

# Making Media Visible in Teacher Education

SIRKKU TUOMINEN

The ability to create and read different kinds of media products is seen as an important skill for citizenship. In Finland media education (in communicational education) has been taken into the official curriculum as a cross-curriculum subject in 1994 at the primary school level, after the first Finnish dissertation in media education had been published (Härkönen 1994). At the same time Finnish schools got more authority to make their own curriculums. Since then media education has played bigger and bigger part in these curriculums. In primary school teacher education, it was quite silent in this theme area until 1995, when visual media education began as an experiment with ministerial funding in the University of Tampere. To evaluate this course is now current, when developing media education in Finland.

The experimental course, 35 credit points of visual media education, was organized co-operatively with the Department of Primary school teacher education and the Department of Journalism and Masscommunication in the University of Tampere. 15 student teachers and in-service teachers attended the course. The focus of my research is on evaluating the experimental course: what kind of understanding do these student teachers acquire about media education? Media broadens the learning environment out of the university to the personal environment concerning also the childhood and thoughts about the future. I am focusing on the development of the students as media consumers and as media teachers.

Media educational course needs evaluation which can take account both private and public factors and the communicative nature of action which it emphasizes. That means also new kinds of evaluative techniques (see also Buckingham & Sefton-Green 1994). In this case the critical evaluative ap-

proach in teacher education is communicative evaluation (more Niemi 1996) and the method is educational media lifestyle.

In media education, visual and written autobiographies has been used also as a method in learning (for ex. Buckingham & Sefton-Green 1994). Educational media lifestyle is the main means to evaluate the student teachers' and in-service teachers' development during the course. Here I have examples from two lifestyle studies, a male student teacher and a female in-service teacher. It is also interesting, what kind of evaluative knowledge can educational media lifestyle provide?

## Towards Media Consciousness

The history of media education has a commitment to the development of media and educational research. The behaviorist approaches saw media negatively as a threat against citizens. People had to be inoculated, protected from this kind of disease by teachers. The later humanist and constructivist approaches have taken the media as a chance for better living and lifelong learning in a continually changing society. Media belong to our reality, and they must be seen as a part of contemporary culture. People ought to be taught media competencies which include wider understanding and self-reflection (see Buckingham & Sefton-Green 1994, Masterman 1994, Craggs 1992)

In the 1980s the markets and consumption of new media such as video, satellite channels and informational technology spread. There was a sudden change in the middle of the 1980s from monopoly to competition and from one-way communication to interaction and dialogue. As a whole, the number of media has increased and finally the multimedia were here: all the old media united together in mi-

crocomputers. Pictures, sounds and texts together construct media performances, the audiovisual culture belongs to everyday life (see more Varis 1995).

The aim of media education in the 1980s was to become critical with media: to learn about selection, media constructions and representations of reality (see, for example, Masterman 1989 and Craggs 1992). In the 1990s Masterman calls for critical autonomy. David Buckingham speaks about media consciousness. It is criticalness in two dimensions, individual and social. The social dimension can be seen as a distribution of power within society. The subject dimension means individual power and control over thought processes. These two processes are not separate, there is an interplay between them (Buckingham & Sefton-Green 1994, 182-183, see also Sihvonen 1995). Media consciousness or critical autonomy is seen as empowering in one's life: freedom to make choices, hope for better future or inside micropower (Masterman 1994, Buckingham & Sefton-Green 1994).

Masterman speaks about media texts: they include texts, pictures and sounds. He broadens literacy to media and behind them to the producers and social constructions. Buckingham (1994) speaks about postmodern literacy, which is broader than media; it is the whole popular culture with current social and technological changes. Literacy is not only a skill, but an act of individual cognition in the different social contexts with different technologies. He speaks about "trans-media intertextuality" which means disappearing boundaries between texts and media. Media are parts of texts and belong to the cultural literacy (see p. 213-214, compare McCarthy 1984, 280-281: the universal pragmatics of Habermas).

