2007-01-01

Final Report: Critical Media Literacy in Ireland

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Recommended Citation

Barnes, C., Corcoran, F., Flanagan, B. and O'Neill, B. Final Report: Critical Media Literacy in Ireland. Dublin: Radharc Media Trust, 2007
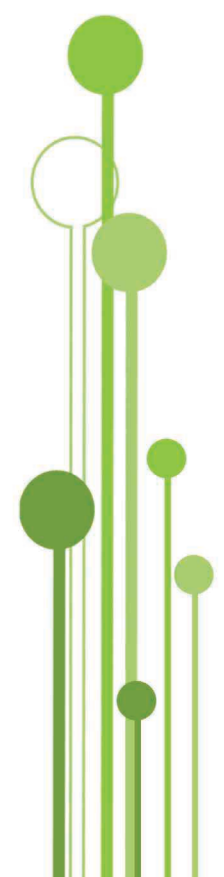
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Critical Media Literacy in Ireland

NOVEMBER 2007

The Radharc Trust
Dublin City University
Dublin Institute of Technology

CRITICAL MEDIA LITERACY IN IRELAND

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THE RADHARC TRUST, DUBLIN, (2007).

CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Critical Media Literacy (CML) is a matter of major public importance. The skill-set of CML[1] is increasingly recognised at national and European level as essential to citizenship and to a healthy democracy.

Attempts to foster Media Literacy have been a feature of Irish education for over thirty years. Extensive curriculum reform has taken place to ensure that opportunities for studying the media are available across the primary and secondary curriculum.

However, in 2007 the subject retains a low profile and provision for Media Education is uneven. The subject has a low status within the educational system and media exploration is frequently avoided given the pressure of traditional examination subjects and end of year exams. The dispersed and unstructured nature of Media Education has offered some advantages in allowing freedom to teachers to develop new innovative practices. However, it also undermines the overall coherence of media studies as a subject.

In an international context, Ireland has fallen significantly behind other countries such as the Nordic countries, United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand and Canada where Media Education has been a core feature of the educational system for many years.

Media Education in Irish schools is largely informal and too often relies on individual teachers and enthusiasts for the subject. The lack of dedicated or localised Irish resources for the teaching of media has undermined the development of the subject. Teachers normally have to rely on developing their own materials with little access to training or resources.

There is now a much wider community of interest for Media Literacy Education which includes not only schools, but parents, community groups, media organisations, cultural agencies and regulatory bodies. There is strong evidence that suggests links between the various bodies will greatly enhance the sustainability of any future strategy towards Media Literacy.

Many excellent examples of Critical Media Literacy have been developed through community-based initiatives. While some have enjoyed a high profile, most are inadequately resourced, if at all. Valuable expertise has been developed within the community sector though achieving continuity and momentum has been difficult. There are insufficient opportunities, likewise, to apply the knowledge learned within the formal education sector.

Recommendations summary

- A revised and coherent **rationale for Media Literacy** in Irish education needs to be developed that takes into account its contemporary relevance and wider social context.
- The **lack of ownership of the subject needs to be addressed** and a representative body of all stakeholders including teachers, educationalists, parents, statutory agencies and media professionals need to provide leadership for the development of the subject.
- **Links with media industries** would be widely welcomed.
- A **curriculum development strategy is now required** that includes provision for a transition between primary and secondary schools, and supports progression through different key stages of learning. Such a curriculum also needs to provide teacher support and incentives.

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[1] 'to appraise critically, and assess the relative value of, information from different sources, and gain competencies in understanding the construction, forms, strengths and limitations of screen based (and other media) content' (Livingstone and Bovill, 1999)

INTRODUCTION

Critical Media Literacy in Ireland is a report of research commissioned by The Radharc Trust in October 2006 and jointly undertaken by Dublin Institute of Technology's School of Media and Dublin City University's School of Communications. Responding to the now widely-recognised importance for children and young people to acquire both the critical media awareness and the practical communication skills that are needed in the workplace and in the course of daily life, the aim of the research was to map the current status of Critical Media Literacy (CML) in Ireland against key developments in Media Education worldwide. An objective of the research is to seek greater official recognition and support for Media Literacy initiatives among policy makers, educators and the general public.

The report comprises the following sections:

Section 1 Overview outlines the scope and focus of the research, setting it within a contemporary context and provides a working definition of the concept of Media Literacy.

Section 2 International Context provides a comparative overview of models and international good practice for the promotion of CML both within and outside formal education. An outline of current and recently-completed research is provided, including a comprehensive discussion of the issues, questions and policy frameworks surrounding CML and its contested definition.

Section 3 The Current State of CML in Ireland identifies the current curricular provision for Media Education in Ireland and examines the pedagogical context, its location within the curriculum framework and assessment structures of primary and secondary levels, and the typical learning environments for Media

Education in Irish schools. Media literacy in the community sector is also briefly examined.

Section 4 Critical Media Literacy – Challenges and Priorities of CML summarises the main issues raised by practitioners, educationalists and policy-makers in the field of Media Education in Ireland. This section reflects on the different ways in which Media Literacy is currently practiced, how it might be better incorporated into our educational programmes and what measures need to be taken to ensure success in the future.

Section 5 Case Studies: Good Practice in Media Education looks at 3 different examples of exciting work taking place in Irish Media Education in areas of film studies, in moving image making for young children and in digital video workshops in the community youth sector.

Section 6 Conclusion sets out the main findings of the report and puts forward a series of recommendations on how the project of critical Media Literacy might be advanced within Irish education.

Section 7 Bibliography and Resources provides a list of further reading and reference resources for Media Education worldwide.

1.0 OVERVIEW

1.1 Scope of the Project

Media education and attempts to foster Media Literacy have been a feature of Irish education for over thirty years and yet in 2007 the subject retains a very low profile. At the outset of this project, it was agreed that in order to enhance its profile, a benchmarking of Irish Media Education against international CML provision was required, augmented by a survey of relevant academic literature on good practice in the field. In their review of the state of CML worldwide for UNESCO, Domaille and Buckingham note not only 'an extraordinary dearth of systematic, reliable research in this field' (2001: 7) but also that research is not shared within, or between, countries. Our research hopes to address this by providing a snapshot of the CML provision, research and classroom initiatives in Ireland in 2007. Building a clear picture of the status of CML in this country and locating it in a comparative context is an essential first step in evaluating the current state of the field.

International examples of progressive Media Education practice highlight the extent to which Ireland is trailing behind world leaders in the field. Thus, our rationale is informed by an analysis of this international experience (sec 2) and by examples of good practice whereby Media Literacy has been successfully integrated not only in classrooms at primary and secondary level but more importantly, in active communities and academic research. Having acknowledged these experiences from other countries, we then address the key debates and key concerns of educationalists in Ireland (Sec 3).

We offer a working definition of Media Literacy (Sec 1.5), itself a matter of some debate and confusion among practitioners and teachers, and present an account of the formal location of Media Literacy provision within the Irish curriculum (sec 3.2). We look also at some

examples of good practice across the field (Sec 5) and, finally, offer recommendations on how the project of Media Literacy might be advanced (Sec 6.2).

1.2 Context

The growing importance of Media Literacy as a matter of public concern is reflected in recent international developments such as the inclusion of Media Literacy within the European Commission's terms of the agreed Audiovisual Media Services Directive (May 2007), the formation of an expert group and launch of a wide-ranging public consultation on Media Literacy.[2]

The Commission's approach to the future of European regulatory audiovisual policy stresses that regulatory policy in the sector has to 'safeguard certain public interests, such as cultural diversity, the right to information, the importance of media pluralism, the protection of minors and consumer protection and action to enhance public awareness and Media Literacy, now and in the future'. The definition of Media Literacy put forward in the Audiovisual Media Services Directive is an important one and worth quoting in full:

> Media literacy refers to skills, knowledge and understanding that allow consumers to use media effectively and safely. Media-literate people will be able to exercise informed choices, understand the nature of content and services and take advantage of the full range of opportunities offered by new communications technologies. They will be better able to protect themselves and their families from harmful or offensive material. Therefore the development of Media Literacy in all sections of society should be promoted and progress followed closely. (AVMSD, para 25a)[3]

In the Irish context, the proposed Broadcasting Authority of Ireland (BAI) in forthcoming legislation on broadcasting is likely to be charged as the authority with the responsibility for promoting Media Literacy. This will follow the example of the UK where the Communications Act of 2003 places the responsibility on the regulator, OFCOM, to promote 'better public awareness and understanding of material published by electronic media, the purposes for which such material is selected or made available for publication, the available systems by which access to such published material is or can be regulated, and the available systems by which persons to whom such material is available may control what is received'.[4]

Similarly, the drafting of an EU Charter by interested educational and other agencies to support the establishment of Media Literacy across the EU in September 2006[5] alongside efforts by organisations such as UNESCO[6] to highlight its importance, point to a growing consensus for a greatly expanded Media Education provision. Against this background, a debate about the nature of Media Literacy and its relevance to Irish society is timely and necessary, not simply in terms of facilitating greater public awareness of the communications landscape but as a means of consolidating a form of literacy that is increasingly recognised as essential to active and full citizenship (Livingstone 2003:2).

1.3 Project Focus

Critical Media Literacy in Ireland concentrates on Media Literacy provision located within the formal education sector. It looks specifically at both primary and secondary levels in Irish education and provides an overview of the specific issues and concerns associated with

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[2] Media Literacy Consultation, October 6, 2006.
http://ec.europa.eu/comm/avpolicy/media_literacy/consultation/index_en.htm
[3] Audiovisual Media Services Directive, May 2007.
http://ec.europa.eu/avpolicy/docs/reg/modernisation/proposal_2005/avmsd_cons_may07_en.pdf

[4] See Communications Act 2003,
http://www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2003/20030021.htm
[5] http://www.euromedialiteracy.eu/index.php
[6] Domaille and Buckingham 2001

Media Literacy Education for younger children and for teenagers. The report touches on but does not explicitly address Media Literacy as a broader social project, though it is recognised that developments in the social arena are likely to have an important bearing on Media Literacy practice in schools in future years. Nor does the focus of the study deny that important Media Literacy work takes place outside and beyond the school, for example, within the community and youth group sector (Domaille and Buckingham 2001: 8). However, the objective of advancing a cohesive and sustainable approach to CML for young people in Ireland makes an emphasis on formal education the most appropriate place to start.

1.4 Project Aims and Objectives

The aim of this research project is to provide a rationale for a sustainable Media Literacy pedagogy in Ireland which will enable children and young people to acquire both the critical awareness and practical skills of Media Literacy needed in the course of daily life and in their future adult lives. The four main objectives of the project are to:

1. Develop an awareness of international experience and best practice in promoting and integrating CML into formal learning environments;

2. Provide an operative definition of CML which takes into account the varied approaches to the subject;

3. Identify the principal challenges facing CML curriculum initiatives in Ireland;

4. Make a series of recommendations for a national CML pedagogy that is not medium-specific, but applies to all media and is in line with the European Charter for Media Literacy (2006).

1.5 Defining Media Literacy

Developing a robust definition of Media Literacy always presents a challenge for researchers and media educators. The hugely important literacy skills of reading and writing which lie at the foundation of our ability to participate as informed citizens have, it is widely recognised, expanded over the course of the twentieth century to encompass audiovisual means of communication and now with the proliferation of ICTs digital and computer-based forms of communication. In addition to the skills required to access information and engage in communication, the notion of 'media' literacy and especially *Critical* Media Literacy is also taken to include a sense of critical discrimination and judgement of the value of the information received. Thus today, we find that Media Literacy as a concept is used variously to refer to competencies required within today's Information Society and the knowledge-based economy; to describe a facility for engaging with fast-changing information and communication technologies; to support a more informed and participative citizenry; and to the concerns raised by media saturation and standards within popular culture.

There are, therefore, a number of competing objectives embedded within the concept of Media Literacy. Accordingly, Media Literacy is frequently defined in a manner suiting the needs of the interests involved. For the purposes of this research, we have chosen the definition put forward by Sonia Livingstone and Moira Bovill in their study *Young People, New Media* (1999) as one which best accommodates the multiple interpretations of what constitutes literacy, what constitutes media and what constitutes an ability to understand, work with, navigate, utilise and produce media messages. Thus Media Literacy in this context is defined as:

the ability to appraise critically, and assess the relative value of, information from different sources, and gain competencies in understanding the construction, forms, strengths and limitations of screen based (and other media) content (Livingstone and Bovill, 1999)

From the educational point of view, CML therefore demands a multi-faceted, cooperative and coherent set of pedagogies that are available to children in Ireland on a universal basis. It also requires that CML be firmly grounded in both the familiar (television, computer gaming) and newer (social networking via the internet) media engagements and experiences of students, but with a view towards wider questions about community and social interaction. The collaborative and democratising elements of media use and production should be to the fore to enable children and young people to become more than just informed consumers of the media (Livingstone 2003: 1-2: Lewis and Jhally 1998: 109). Questions we need to ask ourselves about CML in Ireland must address the tension between a technology and skills-based Media Education (as seen in New Zealand and the Nordic Countries) which emphasises the preparation of students for the workforce, and an approach which emphasises personal and social development in preparation for a full engagement with the complexities of modern social life (Christ and Potter 1998: 9). A question which the research addresses is whether these are compatible or mutually exclusive aims.

