys were not nearby and the media pedagogue discreetly stepped aside. Important for all children were the feeling of being taken seriously, having responsibility of one's own, *daring*, and strengthened self-esteem.

The project also underlines the necessity of more media literacy in teacher training colleges and in teachers' continuing training, so that the adults can be better prepared to meet their students through media education.

South Africa

● **Soap operas for education and social change**

The functionality of media in tackling social ills and motivating young people is what is aimed at in many countries in particularly Africa, Asia and Latin America, where producers use the format of radio and TV drama, soap operas, *telenovelas*, docu-soaps and other entertaining genres for *education*, that is, in order to raise debate and contribute to solving health and other problems in society. Within primarily non-formal education, the use of entertainment-education (EE) in an integrated manner and often in the form of multimedia initiatives has been growing significantly over the past decade, not least addressing health-related issues such as HIV/AIDS. The ideal communicative scenario in this respect is 'communication for social change', i.e., to deal with the challenge of providing an information and dialogue-rich enabling environment where the media contents contribute to empowering the audiences in facing health-related and other social issues and fighting them in everyday life.

One of hundreds of such programs is the youth-oriented South African drama series *Yizo Yizo* with extremely high audience ratings – aiming at reflecting reality (ordinary black South Africans living in townships) rudely and toughly (portraying children's experiences of formal schooling, including violence, sexual harassment and rape, and drug abuse). The series is commissioned by the South African Broadcasting Corporation's Education Television. Research indicates that the aim of the series at revealing the depth and complexity of social crises, and at raising debate and action in society, succeeded to a great extent (Gultig 2004).

3. Media Literacy for Media Educators

Although strong voices from many places in the world are heard urging for media education and media literacy, and although there are successful examples, the practical realisation of media education/media literacy has not gone on fairly well in most countries as a whole. This is the case regarding media education in school. The same is valid for media literacy in the wider sense. Information about children, young people and the media to adults and the process of making all citizens media literate have not found effective forms.

Thus, we can conclude that there are – internationally and in many countries – principles and statements on paper confirming that media education and media literacy are essential. There are also bright spots in practice – but they are shining in isolation. In most cases and nations, media education or media literacy is leading a languishing life in practice, mostly relying on grass-roots movements and single enthusiasts.

There is also a strong claim for more research, evaluations and assessments. Even if some research studies showing that students have learnt what they have been taught, we know very little about the long term consequences of media literacy education. Are they lasting? Is the level of media literacy generally raised?

Obstacles to media education

There are many factors preventing media education and media literacy. Even if also these factors differ between countries and regions in the world, some recurrent ones are the following:

Media literacy may be hampered by *the media themselves*. This can manifest itself in, for instance, difficulties in copying and clearing copyrights of audio-visual material for educational use – especially if the goals of media education are to teach students and ordinary people critical media thinking and democratic participation. Another example is that it can be difficult to persuade the established media to broadcast successful programmes made by ordinary children, young people and adults. The media may argue that such programmes do not fit into the schedule, or that the ordinary audience lacks interest in programmes made by non-professionals.

There is also in many countries a *lack of genuine political will and support*, on the national or local level. If there is media education at all, it is mostly initiated by a solitary fiery spirits. This is in itself an advantage, as media education must be rooted in the needs of children, young people and the local community, but the movement also has to be supported, be integrated into a general media policy. Solitary fiery spirits may at last be burnt out.

A third complex of factors preventing media education is *the media educators' situation*. *Training of teachers* in media education is mostly lacking or insufficient, or, if it exists, it is almost always implemented as an optional area in teacher training colleges and not as a compulsory element. This is related to the fact that in most countries,

where media education is supposed to be taught in school, media education is not a subject of its own but shall, according to the curricula, be integrated in other 'mother disciplines'. Moreover media literacy for young people is almost solely implemented in secondary education, although it would be at least as pertinent to younger children. Actually, the most urgent need identified for better media education in school in an international survey performed by David Buckingham and Kate Domaille (2004) is in-depth teacher training.

One consequence for media educators is, mostly, low status of, and no one really responsible for, *the subject*. (This is in contrast to the high status of the more technical learning how to handle computers and the Internet.) Other consequences are *lack of teaching resources* and difficulties in formulating and assessing *goals* for media education.

This might be further complicated by *the kind of education system* – one must bear in mind that the education system is different in different countries, sometimes being centralised, sometimes decentralised; sometimes public, sometimes private; sometimes controlled, sometimes not.

If looking upon media education as something limited to school, we must also remember that *some children in the world never attend school* and of those who do, many do not reach grade five, and many more never go to secondary school.

In several countries projects of 'media education', 'media literacy/media competence', 'education for communication' and 'communication for social change' are, actually, happening outside school, often led by voluntary organisations and/or in the forms of local youth and community-based projects. When talking about media education globally, it is therefore, as mentioned, necessary to widen the scope and *include all kinds of non-formal contexts*, as well.