In Finland a work group in the Ministry of education (OPM 2: 1996) has launched a concept of medialogy meaning unified media and cultural sciences. The aim in the memorandum is to develop media literacy among citizens. This defining of media literacy includes the traditional literacy skills plus media technological and cultural skills to "write" and to "read" different kinds of media texts. Media education that develops these skills is seen as a part of current liberal education (see p. 29).

In Finland media education (in communicational education) is a cross-curriculum theme at the primary school level. It has been in the official curriculum since 1994 (OPS 1994). Finland belongs to the advanced stage of media education with Australia, Canada, England, France, Norway, Scotland,

Sweden and Switzerland. In these countries media education is in official curricula and in teacher education (see Bazalgette et al. 1992).

### Active Learning with Media

The specific skill demands in media literacy depend on the context where it is needed and used. To work as a teacher is one specific professional context, and the level of the primary school makes it even more specific. Primary school teachers need understanding to teach media literacy and skills to initiate active learning with children (Werner 1996, Craggs 1992).

Media literacy at the level of primary school means learning about media texts: production, representations and reception. Children ought to learn how materials and knowledge are selected for media texts and how these texts are constructed in the process of production in different media. Regarding representations, children should learn narrative techniques. Learning about reception means getting a sense of the audience. These are not separate levels, but interrelated to each other. And everything starts from the understanding that children already have about media texts. The aim is to make media more "visible" to children. At first media should become visible also to teachers (Craggs 1992, 14, also Tufte 1992).

Media education is based on child-centered learning. Issues are raised up from children's life, and materials relevant to children. That means popular culture entering the classroom. The working methods are experiential: simulation exercises and investigation and reflective dialogue in activity groups. Typical to media education is cooperation instead of competition, which shows among teachers too: in cross-curricular teaching and integration with subjects, in projects' for example (see pp. 4-7, 20-22). Masterman (1994) adds parent-teacher collaboration and cooperation with media institutions as essential features of media education. The teachers' mission is to help children to question, investigate and question again (more about active learning in Niemi & Kohonen 1995a).

These definings about media literacy education has worked as fundamental principles in planning the experimental course for primary school teacher education in visual media education in the University of Tampere. Definings about media literacy and media education can be called as teacher's media competence, dimensions of it.

### Teacher's media competence

Media literacy in strategies of

- media production
- performances and representations
- reception

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Media education as active learning

- experiential
- cooperative
- current materials
- investigative, encourages for asking and learning

Teachers ought to learn at first themselves academic knowledge about media literacy and academic, also practical knowledge about media education. Media literacy means then knowledge about media culture, in media studies. Media education is knowledge about educational sciences, methods of active learning. These two aspects are not necessarily separate in action, but they must be distinguished, media education belonging to teachers' professionalism carrying out active learning about media in class room. It is an essential feature in teachers' communicative competence with media in school (compare communicative competence in Habermas 1987, McCarthy 1984).

### About the Course in Visual Media Education

The experimental course for primary school teachers in visual media education started in autumn 1995 at the University of Tampere. It was the first course as long as 35 credit points in teacher education in Finland. Now in 1998, the course is going on regularly and media culture and communicational education has its own professorship in the University of Tampere from the beginning of last year.

In teacher education, media education has visual arts as a partner subject. Student teachers take the course as an additional subject, while their main subject is educational sciences. Six student teachers and nine in-service teachers took part in the experimental course in 1995.

Arts and media were studied both separately and in integrated form. Students earn 15 credits arts, 15 credits media studies and 5 credits doing integrated coursework specializing different aspects of visual media education. Student teachers took the whole course in two years, but in-service

teachers took it in a year, because they had already taken the arts course as part of their M.A. degree.