In the following, we refer to CML to reflect the emphasis on the essential aspect of critical awareness. Internationally CML is variously referred to as media studies, Media Literacy or Media Education. As a rule, when referring to the experience of other countries we will use their preferred term, and when referring to Ireland we will use CML.

1.6 Media Education Paradigms

David Buckingham (1998) has characterised recent thinking in relation to Media Education pedagogy as moving from a paradigm of 'protectionism' to a pedagogy that is more student-centred and less inclined to intervene between the learner and their media/cultural environment. As a leading spokesperson for critical Media Literacy, based on a participatory, student-centred pedagogy, he has characterised the rationale for such an approach as follows:[7]

- Changing views of regulation. Children's access to media can no longer be so easily controlled: internet, video, satellite television. From censorship, and towards 'consumer advice' — of which Media Education is often seen as one dimension.

- Changing views of the media. Media as bearers of a singular set of values and beliefs no longer held. Media no longer a monolithic, centrally controlled machine; more possible for young people to undertake creative media production.

- Changing views of young people. All-powerful 'consciousness industry' has come into question. Children as innocent victims of media effects has steadily been challenged and surpassed. However, not a simple-minded celebration of children's sophistication.

- Changing views of teaching and learning. A growing recognition among educators that the protectionist approach does not actually work in practice. Emergence of a more student-centred perspective, which begins from young people's existing knowledge and experience of media, rather than from the instructional imperatives of the teacher.

[7] Buckingham, David (2002) 'Media Education A Global Strategy For Development'

1.7 Academic Status of Media Studies

Media Literacy advocates and supporters broadly agree that 'Media Literacy has become as essential a skill as the ability to read the printed word' (Heins and Cho 2003:1). Yet a major problem still facing Media Literacy is the continuing low academic status conferred upon it (Domaille and Buckingham 2001; Kerr 2005: 6). The perceived lack of value has a detrimental effect which extends into the level of resources developed, the provision of teacher training and the level of public support for expansion of Media Literacy in school curricula. Bazalgette directly links a lack of active government support for progression in Media Education in the UK to a fear of being 'attacked by the rightwing press as lowering standards of education' (Federov 2006: 4).

The low academic status of Media Education arises to some extent in the context of education's engagement with popular culture more generally. Frequently, Media Literacy is approached in a 'protectionist' way, alerting children and teenagers to the 'dangers' of their media engagement or interaction. This is, despite findings by Hobbs, who finds that 'students are unresponsive to the idea that they are helpless victims of media influence who need to be rescued from the excesses of their interest in popular culture' (Hobbs 1998). While Media Literacy has defined objectives in developing communicative competence, it is difficult to escape the broader debate about the valorisation of popular youth culture, and in particular its more controversial aspects such as computer or video gaming (Gee 2003); rap music and racial and sexual stereotyping (Ging 2005); social networking sites and online safety; and young people's use of mobile phones.

1.8 Partnerships for Media Education

Given the different motivations that exist for promoting Media Literacy, there are differing views on what role, if any, the media themselves might play in the classroom. Corporate media involvement, sponsorship, and partnerships with media companies are increasingly a feature of the Media Literacy field, particularly in the United States. In general, as reported by Domaille and Buckingham (2001: 19-20) partnerships with external agencies are regarded as a necessary element of Media Education practice, and both good and bad experiences are noted. Primarily, concerns about partnership centre on questions of institutional interest (Livingstone 2003: 2) and the possibility of a 'blurring' of business and educational objectives.

It is also noted however, that good partnerships with media content providers can mean access to knowledge, vocational advice and experience, media practice and skills. It can also mean new community links and access to resources which would otherwise not be available (Domaille and Buckingham 2001: 19). UNESCO has noted that as countries move from a defensive or protectionist model of Media Literacy to a more critical awareness and engagement one, there will be greater opportunities for positive partnerships where 'media producers don't feel like the bad guys' (ibid: 19).

As a subject within the formal education curriculum, in many instances (notably the UK, the United States and the Nordic countries) Media Literacy has begun to incorporate a type of 'outreach' approach. This often requires collaboration between schools, individuals, libraries, universities and community groups. Although each country proposes a unique variation on this approach, there are some obvious merits in each case, notably financial and administrative.

2.0 INTERNATIONAL CONTEXT

A comparative country by country overview provides a broad international context in which to situate Irish research, current Irish educational provision, and grassroots activity by teachers, community groups, practitioners and other stakeholders. Before we can fully appreciate the state of CML provision in Ireland we must be aware of its status and progress elsewhere. The countries surveyed in the following include the UK, the USA, the Nordic Countries (Norway, Sweden, Denmark and Finland), Australia and New Zealand. Of these, the UK is acknowledged as being the world leader in Media Education research and curriculum development with a tradition stretching back to the 1920s. Other English-speaking countries such as Canada and Australia have been profoundly influenced by the development and experiences of the UK in terms of research, advocacy, lobbying, curriculum design and grassroots activism. The diversity of Media Literacy experience and provision documented below will include material that may not be immediately relevant or practicable in Ireland due to differences in governance, school systems, availability of resources and training, public attitudes and public support. Key elements such as the proximity and global importance of the UK in Media Literacy Education; the turn to technology seen in the Nordic countries and the predominance of community Media Education initiatives in the USA, all offer challenges to the construction and implementation of an Irish national curriculum for CML. This should both reflect the unique requirements and circumstances of Ireland's culture, school system, economy and media tradition, while drawing on the best examples and contributions from around the world.

In the following country summaries, the experiences and ethos of Media Literacy Education are structured under the following four headings:

- **Context –** key features unique to each country in terms of the history and type of Media Literacy Education they provide. Here we will also highlight any significant issues which impact upon the progression of the field such as a lack of a national curriculum or the persistence of a narrow or 'traditional' understanding of the role of Media Education.

- **Curriculum and Assessment** – curriculum provision, innovation and assessment methods, where applicable, made by different countries in implementing and standardising their approach to Media Literacy.

- **Policy –** main trends and issues concerning the official implementation of Media Literacy.

- **Learning Environments** – an overview of the location of efforts to introduce Media Literacy that frequently require extra-curricular settings, activities, and resources.

2.1 United Kingdom
Context

The UK is unique in its long history of Media Education which began as early as 1929 (Heins and Cho 2003: 35) with efforts to 'protect' children from the 'false and corrupting influence of the mass media' (Buckingham 1998: 33-34). Currently, Media Literacy Education is understood to have moved from a model of 'protectionism' to one of 'empowerment', prioritising critical thinking and engagement rather than a defensive approach (Domaille and Buckingham 2001: 3). Yet still in many instances, the understanding that teaching Media Literacy is primarily designed to protect children from the media prevails at classroom level. This, it is argued, is primarily due to a lack of training and resources for teachers of media (ibid: 20; 43-44).

Curriculum and Assessment
England and Wales

The experiences and curriculum approach to Media Literacy developed in the UK has informed and led the progression of programmes in schools across the world, particularly in other English-speaking countries (Buckingham 1998:39). The new National Curriculum for England and Wales,[8] implemented in August 2000, makes Media Education a compulsory subject in secondary schools from Key Stage 3 (ages 11-14).[9] Despite this, provision varies from school to school with Media Literacy most commonly 'stranded in' as part of traditional English language teaching and also, since 2002, as part of the new Citizenship curriculum which is mandatory for this age group and up. The full curriculum stipulations and criteria for Media Literacy can be viewed on the National Curriculum website.[10] Media literacy is catered for in some schools as a 'stand-alone' subject and there are also a small number of 'media arts schools' which have been granted specialist status by the UK Government and which incorporate the study of media across the curriculum (Domaille and Buckingham 2001: 43). Merry and Titley note in their 2002 study that there are eleven such schools in operation in the UK (2002:43).[11]

The work of the British Film Institute (BFI) has been particularly important and influential in the field of Media Education, both in the UK and abroad. The BFI's education wing, headed by prominent Media Literacy advocate and author Cary Bazalgette, has produced a series of curriculum statements and recommendations since the 1980s. These statements have been

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[8] Scotland and Northern Ireland differ in their Media Literacy provision and examination and are discussed below.
[9] Department for Education and Skills (DfES): see http://:www.DfES.gov.uk.
[10] See the National Curriculum Website http:www.nc.uk.net. See also Domaille and Buckingham (2001: 43-45) (Heins and Cho 2003: 35-36) and Merry and Titley (2000: 42-45) for summaries of the recent status of ML in the UK.
[11] Titley and Merry's study is part of a broader project mapping the development of Media Literacy in the EU. Their focus is on Ireland, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom and remains one of the few pieces of published research which has gathered information on Media Literacy in Ireland.

widely adopted by teachers, such as the following example taken from Bazelgette (1989) which maps the Key Aspects of Media Education to include signpost questions:

Who is communicating and why?	Media Agencies
What *type* of text is it?	Media Categories
How has it been *produced*?	Media Technologies
How do we know what it *means*?	Media Languages
Who *receives* it, and what sense do they make of it*?*	Media Audiences
How does it *present* its subject to us?	Media Representations

Media literacy is examined officially at several stages in the educational system of England and Wales. In terms of a traditional assessment framework, UNESCO estimates 30,000 students take GCSE[12] Media Studies at the end of Key Stage 4 (Domaille and Buckingham, 2001). Assessment for media studies at both GCSE And AS/A Level has two elements: students sit an exam and submit coursework typically in the form of a project or extended essay (Stafford 2000: 4-6).

The 'stranding-in' of Media Literacy into compulsory English and Citizenship courses means the majority of students undertake some form of media analysis in their educational career. This does not, as noted by Domaille and Buckingham (2001), mean Media Literacy is firmly established in all schools, or that it receives the funding and policy focus necessary to maintain and develop nationally coherent and cohesive standards(44-45). Resources for teacher training are scarce (Merry and Titley 2002: 45), meaning that classes in general remain focused on traditional forms of Media Literacy such as newspapers and television; and an in-depth and sustained

Media Literacy Education is not guaranteed to all students.

Scotland

The education system in Scotland is separate to that of England and Wales. Previously there was no set Scottish School Curriculum - guidelines were set by Learning and Teaching Scotland (LTS) on behalf of the Scottish Executive.[13] These guidelines have been under review since 2003 and have since been extensively revised. Scotland has, since 2004, been in the process of rolling out a new National Curriculum covering all formal education from age three to eighteen.[14] Media literacy is 'stranded into' the traditional English syllabus as well as into Art, Drama and Social Studies. It is also offered as a 'stand-alone' subject in some schools (Murphy 2002: 2). Scotland also uses the Key Aspects model which forms the basis for learning in England and Wales; however, there are several key differences (Domaille and Buckingham 2001: 61). These can be seen in the student and teacher ML materials produced by the Scottish Further Education Unit (SFEU) and the Colleges and Open Learning Exchange Group (COLEG).[15] Media literacy is formally assessed by the Scottish National Qualification System as NQ Media Studies (Murphy 2001: 1).

Importantly, teachers in Scotland have the option of taking an Additional Teaching Qualification (ATQ) in Media Studies (Murphy 2001: 3). Domaille and Buckingham note that more than 70 teachers in Scotland had gained this ATQ by 2001, and further note the extensive in-service training provided for teachers prior to the introduction of the NQ Media Studies (2001: 62).

Northern Ireland

Since 2000 Northern Ireland's National Curriculum has been in a process of revision,

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[12] GCSE – General Certificate of Secondary Education – the rough equivalent of Ireland's Junior Certificate.

[13] See http://wwwltscotland.org.uk for full details on the Scottish Education System, Qualifications Framework and Subject Guidelines.
[14] For full details and the document 'A Curriculum for Excellence' see http://www.scotland.gov.uk
[15] Henderson, K. 2005

with current Programmes of Study and Attainment Targets being phased out in 2007.[16] However, the existing requirements for Media Studies, which is stranded into English, are similar to those of England and Wales. GCSE and AS/A Levels in Media Studies can be taken and the Northern Ireland Film and Television Commission (NIFTC) and the BFI are active in developing a new curriculum and lobbying for policy support (Kerr 2005: 6). Kerr offers an important overview of the current state of Media Literacy Education in Northern Ireland and outlines the central issues and 'regional specificities' (2005: 9) which need to be addressed for the construction and implementation of a Media Literacy curriculum in the region. In terms of active research, the University of Ulster's Centre for Media Research is part of a network of four UK universities conducting research into Media Literacy in the regions (Kerr 2005: 5).