Furthermore, teachers in school – or other media educators – often lack *interdisciplinary, national and international networks* which facilitate conferences and newsletters providing input from various directions – tips about new pedagogic methods, books, audio-visual material, and so on. To be prosperous, media education also has to be based on a continuous *co-operation with groups other than teachers*, for example, parents, researchers, media practitioners and viewer action groups, something that seldom is the case. Moreover, teachers and media educators themselves often belong to the *middle class*, which means that they are striving for other kinds of symbolic capital than those conveyed by popular media and which most of their students use.

All these – and other – hindering factors often contribute to confusion on part of the teachers and others with interest in media education, and, consequently, a *pedagogy of media education not thoroughly thought out*.

The conclusion is that if media literacy shall be realised and successful in and outside school, teachers' and other adults' training must be implemented and improved, and school leaders' and politicians' awareness of the need for media education must be raised.

Media literacy for media educators are of utmost concern.

Pedagogy

The multidisciplinary nature of media education or media literacy, and the lack of clear goals and assessments, lead, thus, often to the fact that its pedagogy rests on different and obscure grounds, creating confusion. Let us give two concrete examples:

● **Russian teachers and media education**

Are Russian teachers ready for the implementation of media education? What is their general attitude regarding media education in school and at university? What objectives of media education are most important to them? To what extent do they use elements of media education in their teaching?

The answers of 57 teachers at secondary schools in Taganrog, Russia (Fedorov 2005) showed that three quarters of the teachers support the idea of media education in school, and that more than half feel the need for the introduction of a new major – Media Education – at pedagogical institutes of higher learning. Most of the teachers surveyed also believe that a combination of autonomous and integrated media lessons is the most effective way to develop media education in Russia and thus increase media literacy in the young generation.

However, despite the fact that the majority of the teachers in the study felt that developing the audience's critical thinking is one of the most important aims of media education, the same teachers place great stress on the value of a 'protectionist' approach. They undervalue goals to develop democratic thinking among pupils and increase students' knowledge about theory and history of media and media culture.

Moreover, despite most of the teachers' general support of media education (in theory), only one-third of them actually use elements of media education in their lessons.

According to the teachers surveyed, the greatest obstacle on the path to media education in the Russian classrooms is the absence of financial motivation. However, the researcher asserts that important factors also include the passive anticipation of the authority's directives and the insufficient level of knowledge among today's Russian teachers in terms of theory and methods of media education.

● **Computer use in school – conflicting views among young children and teachers in Sweden?**

In a Swedish research project on children and new information and communication technology (ICT) (Hernwall 2003) the author questions whether Swedish teachers have learned how to integrate computer use into young children's schoolwork. The study presents qualitative data on computer use among four school classes in Sweden – in grades 2-3 (ca. 8-9 years of age) and grade 6 (ca. 12 years of age). The author found that these children experienced the computer as offering them many uses: games, writing, surfing on the Internet, chatting, e-mail use, creating home pages, etc. – all children seemed to be able to find a use that appealed to them. Generally, especially

the 8 to 9-year-olds had an obvious interest in e-communication – that is, they mentioned primarily social interaction on the Internet when discussing their computer use. This e-communication gave them the opportunity to keep in contact with other children, find new friends (generally or in a more simple, interesting and different way), test different roles, check out which behaviour is acceptable and which is not, exchange experiences, and so on. Communicating and acting in the different arenas of the Internet thus also contribute to children's ongoing identity formation, the researcher says.

However, the children in the study were hesitant about the functions of the computer as regards schoolwork and felt that fewer – rather than more – computers are needed in school. The children found it difficult to imagine the 'useful' computer, and regarded it more as something fun that has to do with things other than usual schoolwork, or something that constitutes a 'space between' school and leisure. All four classes had computers at their schools, but the children perceived the value of the computers and ICT at school as 'limited'; the computer brought the opposition of work and amusement to the fore.

In sum, the researcher underlines that it is not possible to introduce computers in school unless pedagogical practice is well planned. The Internet, which teachers often regard as a basis of knowledge where the students can collect knowledge to critically scrutinize and treat, is instead viewed by young children (at least the 8 to 12-year-olds studied) as a space in which to participate in a dialogue – a social forum. (Other studies indicate that older students, naturally, place more stress on the usefulness of computers for schoolwork.) According to the study, a fruitful pedagogy should start from the children's – the agents' – perspective and should not seek to incorporate Internet use within the frame of an adult idea of how school ought to be.

Sometimes, and in some countries more than others, the claims for media education or media literacy are of a *protective* nature – e.g., to protect the audience against undesired influences of prejudices, stereotypes, violent images, etc., in the media contents. This is what Masterman (1985) referred to as the inoculationist approach.

Sometimes, and more and more often in an increasingly number of countries, the claims for media education are instead of a *participatory* nature – e.g., to teach and *empower* children in school and other population groups to use the audiovisual media, as well as computers and the Internet, for communication and participation.

Often – but not in all countries – one central aim of media education, both when it is of a protective and when it is of a participatory nature, is that it shall lead to *critical thinking and reflection*.

We will touch somewhat more on these basic lines within media literacy pedagogy in the next section, 'Children's and Young People's Own Media Production'.