The aim of the course was to enhance student teachers' and in-service teachers' interest in working and developing themselves with media education. That means in the first place learning to understand the academic concepts and techniques in media education and media literacy so that they can produce active learning in classrooms and develop their own curricula and learning environments. Because the partner subject was arts, the emphasis was on visual aspects in media literacy.

Media literacy was learned through exercises, projects, textbooks and workshops. Media education was learned mainly through books, workshops and student teaching. Cooperation with media houses included visits and research in media text production. The strategies of publicity were experienced through a workshop where the students arranged the opening day of the course, and their first group analysis about a television program came out. The whole course was based on cooperation with teacher trainers: two arts lecturers, media studies teacher and an important co-teacher was the lecturer on information technology in workshops about digital picture manipulation and producing hypermedia.

### About Communicative Evaluation

According to Hannele Niemi (1996) communicative evaluation belongs to the critical paradigm of evaluation. The evaluator is seen as a tutor, a subject in the process of evaluation. The approach relies on Habermas (1987) and his theory of communicative action. Social phenomena are considered as different communicative subsystems with own cultural understandings and horizons. The problem in modern society has been the differentiation of these subsystems, that includes citizens' differentiation from the society and social actions. Teacher education can be seen as one subsystem and teacherhood can be seen as an important profession to promote communicative skills for citizens to take part and communicate in postmodern society, which is a mosaic of subsystems. Teacher education should produce professionals for open discussion with partners, and capable to communicate with people with different cultural, movable horizons (Niemi 1996, 17-18).

Niemi differs the knowledge in the communicative evaluation of the effectiveness in three qualitative levels. Revelation means the knowledge about

the quality of learning, barriers to achievements, expectations for teacher education, and new objectives to be set. Anticipation is knowledge about the historical and socio-political context and future: how teachers/ students can make their impact on the development of society. The third level is aiming for communication and partnership. That means evaluative knowledge about cooperation, partnership and interaction with teachers, working life, schools and local communities (Niemi 1996, 21-24). These three levels of evaluation of effectiveness can be applied to the evaluation of the visual media education course. (Figure 1)

Revelation here means the quality of knowledge and growth both in private sector and public sector as a teacher. Did the course advance students' media literacy? What kind of progress did the course enhance in media education as active learning? Anticipation is about changes in students attitudes and their own aims for future. What is their personal interest in media after the course? What kind of commitment and autonomy as media teachers do they have for the future? Aiming for communication and partnership is about creating communicative culture. Here I am looking for student teachers' own communicative culture, trajectors from childhood: what kind of communicative microcultures or styles there are developing? (see about trajectors Kauppila & Tuomainen 1996)

The evaluation of visual media education course here is primary evaluation, because the study is done right after the course has ended in autumn 1996. Then the in-service teachers got the whole 35 credits done and the student teachers continued with other studies in their M.A. degree.

## Evaluation with Educational Media Lifestudy

My main method can be called educational media lifestudy, because it is one educational method among others as well. Educational media lifestudy belongs to the biographical methods which are considered as a means of critical reflection and transformative learning (Dominicé 1994). Studying one's life means studying both the private and public (compare Antikainen 1995 and Fiske 1994). My students wrote their first media lifestudy while entering the course in 1995. During the course they kept learning diary and in winter 1996-97 I made a thematic lifestudy interview with 5 students.

Tuomo Turja (1992) has written an autobiography studying his own media educational environment from childhood. Ari Antikainen (1996, 1995) studies the learning life courses of Finns. His emphasis is on the significant learning experiences in the lives of Finns and their significant "others": for example, people, ideologies and institutions that have affected learning during their lives. He questions what meaning education has for Finns and if it has provided empowerment to the lives of Finns.

Ivor Goodson (1991) argues that studies about teachers' lives focus on the deeper knowledge about the relationships of teachers' work, professional growth and schooling. He says that a teacher's background and history shape the practice and are thus important in data collection in educational research. Important in formulating teachers' careers are all the critical incidents in their lives (pp. 143-149).