Policy

The main contributor to UK policy on Media Literacy is Ofcom, the independent communications regulator which, according to Section 11 of the Communications Act of December 2003, is charged with the 'duty to promote Media Literacy'.[17] Ofcom has commissioned several important reports including a far-reaching and comprehensive review of academic research literature about children and the media as well as numerous other audits and reports, all of which are available on the Ofcom website.[18]

The education wing of the BFI has produced influential Media Literacy curriculum statements for primary (Bazalgette 1989) and secondary (Bowker 1991) education. These

have defined the aims of Media Literacy, in and beyond the UK, through a 'framework for the curriculum organised not in terms of objects of study, or in terms of skills or competencies, but in terms of conceptual understandings' (Buckingham 1998: 39). The BFI continues to be active in terms of policy support and lobbying and has contributed to the case for Northern Ireland's Media Literacy provision in *A Wider Literacy. The Case for Moving Image Education in Northern Ireland* (2004).

While it may seem that the UK is well catered for in terms of policy-making and a strong lobbying profile, it should be noted that Media Literacy and education falls under the remit of several Government departments including the DES, Ofcom, and the Department for Media, Culture and Sport (DCMS). It is further fragmented through Welsh, Scottish and Northern Irish bodies. Although the situation has improved in terms of national cohesion and a shared focus through the setting up of Ofcom, Media Literacy in the UK still suffers from a lack of resources and teacher training requiring both political and economic investment (Domaille and Buckingham 2001: 45). Further to this, it is felt that Ofcom may have too much influence, encouraging 'a very simplistic notion of Media Education – as protectionist, or exclusively concerned with technological access and know-how' (Federov 2006: 14).

Learning Environments

Given the funding constraints on Media Literacy in the UK it is remarkable that so many students take the subject at both GCSE and A Level. Domaille and Buckingham (2001) and Merry and Titley (2002) both cite the role of the 'enthusiast' teacher in this. Work at the grass-roots level has been a remarkable feature of the development of Media Literacy Education in the UK and the number of organisations and websites are testament to the dedication of teachers and academics. Important reference websites, run for and by teachers, include the

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[16] See http://www.rewardinglearning.com – the official website of Northern Ireland's Council for the Curriculum Examinations and Assessment.
[17]
http://www.ofcom.org.uk/consult/condocs/strategymedialit/ml_statement/annexb/?a=87101
[18] Buckingham et al, 2004. The Media Literacy of Children and Young People is available for download at Ofcom.org.uk. This document represents the most up to date and comprehensive reviews of the field.

MediaEd site run by Media Education in Wales and funded by the BFI, the Media Education Association site run by English and Welsh teachers and the English and Media Centre site which provides resources for teachers as well as the BFI's own site (see Section 7 *Bibliography and Resources*).

Academic research on Media Literacy is also represented within a number of important research centres such as the Centre for the Study of Children Youth and Media (CSCYM) at the University of London's Institute of Education and run by Director David Buckingham, a key figure in Media Literacy. The London School of Economics' Department of Media and Communications is the base for Sonia Livingstone's Media Literacy research. She is a key contributor to the field and has published a series of important and far-reaching studies looking at children and their media, including the online projects researching children's online activities[19]. Other central academic figures in UK Media Education include Len Masterman and Cary Bazalgette.

2.2 United States Context

A noteworthy feature of much Media Education outside the United States, is that in many instances it has been prompted by a response to the dominant influence of imported US music, television and film culture. Educators, policy-makers and critics expect that Media Literacy may help youth perceive that the values conveyed by and through media (especially those imported from the US) are not necessarily their own. In fact, this 'protectionist' attitude towards media is equally pervasive in the US. Indeed, this stance can be seen to be the result of allegiances that are (perhaps understandably) strongly divided in the US.

The division is best illustrated in the opposing philosophies of two organisations: the Alliance for a Media Literate America (AMLA) founded in 2001,[20] and the Action Coalition for Media Education (ACME) founded in 2002.[21] The AMLA (the larger of the two) attempts to unite Media Literacy organisations and commercial media producers, whereas the ACME refuses any interaction with corporate media and tends to favour an activist position towards media regulation and ownership. While the two organisations have broadly similar goals, their philosophical differences reflect a deep divide in Media Education in the US.

For example, Sut Jhally (Lewis & Jhally, 2000),[22] founder and executive director of the Media Education Foundation, focuses on the media part of Media Literacy – making and doing. However, Faith Rogow,[23] former president of AMLA, advocates placing the primary focus on literacy, in order to develop Media Education as an academic field of study rather than a social movement. This division reveals key differences between AMLA's more liberal educational approach and ACME's more radical advocacy position.

Curriculum and Assessment

Wartella and Jennings (2000) have provided an historical context to media research over the past century that may explain this fissure.[24] They note that the advent of each new communication technology (radio, film television, Internet), is accompanied by supporters who proclaim the benefits (educational, etc.) and critics who are concerned about content (inappropriate, commercial, sexual or violent). Wartella and Jennings argue that although these issues seem

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[19] See for example, http://www.eukidsonline.net/ and http://www.children-go-online.net

[20] AMLA, 2001. http://www.amlainfo.org
[21] ACME, 2002. http://www.acmecoalition.org
[22] Jhally, S. 2002
[23] Rogow, F. 2004
[24] Wartella Ellen A. and N. Jennings. (Fall-Winter 2000). Children and computers: New technology - old concerns. *Future of Children*. 10(2): 31-43. URL: http://www.futureofchildren.org/usr_doc/vol10no2Art2.pdf

new, similar reactions have 'accompanied each new wave of media technology throughout the past century'. They have noted a number of recurrent patterns, principally how initial research focuses on issues of access and, as use becomes widespread, the analysis shifts to content and its effects – usually on young people.

Despite decades of endeavour since the 1970s by individuals and groups, Media Education is still only reaching a small percentage of schools in the US. Media literacy education is not as advanced in the USA as in most other English-speaking areas, such as Great Britain, Canada, and Australia (see Alvarado & Boyd-Barrett, 1992). While some major inroads have been made, such as getting elements of Media Literacy included in most of the 50 states' educational standards and the launching of two national Media Education organisations, most teachers and students in the USA remain unaware of the main issues involved in Media Literacy Education.

Although there are a number of ongoing debates about the practices, pedagogies and politics embedded in Media Literacy (Hobbs, 1998), an approach that emphasises constructivist, interdisciplinary, collaborative, non-hierarchical and inquiry-based processes of learning is emerging as an important paradigm in the US (Alvermann et al., 1999; Bazalgette, 1993; Brunner & Tally, 1999; Considine & Haley, 1999; Film Education Working Group, 1999; Hobbs, 1996; Masterman, 1985; Watts Pailliotet & Mosenthal, 2000).

However, a preoccupation remains with large group studies using survey methods and these are mainly used for assessing whether or not education has beneficial effects on performance (Kellner, 2003). An obvious omission then, is school-based empirical research that demonstrates the impact of a media-literacy curriculum on students'

attitudes, behavior, knowledge and understanding.

Learning Environments

The 'protectionist' view and its implied connotations of censorship previously mentioned, seeks to 'inoculate' young people against the effects of media saturation and manipulation - by cultivating a taste for book literacy, high culture and the perceived values of truth and beauty, and by denigrating all forms of popular media and computer culture (see Postman, 1985, 1992). A 'Media Literacy' movement, in contrast, encourages students to read, analyse, and decode media (as 'texts') in ways similar to the appreciation of print literacy. However, a third position, 'media arts education', in turn, fosters an understanding of the aesthetic qualities of media and how to use various media and technologies as instruments of self-expression and creativity.

Many out-of-school projects have begun to address the 'digital divide' through these media arts programmes. Indeed, many of these collaborative projects between schools, universities, libraries and community organisations (see Hull, 2006) highlight the shortcomings of the formal school curriculum in bridging this divide.

Policy

It has been pointed out that the US differs significantly from other countries because of the inherent difficulty of implementing policy across 50 states each with many different public and private school systems. This has meant that many schools have followed their own initiatives in finding support from organisations, community groups, libraries and universities.

In the continuing absence of any strong national mandate, private groups have made efforts to provide resources – curricula, workshops and conferences. However, the diversity of approaches can be seen to reflect the need for

multifaceted goals of bringing together all 60 million students, parents, teachers and others involved.

President George W. Bush's 'No Child Left Behind Act' has been accompanied by a positivistic wave in the corporate adoption of progressive pedagogies under the label of 'instrumental progressivism'. This merging of corporate America with public education can clearly be seen in the Partnership for 21st Century Skills,[25] a public- private organisation founded in 2002 by among others the US Department of Education, Microsoft Corporation, Apple Computer Inc. and AOL Time Warner Foundation. In the contexts of skills uptake, globalisation and knowledge economies, the rationale for fostering such allegiances can seem convincing. According to some critics, Media Literacy is being hijacked by corporate interests to buy legitimacy and deflect criticism. However, the development of Media Literacy as a component of contemporary education is inhibited from developing, because there still remains a view that it is still an acceptable alternative to censorship.

2.3 The Nordic Countries -
Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Finland and Iceland
Context

Media education was first introduced into the Finnish elementary curriculum in 1970 and into high schools in 1977. However, Media Education as we know it today did not evolve until the 1990s. Media education has been compulsory in Sweden since 1980 and in Denmark since 1970. In both Nordic countries, Media Education evolved in the 1980s and 1990s as Media Education gradually moved away from moralising attitudes towards an approach that is more critically-informed and

student-centred. In 1994, the Danish education bill gave recognition to Media Education but it is still not an integrated part of the curriculum. The focus in Nordic countries today is oriented more to information technology than Media Literacy.

Finland's National Plan (2000-2004) outlined a concerted effort to implement a comprehensive action strategy aimed at reshaping the role of learning within, but also outside, the school system. The focus of the strategy, *Education, Training and Research in the Information Society. A National Strategy for 2000 – 2004* was on education, training and research [Finnish Ministry of Education 1999]. An interesting aspect of the Swedish Information Age initiative has been the setting up of a Youth Council to stimulate discussion about the future shape of society from young people's perspectives and to encourage political discussion in response to a future society underpinned by ICT. The emphasis of the plan is on teaching *with* technology, rather than teaching *about* technology.

Curriculum and Assessment

The Scandinavian countries have a distinctive contribution to Media Literacy that may be traced to their pedagogical and curricular history. For example, the German concept of *Bildung* has an equivalent 'dannelse' in Norwegian and 'bildning' in Swedish. This term has connotations that are more about individual development than educational standards. *Bildung* is a wider concept than literacy. In the beginning of the 20th century, to acquire *Bildung* meant to learn and master inner collective common values like control, dignity, obedience and grace (Drotner 2006: 1). Today the concept implies reflection, criticism, identity, competence and sense of community.

Policy

There is growing support for expanding the concept of literacy by those interested in making

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[25] Partnership for 21st Century Skills, http://www.21stcenturyskills.org

classrooms sites for authentic learning in student-centred environments (Luke, 1997; Masterman, 1985) as well as those who see the value of recognising reading and writing as practices that are socially and culturally constructed (Alvermann & Hagood, 2000; Buckingham, 1998; Nixon & Comber, 2001).

For example, in Sweden, since 1992, there has been a major shift in focus from teachers teaching to pupils learning. The new curricula and syllabi state that all subjects should integrate the use of computers as a tool where appropriate (ITiS 1998).[26] In line with this, assessment structures and the organisation of learning and leaning environments have also been modified (see below). ICTs are seen as powerful tools to promote the transition from one teacher in one classroom to teams of teachers working together with larger groups of students.

> *Evaluations of ICT projects in schools provide strong evidence that only when the organization of work has been changed can the introduction of ICT fully support the learning of children.* (ITiS 1997)

One outstanding example of a collaborative and integrated learning environment is the Swedish Färila Project, where classrooms have been replaced with open areas and the traditional teaching style replaced by a more collaborative learning focus. All students have access to a personal portable computer. Only 16% of time is spent studying with a teacher, reduced from 42% in 1995. This radical overhaul is thought to have contributed significantly to raising grades in one particular school from one of the lowest in the country in 1993, to being a school with one of the highest grades in 2000 (Knut 2000).

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[26] ITiS (1997) '*Tools for Learning: A National Programme for ICT in schools.*' Delegation for ICT in Schools. Stockholm: Ministry of Education and Science.
http://www.itis.gov.se/english/IT_iskolan.pdf

Similar characteristics can be found in the Finnish strategy, which places strong emphasis on the participation of students. Even more importantly, the involvement of students in the preparation of teaching materials is encouraged.

Learning Environments

We can observe in the Scandinavian countries and in the UK significant interest in co-operation between public and school libraries in developing Media Literacy. Indeed, this type of co-operation is not totally new in the construction of distance-learning platforms in Scandinavia.

Today, the Nordic region constitutes a common market in the media sector. Of special importance is NORDICOM [27] - a clearinghouse for media and communication research, a co-operation between the five countries of the Nordic region - Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden. It collects and adapts knowledge and mediates it to various groups in the Nordic region, Europe and elsewhere in the world.
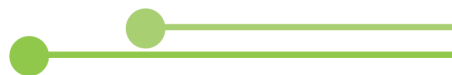
2.4 Australia
Context

Australia has a strong record of academic interest in and practical support for the teaching of Media Literacy. As the country operates a federal system of education, each of the six States (Western Australia, New South Wales, Queensland, Tasmania, Victoria and South Australia) and two Territories (the Northern Territory and Australian Capital Territory) operates under its own board of education (Domaille and Buckingham 2001: 34). Thus, there is no set National Curriculum for the country as a whole yet each of the States and Territories has detailed provision for the inclusion of Media Literacy. Further to this, there exists a broad similarity and a shared foundation in the type of Media Literacy Education provided

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[27] NORDICOM, http://www.nordicom.gu.se/clearinghouse

countrywide. Details differ across states but the underlying principles of empowering learners and understanding the importance of the media in social life is shared (Domaille and Buckingham 2001: 34). This similarity is visible through the curricula and framework documents – including learning outcomes, support materials and assessment standards – provided by each of the eight education departments and available for download on the Australian Curriculum Corporation (ACC) website.[28]

Media literacy in Australia was very much shaped by the work of the BFI in the 1980s (Buckingham 1998: 39). This influence can be seen in Media Literacy Education in the traditional English curriculum and also as it is catered for in the Creative Arts curriculum. Syllabus materials from Queensland clearly show this influence with reference to 'five interrelated key-concepts … media languages, technologies, audiences, institutions and representations' (The Arts Years 1-10: 16).[29]

Curriculum and Assessment
Arts and English

Broadly, all Australian schoolchildren experience some form of media teaching in at least one of two distinct areas of their State or Territory's curriculum – Arts and English (Buckingham et al: 2004: 20).[30] Australia differs from the UK and Ireland in that it has a long established tradition in teaching the creative arts at all levels with Media Literacy as an integral part of that curriculum. As well as the traditional focus on the analysis of media texts,

there is a strong emphasis on the practical application of media skills. These skills range from reading and writing different types of media texts – headlines or television scripts – to operating cameras and using radio equipment. Media Literacy is also stranded into the traditional English curriculum whereby 'Mass Media Texts' are given equal standing alongside 'Literature' and 'Everyday Texts'. For instance, Western Australia's criteria require that one quarter of the English syllabus be focused on the study of Mass Media Texts (Heins and Cho 2003: 37).

The requirements for Media Literacy differ across the federal system. Some States such as Western Australia[31] make formal provision for Media Literacy from what is known as Early Years Education, whereas others, such as Victoria, have formalised Media Literacy Education only at the later stages of primary school and throughout secondary level. Although the general term Senior Secondary Certificate of Education (SSCE) is used countrywide, standardised exams for secondary school were halted in 1971 (Heins and Cho 2003: 37). Now each State or Territory defines the certificate in its own terms and sets its own assessment framework.[32] For example, the Victoria Board of Education accredits students with the Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE) and offers the option of a Media exam at this level.[33]

Policy

Heins and Cho (2003) acknowledge the role of ATOM (Australian Teachers of Media) as 'a critical voice in introducing Media Literacy Education and providing it with a politically conscious, bottom-up rather than top-down character'(36). This group has been responsible for much of the advocacy work which has

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28 http://www.curriculum.edu.au. This site is the internet presence of the official Education Support Organisation which, since its establishment in 1989, has been jointly owned by all Australian Education Ministers.
29
http://www.qsa.qld.edu.au/yrs1to10/kla/arts/docs/syll abus/syllabus.pdf
30 See transcript of a recorded debate at London's Institute of Education entitled 'Who Needs Media Literacy' and is available for download/viewing at:
http://www.childrenyouthandmediacentre.co.uk/Pics/pub lic_debate.pdf. Lee Burton, Education Manager of the Australian Children's Television Foundation (ACTF), highlights the fact that 'Media Literacy is now being taught compulsorily in all Australian schools from kindergarten to Year 12' (2004: 20).

31
http://www.curriculum.wa.edu.au/pages/curric_guides/art s.html
32 These details can also be found via the Australian Qualifications Framework Site at www.aqf.edu.au. and at the Department for education in each State or Territory.
33
http://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/vce/studies/media/exams.ht ml

resulted in the fact that Media Education is a compulsory subject country-wide. The Australian Literacy Educators Association (ALEA) has also supported the case for Media Literacy at all levels of all education and in all schools.[34] In policy terms Media Education is well served in Australia and the ongoing process of curriculum review in all States and Territories has ensured Media Education remains at the forefront of educational debate.[35] A final essential point which differentiates Australia from other countries is that only teachers who have a specific qualification in media teaching can do so (Domaille and Buckingham 2001: 36).

Learning Environments

As in the UK there is a remarkable level of grassroots activism with a strong internet presence. This means that a diverse range of research, teaching and learning support materials are all easily accessible online. Many sites feature a high level of organisation and professionalism most particularly those maintained by ATOM and other groups such as the Tasmanian Association of Teachers of English (TATE), the ALEA and the Australian Association for the Teaching of English (AATE). The ATOM regional branch websites are key sites for information, advocacy, teacher support and training and related resources, including their publications - *Metro Magazine* and *Australian Screen Education*.[36] The Australian Children's Television Foundation (ACTF) and its Education Manager, Lee Burton, are also active in the field. Significant academic researchers include such key figures such as Julian Sefton Green, David Considine, Graeme Turner, Barrie McMahon and Robyn Quin, all of whom have published widely in the field.

2.5 New Zealand Context

While Media Studies is not a 'new' subject in New Zealand (Film and Television Studies have been taught there for over 20 years),[37] it is not as long established or as clearly defined as Media Education in Australia. According to UNESCO, Media Education is 'beginning to claim a significant place in secondary schooling' (Domaille and Buckingham, 2001: 36) although it is still not a fully established subject. There is disappointment among some media teachers and other stakeholders at the lack of priority given to the creation of a formal curriculum for media (Smith 2005: 5-22). Concern is focused on the fact that Media Education remains a 'low status subject'; assessment is not standardised across the country; funding and training is restricted because of the lack of a national media studies curriculum; and understanding is not consistent across all schools (ibid: 8). These are key concerns which are shared and have been outlined by almost all respondents from the 35 countries surveyed in UNESCO's 2001 Report. In contrast, it should be noted that some teacher respondents in Smith's study rejected the bid for a national curriculum fearing that it would stifle the relevancy of a rapidly changing media world (ibid: 8).

Curriculum and Assessment

New Zealand is in the process of drafting a new National Curriculum which is expected to be ready in late 2007. The situation is somewhat unclear but it appears that there is no provision for a separate national Media Studies Curriculum. Media is still provided for in the English/Language and Languages Strand (Federov 2006: 9; Ferguson 2002).[38] It is also stranded into Social Studies. Currently Media

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[34] Papers and proceedings from the ALEA 2005 literacy conference are accessible online: http://www.ALEA.edu.au.
[35] See the Department of Education and Training for each state/territory for more details on curriculum review and renewal – Australian Capital Territory's programme: Towards 2020 Renewing our Schools.
[36] See http://www.atomvic.org;
http://www.pa.ash.org.au/atomqld/AtomQld/Welcome.html;
http://www.metromagazine.com.au/metro/default.asp

[37] http://www.name.org.nz
[38] Report on the 2002 Curriculum – Australian Center for Educational Research (ACER) – available at:
http://www.minedu.govt.nz/index.cfm?layout=document&documentid=7473&data=l&goto=00-03

Studies is adapted from the BFI model although there is also a significant interest in media technology and production in terms of training and career orientation. Media Studies is formally assessed for senior students at National Certificate of Education Achievement (NCEA) level.

Policy

Geoff Lealand (2003) outlines the somewhat complex situation in which Media Education exists without formal national curriculum guidelines. Rather, it has what Lealand refers to as a 'proxy curriculum', in that the assessment frameworks for the NCEA provides guidelines. This is a subject of some controversy with many teachers concerned that assessment is structuring learning by 'leading curriculum' (Smith 2005: 5; Lealand 2003).[39] Overall, a lack of status, lack of funding and a lack of cohesion remain persistent issues for the formal establishment of a Media Literacy curriculum in New Zealand. Yet one recent and exciting policy innovation has seen the creation of what are known as 'Beacon Schools'. These are comparable to the UK's 'Media Arts Schools' and specialise in 'defined subjects or teaching/learning approaches'. In 2005 Beacon Schools had five school clusters developing as centres of excellence in Media.[40]

Learning Environments

The effort of 'teacher enthusiasts' is to the forefront - the teacher organisation National Association of Media Educators (NAME) maintains a website dedicated to media studies and Media Literacy and provides information and resources for teachers. It also publishes the online magazine Script. NAME has strong links to ATOM in Australia, although these are weakening as local models and resources are developed (Federov 2006: 20). A further resource for Media Education in New Zealand is the website MediaScape. This is designed as 'an information clearing house for New Zealand media information and research' and is run by the NZ Broadcasting School at Christchurch Polytechnic Institute of Technology (CPIT).[41] It has a wider focus than NAME and is designed for parents, teachers and students. Key academic figures active in the field include Lealand and Ruth Zanker

2.6 A Comparative Overview

The following (overleaf) is a country-by-country summary of the factors that have supported and encouraged the growth of Media Literacy in the formal education sector. It also highlights the principal challenges encountered in these countries throughout their development and implementation of a ML curriculum.

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[39] Lealand's full paper is available for download at http://www.frankwbaker.com/lealand.htm
[40] All information available at the Ministry of Education website in the Media Studies Sub-Section - http://www.tki.org.nz/r/media_studies/index_e.php

[41] http://www.mediascape.ac.nz/content/about-us

Countries	Key Findings (+)	Key Challenges (-)
UK	Extremely active research environment with high profile research centres dedicated to the study of children and media. High level of teacher activism and support for ML. High level of policy support and interest beyond the formal education system with stakeholders such as Ofcom and the BFI invested in the success or ML. High profile internet presence and high level of easily accessible material online in terms of research work and data, curriculum design and criteria.	High levels of fragmentation – responsibility for Media Literacy is spread across several Government departments. Provision further differs in Northern Ireland and Scotland. ML is not available in all schools, and is generally considered to be a 'soft' subject. As a result it suffers from a lack of academic status. Ofcom can be perceived as too prescriptive Funding and resources are scarce and teacher training is restricted by this. Lack of training has contributed to a 'hang over' of traditional 'protectionist' approaches in the classroom.
USA	Predominance of 'media arts programmes' at grassroots level as an attempt to bridge the 'digital divide. Strong ethos of partnership, collaboration and integration. Perceived shift towards inquiry-based forms of learning	Difficulty in implementing a 'central' strategy among great diversity. Traditional split between those proposing interaction with corporate media and those who favour an activist position towards media regulation and ownership.
Nordic Countries	Highly innovative approaches to learning with comprehensive body of research undertaken. Curricula and materials very student-based and often inspired by student input. Emphasis on teaching with technology, rather than teaching about technology. Very strong ethos of schools collaborating with libraries and universities.	Their curriculum would be very difficult to implement outside their culture. Perceived lack of internal support and funding.
Australia	Media Education is a compulsory subject in public schools. Only teachers who have a separate Media Education qualification are eligible to teach media. Grassroots activism and lobbying is responsible for the strong position of ML in the education system.	Levels of Partnership are low in many instances. This is due to the geographical spread and centralisation of media production in urban areas. The curriculum is highly structured and detailed – this is not ideal in a continuously shifting environment such as the media.
New Zealand	Media Education is largely unstructured in schools. Only assessment guidelines are given. This allows teachers and students the freedom to pursue projects, issues and questions that are directly relevant to the unique circumstances of each school and community. Some schools have been awarded specialist status with regard to clusters of excellence in Media Education Local methods and resources are overtaking outside influences	Media learning is structured and led by the 'proxy curriculum' of assessment guidelines There are fears about consistency and cohesion due to this absence of a national curriculum. Media Education is considered a 'low status' subject by many parents, teachers and students. Funding, classroom resources and teacher training are restricted as a result of the perceived 'low status' or Media Education.

3.0 THE CURRENT STATE OF CML IN IRELAND

This section provides an overview of the current status of critical Media Literacy Education in Ireland, linking it to comparable experiences and developments in the countries discussed in Section 2. Pursuing a similar approach, we describe here the *Context*, offering an account of the location of critical Media Literacy within Irish educational debate and discussion; *Curriculum and Assessment* gives more detailed information on the current provision for CML and on potential future measures to enhance the field at both primary and secondary levels of the Irish education system; *Policy* and *Learning Environments* outline the official and unofficial supports offered to CML in Ireland, and raise important questions as to the current status of both CML and the ongoing issues which have limited its development in the recent past.

The interviews within this section offer a reflection of the diversity of opinion around the topic of CML.[42]

3.1 Context and Brief History
The process of developing Media Literacy in Ireland has been a difficult challenge and despite pioneering work by teachers and support groups to implement curricular change, the results have led generally to a lack of adequate resources. For O'Neill (2000), the entry of media into the mainstream curriculum was 'late, cautious and piecemeal'. Although in more recent years this has begun to change and the centrality and importance of media in the lives of young people is now both well acknowledged, and widely accepted. Currently, as will be discussed in Sections 4 and 5 of this work, there is a wide range of curricular and extra-curricular CML initiatives in place in schools and in development for the future.