Figure 1. Communicative Evaluation in Visual Media Education

Private	Public
<i>Revelation:</i> the quality of knowledge, barriers in development	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• changes in own relationships with media: critical autonomy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• changes in media education: conceptual and pedagogical</li> </ul>
<i>Anticipation:</i> attitudes and aims for future	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• taking an interest in media</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• commitment and autonomy as media teacher</li> </ul>
<i>Aiming for communication and partnership:</i> creating communicative culture	

Joseph Lukinsky (1994) and Pierre F. Dominicé (1994) have used educational life history as a self-study in adult learning and in the universities both as a teaching method and studying method. In Lukinsky's model lifestudy is a part of a learning diary. It includes important "steps" of life: people, incidents, work, questions and definitions. Students can use this kind of diary during the courses, reflecting upon what special information have they learned and through what kind of learning "steps" (Lukinsky 1994, pp. 241-243, 248).

Through biographical methods "self" and "others", "private" and "public", "personal" and "professional" can be reflected as in the examples above. Especially when the aim is to define different typifications of life styles or living courses, biographical methods are useful, as they also are when typifying some special qualifications (see Roos 1987, Antikainen 1995, Raehalme 1996).

The students came to the course with their first lifestudy written or came to me for a thematic interview. The interviews lasted about 1-2 hours and written papers were 3-10 pages. This educational media lifestudy produced knowledge of revelation and anticipation before the course: with what kind of understanding did the students enter the course?

The students, both men and women, are from 22-44 years of age (only two of them are over 30). Students tell about their life with the media through family habits, different ages, hobbies, friends and living places. Big news events, like crises in Russia, were remembered as significant situations when the media had an influence on the whole family media habits. Family habits include memories about times to stop watching tv and go to bed and also memories about not having this kind of control from parents. Almost everyone remembers television first at a preschool age. Radio is recalled in the 1980s, when private radio stations were begun in Finland after the states broadcasting monopoly was broken. Newspapers have belonged to the everyday routine since high school, as have special hobby magazines. The microcomputer is mainly a new friend, dating from university entrance. The concept of media was mainly understood in the papers, but media education was rarely mentioned. Only two students mentioned some lessons at school where articles or videos were made. Only three students discussed media education and its future. The visual dimension appears in few papers: most of the writing is merely about pictures and the visual media. Perhaps expectations for the course beginning?

The revelation knowledge was about students media environment in which they had lived, the media educational approach at home and school in childhood, and own relationships with media. At the beginning of the course these all reveal for me as a media teacher about students hidden media literacy skills. Media education should make these visible for students themselves, and develop skills further towards critical autonomy (see Tufte 1992).

During the autumn the students kept learning diaries. Before Christmas they wrote down headlines in small groups about the significant learning experiences or steps in this course. At home everyone added under these headlines: what had they learned and how? What more do they want to learn? What did the first part of the course mean in their lives?

In winter 1996-1997 I made thematic interviews about students' lives: from the basis of their first educational media lifestudies and their headlines about significant learning experiences during the course year. This second part was a longer project. It had instructions beforehand: main questions to answer. Before the second part I sent them copies of the first lifestudy, and their essays, exams etc. as well.

### **About Changes During the Course: Media Coming "Visible"**

The male student teacher, age 24, comes from the country, grown up in a farmer family with two siblings. His cultural trajector is socially critical from the childhood: he has had a home where social issues has been on converse daily. The male student teacher negotiates and debates a lot about media also during the course. The female in-service teacher, age 29, comes from little town, grown up in a residential area with neighborhood children and a younger sister. Both her parents were working outside the home. Her cultural trajector from childhood is aesthetic and very visual: the significant others in childhood were other children, books and pictures. Teacher education had not been her dream, but she had not got in to the Arts College, although she had tried many times.

At the time of the second lifestudy interview the male student teacher was in the fourth grade in teacher education doing his M.A. research. His personal life was in big change: he had a total break with his girlfriend, he started a new relationship with another girl, his mother got cancer and died during the course. The female in-service teacher

was working as a teacher her fifth year with second class pupils and she had already settled down as a married woman in justbought little house with a teacher husband.

As revelation knowledge they mention significant learning experiences during the course. The male student teacher mentions his research, final student teaching, film workshop and a course in graphics. The female in-service teacher mentions a lot of awakenings she has had with course books, teaching practices in her class and exercises with visual media. Both of them tell me about media production, selection, narration, genres and reception coming “visible” for them. Development has occurred as media consumers. They tell me also about projects they have carried out in the class rooms with media. The female in-service teacher more and with more strict aims than the male student teacher.

As anticipative knowledge, they tell me about their personal interests in media and as media teacher. The male student’s interest has increased so, that he doesn’t know whether he wants to be a teacher yet. He has taken additive courses for example in documentaries and animation. The female in-service teacher speaks about feeling guilty with popular culture before the course, but not anymore. She has got also a lot self confidence working with media projects in classroom.

What has prevented their development and growth? The male student teacher tells about conflicts with peers and teacher trainers. He didn’t also like that in-service teachers took part in the same course, because it meant teaching in weekends. The female in-service teacher tells about her technological lacks that prevented her to concentrate in visual manipulation course where technological support was too small. She thinks her own aims for the course were also too visual and aesthetic.

The trajectors of the both students got more towards one another during the course. The male student teacher’s social and critical trajector got some aesthetic dimensions and the female in-service teacher’s aesthetic trajector got social dimensions. The male student teacher loves now doing the arts work also. The female in-service teacher speaks a lot about the social representations that media performances offer to us.

The evaluative knowledge about the effectiveness of these two student cases is not countable, but qualitative. Media consciousness have developed, media has become visible instead of myth anymore, in both cases. They have both got under-

standing about media education, the female in-service teacher a bit more than the male student teacher. Both have changes also in attitudes: the interest in media culture and popular culture has increased. Cultural trajectors have not changed but got unifying dimensions during the course about (visual) media.

## **Lifestudy in Evaluation, Conclusions**

While the data analyzing is going on with other lifestudies, I can still make some observations about the method, its advantages and limitations.

Already the students’ first media lifestudies and the significant learning headlines in learning diaries show that in these interpretations both private and public aspects can be present. The learning environment appears to be broader in students’ lives than the department of primary school teacher education is and it makes evaluation of the effectiveness also more complexive. For example the male student teacher has had so much going on in his private life at the course time, that the effectiveness in his case is very complexive. The female in-service teacher has more stabile personal life situation and the development can be seen more clear in her case.

The knowledge of childhood and students’ everyday life make possible interpretations about why and how students’ study. Cultural trajectors come visible to students themselves also and help them think where are they coming and where going. Lifestudy produces especially knowledge about feelings and attitudes.

The method itself creates a communicative culture, and belongs to the level of aiming for communication and partnership. When educational media lifestudy is a thematic interview, it is a communicative situation between two persons. The researcher can take a role as a tutor and help the student think questions further. It is a question of dialogue, with researcher and student and student with himself. The evaluation situation is a situation for growth, too. I felt myself as a midwife giving birth to the narrative and self reflection.

There are also limitations. The life narratives vary in depth. It is a question about staking oneself as Dominice (1994) says. One limitation is also the double meaning creation in media lifestudies: students create meanings of their lives in their narratives and then I create interpretations about these narratives. In this case the second and third meeting is necessary: students read and check if they want to change the story. To support revelation

knowledge in the public sector, educational lifestyle needs supportive methods in evaluation. Changes in students' pedagogical development need to be studied in accuracy from their diaries of student teaching as well.

The effectiveness of the course here means more than achieving or not, strict countable learning outcomes. It means beginning of growth towards something, here as media conscious person and as primary school teachers.

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