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[42] The quoted passages are not necessarily an expression in support of the authors' views

The ethos of Media Education in Ireland may be said to have its origins in a distinctive Catholic pedagogy of the 1960s which against the background of Vatican II reforms sought a more positive engagement with the realities of modern life. Media and the arts more generally had been neglected up to this point as McLoone (1983) notes, and indeed the relatively late arrival of television in 1961 was symptomatic of a more general fear of technology and contemporary Anglo-American media culture. Some of the earliest initiatives in Irish Media Education as such were promoted by the Catholic Communications Centre, founded in 1968, which in addition to publications such as *Introduction to the Mass Media* (1985) also ran training programmes in well equipped studios for teachers and students in media production techniques.

Two agencies were central to the development of a profile for Media Education within schools. Firstly, the education department of the Irish Film Institute from the 1970s on became a crucial catalyst for the development among teachers of a culture of Media Education. In addition to offering seminars and courses in film and media studies, the Film Institute acted as a catalyst for the promotion of media awareness not just in schools but in Irish public generally. A number of high profile joint conferences and summer schools were also organised by the IFI in conjunction with RTE, and created an environment in which the media's contribution to and representation of Irish life was critically debated. A second agency central to the development of Media Education was the Curriculum Development Unit of the CDVEC, based in Trinity College, which was instrumental in developing teaching resources, in-service training and the piloting of new educational initiatives across a number of subject areas including media studies.

The growing interest among teachers in teaching Media Studies was reflected in the first National Media Education Conference held in Dublin in 1985. The conference was addressed by a number of leading UK Media Educationalists, including Len Masterman, David Lusted and Eddie Dick, created the impetus for the setting up of the first Teachers' Association for Media Education (TAME). TAME sought 'to support and encourage teachers of Media Education in both primary and post-primary schools' and to act as a lobbying group for curriculum provision, in-service training and the development of teaching resources for media studies. It was partially successful in each of these aims though following the formal introduction of Media Education into the Junior Certificate English syllabus, the need for the organisation appeared to decline.

Media education in Ireland first entered schools in the late 1970s. At this time, the education system was struggling with a young population and was therefore under severe pressure and in need of reform. Economically bleak, Ireland faced cut backs in public spending and poor job prospects for many school leavers. This coincided with rapid cultural change, the opening up of Irish society, as well as a vibrant youth culture that fast outpaced changes in schools. Without any clear policy, isolated efforts by teachers to develop media studies were undertaken. In 1978, a Vocational Preparation and Training Programme designed for early school leavers included media in its communications syllabus. An expanded version of this programme in 1984 aimed to "develop an awareness of the nature and function of communications in contemporary society" and to enable students to "acquire greater social competence" (O'Neill, 2000). This provided the impetus for many teachers to introduce contemporary culture into the curriculum.

Following this, a range of vocational programmes were developed. These were often developed in isolation and as O'Neill indicates "nearly all of which incorporated some elements of applied communications studies but for which skills acquisition was the primary emphasis". There is a continued emphasis on

the importance of computer literacy and associated skills (as seen in the Blueprint for the Future of ICT in Irish Education), however, Media Literacy Education, although present, remains underdeveloped at a national level.

While at first sight, Media Education and Media Literacy provision might appear to be well supported within the formal national curriculum, particularly at primary level, one must be mindful of the gap that frequently exists between the official curriculum position, its representation in policy, and what is actually happening on the ground in the classroom. These concerns are reflected in the interviews and field research findings and are documented in Section 4.

The problem of national coherence, consistency, equality of access and reach is a crucial issue. Many schools are providing elements of Media Education but may not recognise them as explicitly Critical Media Literacy provision (Merry and Titley 2002: 68).[43] Equally, many schools are not adequately resourced and cannot participate. While the curriculum stipulates Media Education at various points within subjects such as English, Social Personal and Health Education (SPHE) and Information and Communications Technology (ICT), it is not formally tested and thus is not compulsory, leaving the task to individual teachers, principals and boards of management.

This points again to the role of the teacher enthusiast and highlights, in particular, the gap left by the decline of TAME, the Teacher's Association for Media Education. In their 2002 study, Merry and Titley focused on the activities of TAME in a case study and highlighted the importance and positive impact of the groups'

activities. TAME, since its formation in 1985, worked extensively to raise the profile of Media Education, publishing a text book in 2001 and running workshops, conferences and seminars throughout that period (Merry and Titley 2002: 31-32). In 2007, TAME is no longer active and has been dormant for several years leaving Irish Media Education without a coherent meeting point or organised support network. Several members of TAME have expressed an interest in the revitalisation of the organisation as a way to counter the 'ad-hoc' nature of current discussion and debate about Media Education.[44] Further to this report, it would seem that the establishment of a national group, with a shared vision and understanding of the future of CML education in Ireland, is almost certainly a prerequisite for any future development and expansion.

3.2   Curriculum and Assessment

Primary

Media literacy is, according to educationalists, well grounded in the new primary curriculum in Ireland. The new curriculum was launched in September 2000 and has now completed its first review phase which took place in the 2003/2004 school year. This phase assessed teacher and student experience of the English, Visual Arts and Mathematics curricula. The second review phase is ongoing and will address the Irish language, Science and Social Personal and Health (SPHE) provisions. Media education is specifically provided for in SPHE which consists of three strands: 'Myself', 'Myself and Others' and 'Myself and the Wider World'. The final strand contains two themes – 'Developing Citizenship' and 'Media Education'. There is a dual emphasis at this level which is split between protection and empowerment. For example, teacher guidelines state that children are encouraged to 'examine the media

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[43] Merry and Titley (2002) discuss this problem of a lack of recognition of activities beneath the multiplicity of terms used to describe Media Education, in relation to the community or youth work sector. However, findings in this report indicate that this is a widespread problem and one which highlights strongly the need for consistency and agreement on terms and definitions, as well as aims and future objectives.

[44] David Martin, ASTI Media Studies Convenor and former TAME Member, in interview May 10th 2007.

in a critical way and to explore how they can influence behaviour and opinion' while at the same time they are to be 'given opportunities to explore the range of information available to them through information and communication technologies'.[45]

Curriculum material is well developed and both general and detailed information are available online through the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) website. Within the framework of the curriculum, teacher guidelines are established, in-service training has been provided and support is available through the Primary Curriculum Support Programme (PCSP). While assessment guidelines are presented for teachers,[46] it is not compulsory or structured at a national level. This is an ongoing issue and is discussed in the analysis below.

The first review phase of the primary curriculum has produced recommendations centred on the provision of ICT in the classroom.[47] These focus on the importance of understanding the potential of ICT to support and enhance the integrated nature of the primary curriculum (NCCA 2005: 10) as well as making specific reference to the value of enhancing visual literacy through the Visual Arts strand of the curriculum. As part of the review process, the NCCA also produced a DVD for parents entitled *The What Why and How of Children's Learning in Primary School* which seeks to provide an insight into the classroom and curriculum at primary level and offers suggestions for parents to support their children's education at this level.[48] This is part of a broader initiative to engage and encourage parents to enhance their children's media interaction in the home, an issue highlighted by

Former CEO of the National Parents Council – Primary (NPCP) Fionnuala Kilfeather.[49] The second phase of the review is ongoing currently with data available in early 2008. This phase will offer information on the responses to and experiences of the SPHE strand, which includes a dedicated Media Education theme.

Media literacy education at primary level is also stranded into English, through a general framework of enhancing both oral and written language skills. To a lesser extent, the use of media technology as a tool is also evident throughout the Visual Arts curriculum and Social Environmental and Scientific Education (SESE).[50]

Secondary

The post-primary curriculum is divided into two main sections. The Junior Cycle caters for students aged between 12 and 15 and marks the end of compulsory schooling. The Junior Certificate exam, taken in the third year, is the first state examination taken by young people and marks, for the majority, the transition to the Senior Cycle. This can be a two or three year cycle which culminates in the terminal examination – the Leaving Certificate.[51] Currently there are several options available to Senior Cycle students which offer, depending on the options chosen, a variety of opportunities to experience Media Literacy Education. The main options available are:

- A three year cycle in which a student progresses from Junior Cycle to Senior Cycle through a Transition Year (TY), an optional programme between 3rd year and 5th year.

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[45] http://www.curriculumonline.ie/index.asp?locID=181&docID=-1
[46] http://82.195.132.34/index.asp?locID=12&docID=-1 – this is the curriculum online website, accessible through the NCCA website at www.NCCA.ie
[47] http://www.ncca.ie/uploadedfiles/Publications/ PrimaryCurriculumReview.pdf
[48] http://www.ncca.ie/index.asp?locID=255&docID=-1.

[49] In interview, Kilfeather outlined her view that Media Education must also be made available to parents, as media use begins in the home.
[50] further information on the revised primary curriculum including curriculum material, teacher guidelines, assessment guidelines and all relevant documentation can be accessed via the NCCA and its partner websites – www.ncca.ie and www.curriculumonline.ie
[51] CSO Statistics from 2005 tell us that 11.9% of young people aged 18 – 24 can be classified as Early School Leavers – i.e. their highest level of education achieved is at lower Secondary/Junior Cycle or below.
http://www.cso.ie/releasespublications/documents/labour_market/current/qnhs_educationalattainment.pdf

- A two year cycle in which the student moves from 3rd year directly to 5th year. TY is of particular importance in relation to Media Literacy Education, as it offers both several established media programmes and project opportunities and also a variety of future directions for the study of media in the classroom. Reflecting the centrality of TY within the field is essential and it is discussed separately below.

Within the Senior Cycle curriculum itself students can take one of a further three options:
- The Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP).
- The Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA).
- The Leaving Certificate (Established).

Currently there is no separate Media Literacy curriculum at either Junior or Senior Cycle in the Irish education system. At lower secondary level, a form of general Media Education is stranded into English under the heading of Cultural Literacy and into both Civic Social and Political Education (CSPE) and Environmental and Social Studies (ESS), both of which emphasise the use of media forms as learning tools. Both CSPE and ESS are formally assessed at Junior Certificate level. However, the Media Education component in both is incidental rather than integral to the course of study.

At Senior Cycle, the majority of students opt for the traditional Leaving Certificate (Established) in which their opportunities to experience Media Literacy Education are primarily contained within the English curriculum and are typically focused on Film Studies. There is, as noted, no separate Media Education strand at this level as there is at primary level and experiences vary widely from school to school making it difficult to assess the level of Media Education provided.

At LCVP and LCA, Media Education is more structured and students are required to study a module entitled English and Communication at LCA, and ICT at LCVP. Assessment is split between an end-of-year examination and portfolio and project work for both LCA and LCVP. However, as with the Leaving Certificate (Established), the written response is privileged and practical media work, while seen as both empowering and necessary, is not currently assessed.

The Senior Cycle is currently undergoing a review and radical changes to the structure and breadth of the curriculum have been proposed. These changes offer an exciting opportunity for Media Literacy Education to advance its position in the formal national curriculum and already several steps have been taken to begin that process. As part of the curriculum review, Key Skills are to be integrated into all subjects with the aim of broadening the curriculum beyond its overt functionality and examination focus. At the time of writing, Key Skills are in the process of being developed and embedded in the curriculum and are listed as follows:

- Learning to Learn
- Information Processing
- Personal Effectiveness
- Communication
- Critical Thinking
- Working with Others[52]

It is hoped that this initiative will foster a new and more inclusive culture within the Senior Cycle, more receptive to the educational ethos of CML. In addition, two new forms of subject provision are proposed. The first of these is the Transition Unit, a 45 hour course designed by schools and individual teachers. While not yet running in schools, twelve draft proposals have been received by the NCCA and of these, three relate directly to Media Education (Johnson 2007).[53] The second form is the 90 hour short

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[52] Proposals for the Development of Senior Cycle Education in Ireland – Overview. (NCCA 2004: 18). http://www.ncca.ie/uploadedfiles/Sc_Advice_0604.pdf
[53] Peter Johnson, Director Curriculum and Assessment at the NCCA in interview July 4th 2007. He identified the three

course which is to be developed and assessed at a national level.[54] Short courses are currently being drafted and include suggested subjects such as Music Technology and Art Technology (Fitzpatrick, 2007).[55] Other possible subject areas include Enterprise, and Media & Communication Technology (Tormey, 2006: 17).[56]

3.3 Transition Year
Current Provision

As noted Transition Year (TY)[57] is of particular relevance here, it is a voluntary option and is offered by a large number of schools; in the 2000 to 2001 school year over 22000 students participated in over five-hundred schools.[58] The Transition Year Support Service website[59], provides detailed information on the overall structure of the TY course; its materials, modules, ethos and outcomes. However, each individual school decides and devises the TY programme which best suits the school in question; its students and the local community in which it is situated. For our purposes here, the most essential quality of TY is the flexibility it offers teachers to pursue projects and short 'taster' courses in the classroom, allowing students to try out interests and subjects in a more relaxed atmosphere.

Currently TY offers opportunities to study the media in several of its core modules – CSPE is designed to underlie all work carried out in TY, encouraging students to develop 'active and participatory citizenship,'[60] a process which necessitates a critical and evaluative engagement with the media and its messages. The English curriculum at TY not only incorporates a media studies module, it also allows for a much greater focus on literacy in the broader sense.[61] Because TY is not exam driven in the way Junior Certificate and the remainder of the Senior Cycle are, there is more scope for students to experience a broader perspective on reading, viewing and writing in the English language. The production of a school magazine, discussed in more detail below, is one suggestion provided by the TY English support service, as is the production of radio or video material where possible, and increased opportunities to view, discuss and comment on a wide variety of films. The Irish Film Institute's innovative TY module - *Moving Image* - and their broader Moving Image Education and Film in Schools project provide excellent examples of how film education can work in the classroom. The *Moving Image* module, in particular, is at the core of existing TY Media Education and will be discussed in greater depth in Section 5 as one of three case studies of good practice in Media Education.

Another popular recent initiative, typically pursued in TY, but open to students at junior and senior cycle, is run in collaboration with the Irish Times newspaper. *The Irish Times School Mag Competition*, now in its third year, sees schools and students compete to produce the top School Magazine in the country. The competition assesses graphic design, layout, feature and news writing, photography,

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potential Transition Units as *Soaps and Popular Culture, Reading the Silver Screen,* and *Media and Communication Studies*.
[54] Proposals for the Development of Senior Cycle Education in Ireland – Overview (NCCA 2004: 16) http://www.ncca.ie/uploadedfiles/Sc_Advice_0604.pdf.
[55] Sarah Fitzpatrick, Deputy Chief Executive NCCA in interview July 4th 2007.
[56] Social and Political Education in Senior Cycle. A Background   Paper.   (Tormey,   2006) http://www.ncca.ie/uploadedfiles/publications/social%2 0&%20pol%20ed.pdf
[57] The Curriculum Online website offers a definition of TY as follows "Transition Year is an optional one-year, school-based programme between Junior Cycle and Senior Cycle. It is designed to act as a bridge between the two by facilitating the smooth transition from the more *dependent* learning of the Junior Cycle to the more *independent* self-directed learning required for the Senior Cycle. Schools have the chance to design programmes and courses tailored to the needs and interests of students. The Transition Year offers students an opportunity to engage in independent, self-directed learning, to develop general, technical and academic skills, and to mature and develop without the pressure of an examination. http://82.195.132.34/index.asp?locID=919
[58] http://ty.slss.ie/aboutus.html
59 http://ty.slss.ie

[60] http://ty.slss.ie/areas_study.html
[61] Two of the Irish written and produced text books used in media and film studies at TY are:
Jeffers, Gerry (1997) Reel 2 Real. Dublin: Educational Company of Ireland
Kieran, Martin & Frances Rocks (2001) The Write Stuff. English and Media Studies for Transition Year. Dublin: Gill & Macmillan.

cartoons and subediting. The competition allows students to understand how a successful publication is put together and teaches a range of skills, both media related and beyond.[62] The competition is judged by Irish Times journalists and is one example of how practical media applications and understandings can be successfully combined with traditional literacy and writing skills. The *School Mag Competition* also encourages newer techniques such as web design and layout principals which fall under the TY remit to provide opportunities to 'maximise the use of new technology equipment'.

Future Initiatives

In terms of future initiatives the Transition Unit (TU) is potentially of great interest in the promotion of Media Literacy Education at TY. The TU will involve a number of learning-principals which are intrinsically suited to the study of media. The emphasis will be on:

- activity-based learning
- group and project work
- student research
- use of ICT
- work experience[63]

The TU offers the potential, through draft units such as *Soaps and Popular Culture, Reading the Silver Screen,* and *Media and Communication Studies*, for stand-alone modules which are focused on media interaction, critique and understanding. *Media and Communications Studies* – a draft template of which can be viewed online – describes a course focused on student interaction with, and understanding of, advertising and the print media. Students will, according to the template, study concepts such as the Target Audience and the gendering of products; they will create advertisements using desk top publishing software and shoot their own TV adverts using digital camcorders. They

will analyse and create newspaper articles, and examine TV news production. Among the Key Skills envisioned here are those of Information Processing, Critical and Creative Thinking and Communicating.[64] While this is obviously an ambitious model the combination of practical and theoretical skills shown here fits well with the emphasis within TY on 'real-life' preparation.

This concept of preparation and work experience is at the core of TY and its importance is emphasised by TY Media Studies teacher and ASTI Media Studies Convenor, David Martin. Martin outlines the value of the work experience element of TY in general but further underlines the essential nature of practical knowledge in relation to Media Literacy Education. He comments thusly on the development of Media Education at his school, Mount Temple Comprehensive:

> One of the most stimulating areas in Mount Temple in the TY is its emphasis on work experience – when people have actually been in a sound recording studio ... they actually see industry standards and industry language ... they actually see it transferred from theory into actual practice and into a career situation and that makes it very real. Work experience as a core element of TY offers the chance to raise the profile of Media Literacy Education.

As Martin observes above, linking viable career options for young people with Media Education in school demonstrates a practical value which may not otherwise be evident to parents, students and teachers. It can also help to propel Media Education forward, building on the successes and growing interest and support from the school community. The profile of Media Literacy Education can also be raised through the formation of strong work experience links and programmes with the media industry in Ireland. This can provide opportunities for the media industry to support schools through work placement, work shadowing and resource sharing, thus

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[62] The website – http://www.irishtimesschoolmag.ie – showcases previous winners and gives full details of the competition.
[63] http://www.ncca.ie/uploadedfiles/
SCycle%20Advice_0405.pdf (p 37-39)

[64] http://www.ncca.ie/uploadedfiles/SampleTU_media.pdf

embedding valuable skills and nurturing interests at Secondary level.

The characteristic flexibility which allows for students to take part in work placements and to study media and visual literacy is, as noted, one of the most positive aspects of TY. It is important to note that flexibility also has some drawbacks. TY by its nature is voluntary and as such is not taken by all students, nor is it offered by all schools. Beyond the core curriculum of subjects which will be carried on into the senior cycle, it is up to the discretion of the school and the TY teachers involved whether to offer any or all of possible Media Education modules or units. As a result only some students can experience media in the classroom through the interest of their individual teacher, resources differ and the lack of a national curriculum is again highlighted. The innovative and engaging work that is being done in Media Education in many TY classrooms must be made available to all students. The senior cycle review and the introduction of Transition Units and particularly Short Courses currently offer the best way of pursuing this towards an overall national curricular framework that ensures the option at least is available to all students.

3.4   Community Education

Beyond the school curriculum, there are numerous examples of innovative Media Literacy Education being carried out in the community sector. For example, there is a very active Community Radio sector, which now has twenty one licensed stations. There are also three Community Television Stations – two of which are on-air, and Community Video groups, including Province 5 Television, Ballymun Media Co-op and Tallaght Community Radio Co-operative Society. There are also numerous community photography groups, newspapers and magazines. Some of these organisations are funded through EU programmes – often

aimed at curbing unemployment (such as the programme for Local Urban and Rural Development), increasing civic awareness or forging international links. However, Craol (the community radio forum of Ireland) has emerged as a formal legal entity representing all twenty one licensed stations and more than ten others. It is an accredited FETAC training centre and designs its own courses. It is also recognised by the BCI as one of the strongest networks in the country.

The vibrancy and innovation which is enabled by the very nature of community education is hindered by lack of funding and resources as well as a lack of documentation and official recognition. Further development requires investment and the creation of networks of support and exchange, something which is difficult primarily due to the lack of media expertise amongst many in the community sphere. Much of the work which is carried out is directed and driven forward by the community equivalent of the 'teacher enthusiast' - that is, individuals and groups that are willing to provide their time and expertise in environments that are often under-resourced.

A corresponding issue arises in that within the community education sector, Media Literacy Education is in many instances considered as a 'means to an end'. It is reported variously as a 'confidence building' exercise, a 'skilling up' exercise and a non-traditional way to approach problems with traditional literacy through script writing for film work, dialogue for radio projects and through the transfer of responsibility involved in active learning. While there are many positive and engaging examples of Media Education practice, particularly technical skill exchange being used in this way, the media used and the critical understandings imparted in this model are, in such cases, understood to be secondary or additional knowledge.

3.5 Policy

The Europe 2002 Action Plan noted that curricula must adapt to meet the perceived needs of the knowledge society, because it was feared that traditional education may not apply to a changing workplace.[65] Furthermore, the Irish government has recognised the enormous significance of knowledge society developments on the educational sector, reflected in at least two documents: *Schools IT2000, A Policy Framework for the New Millennium* (1998)[66] and *A Blueprint for the Future of ICT in Irish Education* (2001).[67] The more recent Blueprint policy outlined the main thrust of the government's three-year strategy, which was to augment ICT capital provision to schools, expand access to and use of Internet technologies, further integrate ICT into learning and teaching, and to enhance teacher professional development to facilitate the development of software and multimedia resources.

However, one significant development from the *Schools IT2000, A Policy Framework for the New Millennium* document, was that it led to the establishment of the National Centre for Technology in Education (NCTE) in 1998. This policy document also contained three major initiatives: a Technology Integration Initiative (TII); a Teaching Skills Initiative (TSI) and a Schools Support Initiative (SSI) – which included a Schools Integration Project (SIP) and the development of ScoilNet.

However ambitious these policies were, they lacked any attempt at addressing the civic or democratic importance of Media Education. These policies also contrast sharply with the types of innovative and creative approaches to media such as the TY projects described earlier which tend to thrive in less formal curricula. Also, the provision envisaged by these reports has ended in an inequitable and frequently ad hoc implementation process.

In terms of policy development, the new Broadcasting Bill is designed to update and modernise the legislative framework for broadcasting in Ireland. The proposed new regulator, the Broadcasting Authority of Ireland (BAI), will encompass the existing regulatory functions of the Broadcasting Commission of Ireland, the Broadcasting Complaints Commission and the RTÉ Authority. The research functions for the proposed BAI include specific reference to the importance of Media Literacy initiatives. Furthermore, the functions of the BAI will include supervision of mandatory Media Education by broadcasters. It remains to be seen how this will work in practice.

3.6 Learning Environments

A consideration of the learning environment for Media Literacy for young people today must take into account the rapid adoption and proliferation of a whole variety of ICT platforms and applications which form the heart of most young people's social and communicative networks. Young people are the eager adopters and contributors to convergence in the media world and lead the popularity of social networking websites such as bebo and mySpace, and of user generated content on platforms such as YouTube. Young people are also avid consumers of traditional media. According to the Irish Film Censors Office (IFCO),[68] film viewing is a regular activity for Irish adolescents: 76% go to the cinema at least once every two months while over half go at least once or twice a month. 87% watch films on television at least once a week and 62% watch films as frequently on DVD/Video.

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[65] http://ec.europa.eu/information_society/eeurope/2002/action_plan/pdf/actionplan_en.pdf. (p.14)
[66] Department of Education and Science (1998). *Schools IT 2000: A Policy Framework for the New Millennium*
[67] Department of Education and Science (2001). A Blueprint for the future of ICT in Irish Education

[68] http://www.ifco.ie/

Film viewing and media consumption in general is a highly social activity for young people. The vast majority of respondents in the IFCO report claim to go to the cinema with family or friends (87% always in company) and the majority also viewed films on television, video and DVD with company. Further, most respondents discuss films with friends before and after viewing and that their parents play quite an active role in their film viewing. They regularly watch films together, particularly on television (78% of the younger group and 72% of the older group). Findings of reports on young people's media consumption indicate that there are significant forms of 'informal learning' among young people generally, reflecting what Sonia Livingstone[69] has identified as the factors that make the media environment difficult to regulate nationally also make it difficult to regulate domestically in the home.

Against this background, we argued in Section 2 that the learning environment for Media Literacy could be greatly enhanced by the involvement outside the formal school situation of community groups, libraries, colleges/universities and media organisations. In Ireland, although some of these links exist, they are insufficiently developed and have not been developed in any formal way. There is strong evidence to suggest that schools and community groups can gain mutual benefits from collaborating on Media Education initiatives. Some practice-based projects such as FÍS and *Fresh Film Festival*[70] provide a forum that allows young people to not only display their media creations, but to get feedback and to become part of a larger community beyond the school itself. However, while some student media projects enjoy a profile through public exhibition, many are not completed or distributed beyond the school itself. In addition, creative media work produced by students, in many instances highly innovative, tends to go largely unrecognised by the public. Greater

public awareness of the opportunities for creative media practice will require further research, promotion and support for the potential of extra-curricular learning environments.

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[69] Livingstone, S. and Bovill, M. (1999)
[70] www.freshfilmfestival.net

4.0 CRITICAL MEDIA LITERACY – CHALLENGES AND PRIORITIES OF CML

In this section, we report on the key findings of a consultation process comprising interviews with a range of organisations and individuals associated with Media Literacy provision in Ireland. Respondents included members of the academic community, the media and cultural industries, community workers, and teachers/educationalists (see Appendix I). Through this consultation process, we seek to identify the main challenges and concerns associated with developing a platform for critical Media Literacy and for its integration and implementation into Irish education.

4.1 Separate Subject/ Integrated Curriculum

The current curricular provision for Media Literacy in Irish education is fragmented and represented principally through a form of embedding in 'non-media' subjects. This is an unsatisfactory situation for several respondents, many of whom feel that there can be no progress while Media Literacy remains a subset of an English, ICT or SPHE curriculum. David Martin, Media Studies Convenor for the ASTI, notes that Media Education cannot develop further without an understanding and appreciation of its value in and of itself. In the meantime it will remain a 'bit player' in subjects whose main focus is directed elsewhere:

> An English department's priority will always be the literary based approach and that is why it [Media Literacy] will have a limited development if it remains a subset of English - it can only develop, expand and become more creative as a separate subject.

Martin argues that teaching and learning about media only through the English curriculum with its focus on Film Studies, or through ICT with an obvious concentration on the use of media technology, suggests to parents, teachers and students that there is no need for a separate focus on, and specific curriculum for, Media Education. Findings within this report and within

other research in the field support this and acknowledge the need for a coherent and comprehensive curriculum with a strong assessment structure founded on adequate resources and training. Realistically, however, the prospect of Media Education being developed as a fully separate or 'stand alone' subject at any level in the national curriculum remains unlikely.

This recognition does not mean that the existing problems of a split in focus and a lack of status afforded to Media Education are not noted by all respondents. It is in addressing these issues that high levels of support for the strengthening and further definition of the currently diverse strands of Media Education emerge. This approach is strongly endorsed by the former CEO of the NPC, Fionnuala Kilfeather, who is very supportive of the development of Media Education in a fully integrated and cross-curricular manner:

> Media Literacy is a cross curricular thing and should be a cross curricular thing because ... any subject area will have Media Literacy built through it. I am not saying there shouldn't be some dedicated time but it is like part of SPHE ... you need a small slot for certain amounts of time but it permeates through the curriculum and the day ... It is a way of doing things and understanding things not just one topic.

This approach acknowledges the high level of media interaction amongst young people and normalises media analysis and informed media choices as being a part of everyday life. This understanding is also reflected within the developing NCCA frameworks both for ICT and Media Studies which are allied strongly to the concept of Developing Citizenship. This is evident in the primary curriculum also, in particular whereby Media Education and citizenship education are grouped together in SPHE. A similar approach has been adopted in the UK with the stranding-in of media into citizenship education (see Section 2.3.1) and is also reflective of Livingstone's insistence that Media Literacy is now a prerequisite to active,

full citizenship and to social participation (Livingstone 2003:2).

As noted, several respondents expressed a desire to see Media Education as a separate subject but have also acknowledged the almost overwhelming difficulties which are likely to prevent that for the foreseeable future.[71] At the present time, the proposed introduction of Short Courses and Transition Units into a revised Leaving Certificate curriculum is widely welcomed as offering a productive and valuable opportunity for the development of Critical Media Literacy. Within this a nationally approved Short Course in Media Studies would be the preferred option, as Transition Units are the preserve of the teacher enthusiast – s/he develops and delivers his/her own course in his/her own school. Transition Units also restrict Media Education to students who take part in a Transition Year programme and to those who have access to a teacher with a special interest in the field. Short Courses, on the other hand, offer a much stronger position for Media Education through inclusion in national state examination structure and legitimation through a qualifications framework.

4.2   Teacher Training

Media education in Irish schools is largely informal and led by individual teachers and enthusiasts for the subject. The subject itself lacks status within the curriculum and currently teachers are not provided with the necessary training either at initial training stages or through Continuing Professional Development (CPD) courses or in-service training.[72] As a result, many teachers are understandably unwilling to take on the additional responsibility particularly with a subject like Media Education. Further to this, fully updated knowledge of, and

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[71] These included Alicia McGivern, Gerry Jeffers and Brick Maier.
[72] The majority of respondents placed the lack of training at the start of teaching careers as a core issue which must be addressed as a priority.

participation in, the rapidly shifting media environment can draw attention to what may be a profound gap in experience between the teacher and the student, an issue that can disrupt the traditional teacher/student relationship.[73] Several respondents noted the challenge of developing curriculum materials or of encouraging teachers to use media technology in the classroom in the absence of adequate training and, crucially, the lack of technical knowledge and support. Brick Maier, a freelance media consultant and media trainer, also highlights the necessity of preparing teachers fully in order to get the best out of the opportunities offered by technology. He further makes the point that while technology is increasingly more accessible and affordable, teachers cannot be expected to adopt and integrate new materials and technologies into the classroom and into the curriculum without the necessary preparation, instruction and ongoing support.

Similarly, Peter Johnson of the NCCA makes reference to the fact that the production of curriculum documents, frameworks and learning outcomes can often bear little relation to the reality on the ground, as very often teachers are not confident enough to depart from the traditional pedagogies and accepted and validated forms of knowledge. Media education, as articulated by Sarah Fitzpatrick (NCCA), entails a democratisation of the classroom and of knowledge – something which established classroom structures and relationships are resistant to. A further worth noting centres on a problem identified both by Maier and by Kilfeather, both of whom underline the need for teachers to be trained, but go on to raise the question of who will do the training. The need to combine technical knowledge of media processes with the required pedagogic experience and understanding of the specific

classroom requirements will make large demands on teacher training and further, targeted investment in this area will be required to adequately support an effective strategy for CML.

The interconnected nature and multifaceted approach required to enhance the status of Media Education thus means that teacher training is mutually dependant on a strong curriculum which is nationally benchmarked and supported by national assessment structures. This further requires concerted lobbying to raise the profile of Media Education and to generate support for it in schools, focussing attention on the need for teacher support networks such as TAME.
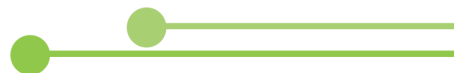
4.3   Implementing a Curriculum

The main issues and trends that affect the implementation of Media Education in Irish schools were found to be relatively consistent among interviewees. Of primary concern was the method of implementing a coherent curriculum. In this respect, there was a strong feeling that a strategy for Media Education should come from the 'bottom up', rather than the 'top down'. This concern reflects a strongly-held view (mainly among teachers) that successful implementation of Media Education requires the following three conditions:

- A whole-school policy that facilitates the introduction of Media Education. Typically, this comes from the School Principal and extends to other staff that will accommodate or facilitate this process.
- A 'teacher enthusiast' who will act as a champion for implementing Media Education. This often requires input beyond the scope of work done within the curriculum. Thus, trying to ensure that all teachers have the same motivation or enthusiasm for Media Education could become a serious impediment.

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[73] This issue was raised by numerous interviewees all of whom have extensive experience in the classroom – including Peter Johnson of the NCCA, Fionnuala Kilfeather of the NPCP, Sarah Fitzpatrick of the NCCA, David Martin of the ASTI and Gerry Jeffers of NUI Maynooth.

- A supportive management board prepared to provide the required facilities. Facilities and external input are found to be extremely varied and differ from school to school. Frequently, parents' councils are called upon to raise additional finance for equipment, training or facilities.

A successful implementation strategy for a comprehensive approach to CML needs to take account of the above factors which to date have supported the development of Media Education in some schools. While it is unrealistic to think that all schools will be able to access the same level of human and financial resources, equality of provision must remain a priority and necessary minimum conditions for effective Media Education need to be identified.

4.4   Links with the Media

One issue that drew positive response was in relation to industry involvement. Unlike the USA which is divided over the involvement of what are considered corporate interests in educational affairs, the support of professional media for Media Education and Media Literacy provision was widely welcomed.

RTE's responsibility for Media Literacy and interest in supporting initiatives for creating more media-literate audiences was confirmed by Peter Feeney (Head of Public Affairs Policy, Freedom of Information Office, RTÉ). However, in attempting to devise programming that is aimed at Media Literacy, it is recognised that targeting audiences is not always straightforward. As Feeney observes, young people are an important part of RTE's mandate, however the economic imperative to produce and distribute educational content directed at a relatively small section of the Irish population is not viable. Johnson at the NCCA also raises a related point through the issue of keeping

textbooks and video or DVD resources relevant and up to date in a small market:

> It is also a market issue because this is a very small market here in Ireland and the UK is a huge market so... it is easier to make some money developing the resources there.

The principle aim of such initiatives should be to develop an understanding of how media works and also develop active audiences. Yet, the question remains as to how the media themselves could or should become involved. Corporate involvement is likely to be on a commercial rather than purely philanthropic basis leading to greater concern over commercial sponsorship in educational matters. However, corporate involvement in schools has long been evidenced from Coca-Cola and Kelloggs as sponsors of school materials. More recently, the FÍS project has been heavily supported by Apple and Diageo and may not have achieved the success it has without their sponsorship.

Another viewpoint indicates that involvement of the media industry is more and more necessary in today's fast changing media environment and can make Media Literacy initiatives more relevant and meaningful to young people. For example, Shane Crossan of Bradóg believes that schools are too conservative and cannot adapt quickly enough to changes in the media. Crossan also points out that the type of training experienced in Media Literacy programmes is crucial. He believes that young people must be shown how to use media for themselves and allowed to experiment or 'learn by doing', rather than having teachers or facilitators do the work for them. David Martin also highlights the importance of building bridges between CML and the workplace. For instance, work experience links between schools and media outlets can greatly strengthen the effectiveness of a Media Education programme, and substantiate its importance for students, teachers and parents.

Helen Doherty at DLIADT makes the point that in overcoming the conflict between corporate profiting versus philanthropy, there may exist strategies for sponsorship that are formally recognised but have minimal or no individual or significant financial gain.

4.5 Resources, Research and Training

At present, the National Council for Technology in Education (NCTE) sees its remit as providing advice, support and encouragement for the use of technologies by teachers and students. However, since Media Education is not presently recognised as a subject on its own, it needs encouragement that is usually in the form of pilot projects. Anne White (NCTE) clearly recognises lack of resources as a serious impediment. The issues of resources and training also indicate a broader concern as to who should teach Media Education. For example, industry practitioners may have the skills and resources, but lack pedagogic training. Teachers, on the other hand may not have a sufficient grasp of the complexities of 'active producers'. As Brick Maier has indicated, the technology demands that someone not just be able to teach but to understand how best to use technologies. He suggests:

> Long term [success] requires making budgetary decisions to dedicate full-time salaried positions to Media Literacy roles. The current model asks already busy teachers to wear another hat. Trained media professionals could fill a specialist role in the school environment where students get to make media, think about media, write scripts, perform, and work with technology to make media. This is unlikely to happen because that would require a significant investment in hardware and software, but more importantly in the person who has all the skills to deliver an effective program.

4.6 Communities and Media Literacy

Media Education must focus on a wider remit than the formal education sector alone. If the gap between media use in schools and media use in the home is to be bridged, the community immediately suggests itself as an option. As Crossan observes, many of the resources available in schools are locked up by four o'clock every day. This is a concern for students, teachers and parents, because research indicates that much media learning takes place outside of schools.

Ciaran McCormack (FÍS) has made the point that when FÍS started, many of the films were centred around a school hall, school canteen or near to the school. However, in recent years there has been a migration towards more community-based projects. This recognition of community has resonance both in rural and urban environments, albeit with different emphases. In each environment there is a clear recognition that both the school and community can greatly benefit from these crossovers.

4.7 Pilot Schemes

Although several interviewees indicated strong support for pilot schemes, others found that this lacked the impetus for ongoing development. Indeed, many schemes have been successfully implemented and yet fall 'under the radar' in terms of recognition and longevity. For example a disabilities project entitled Lights! Disabilities! Action! (LDA!)[74] successfully developed and implemented several media projects up until 2002, many of which dealt with and directly addressed accessibility and yet the organisation no longer has any web presence. It may be worth considering how to leverage these projects too as many were innovative and may be usefully employed by other individuals and groups. Unfortunately, many of these projects were conducted in isolation and re-duplicated in other situations. In short, while the notion of pilot project is

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[74] http://www.disabilityworld.org/June-July2000/Media/Irish.html

laudable, there needs to be more of a concerted effort at linking projects, avoiding unnecessary duplication and sharing information between groups and individuals.

4.8 Shifting School Culture

At present, the school culture is not conducive to the development of Media Education as a separate subject, or indeed as a cross-curriculum set of objectives.

In a points-driven curriculum, Media Education provides many challenges and there is no foreseeable solution to implementing a strategy quickly. Indeed, some would argue that such a strategy requires slow and deliberate rather than radical and immediate action.

Nonetheless, there appears to be a majority opinion that Media Education should be considered as spanning the curriculum. Also, as noted earlier, facilities, expertise, training and resources are to varying degrees contentious issues.

In these circumstances, it may not be surprising that more visible models of 'good practice' come from the community sector, because they are judged on an individual basis and in a volunteer capacity and are not, as school initiatives are, required to be implemented or replicated across schools nationally, something which is difficult to do without addressing the lack of facilities, expertise, training and resources noted above. Furthermore, many of the media projects that are completed 'within' schools often take place outside school hours, away from the school environment and are exhibited and compete outside schools. However, most of the planning and devising tends to take place in classrooms and it is these activities (research, drawing, writing etc) that are ways of 'legitimising' the media activities as part of a curriculum

however spurious these attempts may appear. For example, an environmental project might include research at libraries, online searches, emails requesting specialist expertise and drafting narratives – all of which can take place in the classroom and can be done as part of a curriculum that includes English, History, Social Studies and Art). However, the project itself may involve a field trip and/or interaction at a community or regional level and often ends up shown at children's competitions or community gatherings.

As Peter Feeney observes, informal and extra-curricular projects often benefit more in terms of output, in particular voluntary sector projects – especially those that are premised on 'the ideal citizen'. That is, if the goal of education is a 'well-rounded' citizen, media play a central role in this. In preparing individuals for adulthood, citizenship amounts to full responsibility, this does not just end at the school gate.

Kilfeather also believes that there is a need for a fundamental shift in how we think about teaching media. It is not fair to expect teachers to suddenly become technical experts. Indeed, much of their training takes place in centres of education and are not, as Peter Johnson asserts, taking place in settings that teachers can implement them, nor is it learning that can be immediately implemented in the classroom.

At present, some schools have managed to introduce work experience programmes for students. These are piecemeal and fragmented and were not the product of any coherent policy. Although there is growing recognition of Media Education in schools, which can be seen through examples like the FÍS project or the IFI's TY Module in Moving Image Education, there are no immediate nationally available models of 'best practice' which are embedded in the school curriculum.

5.0 CASE STUDIES: GOOD PRACTICE IN MEDIA EDUCATION

5.1 FÍS – Formal Education Sector Initiative

The FÍS[75] (Film in Schools) project is a useful example of a school-based initiative that has managed to expand both vertically and horizontally. That is, it has developed from a small number of schools' involvement to a nationwide programme. It has also begun to harness external resources and facilities.

FÍS (literally translated as 'vision') is an initiative from the Department of Education and Science in the Republic of Ireland. It began as a pilot project and was designed to introduce the medium of film as a support to the Revised Primary School Curriculum (Curaclam na Bunscoile). The pilot ran over a period of three years from March 2000 to March 2003. The project was managed and delivered by Dun Laoghaire Institute of Art Design and Technology, The National Film School, where the FÍS office is located.

The pilot involved the development of a comprehensive Resource Pack for teachers (now available online in the Teaching Resources section of the site). The FÍS pilot was supported by AIB Group through its Better Ireland Programme and IADT. Although capital- and labour-intensive, the project is a clear example of how media projects can be successfully implemented in diverse environments.

Although, not every school is involved in FÍS, those that are, succeeded in doing so because (1) their principal and school ethos supported the activity, and (2) individual teachers agreed to take on the responsibility (attend training and provide tuition). As indicated earlier, these are essential prerequisites for the successful implementation of consistent Media Education. Also, over the past 40 years, developments in computing and media technologies have been woven together to create a complex tapestry of

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[75] http://www.fis.ie

digitally enhanced media that are cheaper, portable and compatible. Furthermore, while there remains a disparity of resource provision, as highlighted earlier, the digital divide is not just reflected in individual school equipment, but quality of usage and literacy levels too. For example, the diversity of projects and approaches to FÍS films has demanded an 'unstructured' approach to each individual project. That is, a more clearly-defined set of learning objectives (even if possible for such a project) would seriously undermine the advantages of encouraging creative approaches to digital filmmaking. How such a project might be introduced into a curriculum for assessment then may be problematic.

FÍS a Dó is a pilot project which has been designed based on the outcomes of the initial FÍS pilot project (March 2000 to June 2003). It is an initiative of the IADT and is delivered through Diageo Liberties Learning Initiative in the Digital Hub. FÍS a Dó concentrates on introducing the medium of film into the Primary and Post Primary School curriculum. While the project places an emphasis on the exploration of creativity as a means of learning and self-expression through the visual arts, drama, music dance and literature, it tends to fall into the category of 'soft skills' compared to other curriculum subjects.

FÍS schools are using film in many different ways. These often include documentaries about its local history, interviews with local citizens or adapted works of fiction with children writing the screenplay, acting and filming their own production. In this context, it does, however, reflect what Domaille and Buckingham (2001) see as a development of new community links and the sharing of resources which would otherwise not be accessible.

There is no formal assessment of the learning involved in FÍS and therefore, no clear indicators of consistency. Indeed, it appears that a diversity of learning styles have emerged and in

keeping with an educational ethos of 'process rather than product' children are encouraged to learn from the process itself – rather than considering the films an end product. For example, schools that cater for children with physical and learning disabilities have found film particularly helpful in establishing a sense of individual achievement. Often, recognition of the children who contributed to the film was as important to its motivational impact as the film itself. Filmmaking indicates how media generally are particularly flexible for mixed abilities.

Finally, as a relatively new introduction to schools, FÍS suffers from any research that demonstrates its impact on students' attitudes, behavior, knowledge and understanding. However, it is a model project in addressing the 'digital divide' and shows great potential for collaborative, resource and skill sharing.

5.2 Irish Film Institute – Transition Year Module in Moving Image Education

The Irish Film Institute (IFI) runs a series of initiatives in film education, both for the wider community as well as events, screenings and workshops designed specifically to support the national curriculum and broaden the filmic experience for Irish children and young people. Currently, as part of its respected and innovative Education and Access programme, the Institute provides screenings for Primary, Junior Cycle, Transition Year[76] and Senior Cycle students both in Dublin at the Irish Film Centre and around the country at regional screenings. To accompany these screenings, detailed study guides are produced which contain teacher and student material designed to support discussion about and engagement with the film in question. Many of these study guides are

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[76] The Transition Year Module is of particular importance here, it was developed in partnership by the IFI, the Second Level Support Service (SLSS), the Arts Council, The Irish Film Board, The Irish Film Censor's Office all of whom formed the Arts Council Working Group on Film and Young People (2006a: 17).

available for free download on the IFI website – www.irishfilm.ie – providing a valuable resource for schools and for students.

Talks and workshops on film, as well as screenings of short films are scheduled for school audiences making sure that children and young people have access not only to films they may be studying for exam purposes, but also to films which they may not otherwise experience. Over 17,000 students attend screenings each year and a wide variety of films are shown including both Irish made films and films in the Irish language; independent films such as *Little Miss Sunshine* (2006) or *The Page Turner* (2006); documentaries such as *An Inconvenient Truth* (2006) and *Touching the Void* (2003); as well as adaptations of novels and plays such as *The Remains of the Day* (1993) or *William Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet* (1996). Filmic adaptations of novels and plays complement the English curricula at both junior and senior cycle.

As noted, the IFI education programme is committed to providing opportunities for children and young people to experience as many different genres and kinds of film as is possible. To that end silent films, animated films, arthouse films, and particularly foreign language, subtitled films are shown. Alicia McGivern, Senior Education Officer at the IFI describes, in interview, the Institute's educational objectives as being:

> To promote a critical and active engagement with film and moving image, the use of the term moving image is to broaden it out from being just traditional 35mm film… to also include short film forms, silent film, digital film and so on

The Modern Languages Curriculum is also supported by the IFI through their screening of French, German, Italian and Spanish productions, for which study guides are developed in the language of the film[77]. The IFI

also showcases the work of films in the Irish language including, in 2007, screenings of An Gaeilgeoir Nocht (2006).[78]

While the overall educational remit of the IFI is relevant here, it is the Transition Year Module in Moving Image Education which is of particular interest for this research. Given the importance of the Transition Year for the future of Media Literacy in schools this module provides an example of good practice in visual literacy education. The first Pilot Review of the module is now available, reflecting the experiences of the original eleven participating schools, teachers and students.[79] The TY Module is particularly exciting as it is not driven by exam needs or the set curriculum. It is also an opportunity to free Moving Image Education from its established place in the English syllabus, allowing a different focus on film as part of visual culture rather than film as text. The Module is recommended for 45 hours, the length of time allocated for the proposed Transition Units, and requires at least three screenings, with a minimum of two of those taking place outside of the school (McGivern 2006a: 16).[80] This Module allows for film to be 'rescued' from the classroom demands of shared televisions, unsuitable spaces and forty-minute class periods which do not allow for a full, uninterrupted viewing. In fact, the experience of going to the cinema is, according to McGivern, an essential element of the TY Module, and information gathered in the Pilot Review shows that 84% of TY students found watching films together in the cinema to be the most enjoyable aspect of their participation (2006a:1)

The TY Module has been extremely successful, as is both evidenced in the Pilot Review and in

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[77] To demonstrate the breadth of the foreign language film provision, examples from the 2007 school schedule include

Le Grand Voyage (French 2004) *Volver* (Spanish 2006) and *Die Fetten Jahre Sind Vorbei* (German 2004).
[78] Education and Access. Spring Summer 2007. Dublin, Irish Film Institute
[79] McGivern, A. (2006a) Transition Year Module in Moving Image Education: Pilot Review. Dublin, Irish Film Institute.
[80] The three screenings are to comprise one Irish made film, one American Independent film and one foreign language film (2006a: 1).

McGivern's description of the project so far. McGivern attributes, in part, the success of the module to the dedication of teachers and the decision to focus on contemporary film which is familiar and directly relevant to the lives of young people. She also highlights the importance of the teacher training days, delivered in conjunction with the SLSS, and the strong emphasis on the cross-curricular potential of Moving Image Education as further key factors in the module's progression. The Module has been rolled out to include schools in counties Clare, Kilkenny and Sligo, as well as the original schools in Dublin and Kildare which piloted the Module between October 2005 and January 2006. Although the success of the Module is well recognised, the Pilot Review highlights a series of key challenges which can be broadly applied to the experience of, and difficulties foreseen in the integration of a national Media Literacy Education initiative. This provides a useful indicator of the issues which arise or which may arise in other similar types of projects or initiatives in this field.

Key Challenges

From consultation with teachers and students who participated in the pilot, it was found that there were shared concerns about the lack of evaluative structures – exams, essays, skills gained etc. Many teachers felt uncertain about taking on a new subject with which they had little experience, and saw that the module had to compete with all of the long established TY programmes and projects already running in schools. Student interest in the practical side of film-making was reported through interview and questionnaire responses, however a lack of time and resources prevented this being developed.

The positive reaction from students and teachers and the continuing expansion of the Module demonstrates, however, that these issues can be overcome with time and dedicated resources, research, funding and application. The Moving Image Module is currently a strong example of good practice in Media Literacy Education demonstrating as it does the benefits, beyond simple funding, which can be gained from progressive partnership between schools and the media industry.

5.3 Bradóg – Community/Informal Education Sector Initiative

To engage young people by offering them meaningful experiences through youth arts, outdoor pursuits, accredited training, health promotion, sport and digital media.[81]

Bradóg is unique among youth services in Ireland in that its mission statement, reproduced, in part, above, includes, along with the more traditional services provided by community youth workers such as sport and health education, a focus on digital media. It is for this reason that Bradóg Regional Youth Service was chosen as an illustrative case study demonstrating successfully the innovative and vibrant media work being done in partnership with young people outside of the formal education sector.

The services offered by Bradóg are centred in Dublin's North West inner city in an area of high unemployment, with high levels of drug abuse and with a history of low educational attainment. The programmes that are run there reach approximately four-hundred young people per year and have been running for eighteen months. The media work is led by youth worker Shane Crossan, a community equivalent of the 'teacher enthusiast'.

Crossan's own understanding of the importance of a CML means that the emphasis on media technology and digital film production, in particular, is driven by a number of factors. These factors include a commitment to

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[81] http://www.bradog.com

bridging the equality gap or 'digital divide' which would otherwise mean that disadvantaged young people in this community would not ordinarily have a chance to experience, learn and work with digital cameras or radio equipment, or indeed be able to access the internet on a regular basis.

Developing a familiarity with the technology has obvious advantages in that it provides skills and experiences, but this practical learning process also, as highlighted by Crossan, helps to address traditional literacy problems that are often exacerbated by a poor relationship between the young person and the school system. Further to this, strong and mutually beneficial links between schools and youth services are also, in Crossan's experience, rare, meaning that valuable amenities and spaces, such as physical education (P.E.), halls are off-limits to young people in the community after 4pm each day and at weekends.

Supporting and developing the self-confidence of young people who use the service is a fundamental element of the work of Bradóg, and understanding both the production and representation side of the media plays an essential role in this. Giving young people the tools to represent themselves allows them to challenge stereotypical perceptions and established media representations of disadvantaged youth. For this reason, Bradóg has broadened the potential audience for their film work from the local community and other youth groups through uploading and sharing content online through social networking and video sharing sites such as YouTube. Currently, Bradóg has more than twenty-five short films and photo stories ranging from six minutes in length to twenty-three seconds in length available worldwide on YouTube. The videos available include a short film entitled 'Dublin Valentines Day Project'[82], which details the

result of an imaginative and exciting project undertaken by the service which was described by Crossan in interview:

> We built a giant love heart booth and transported it to Temple Bar Square on Valentines Day and inside was a TV screen that had six forty second movies made by young people. Some of them were just made with photographs in iPhoto or iMovie[83] and all were dealing with love... they were on a loop and people came in and viewed them... Around 400 people saw it in 7 hours and we were filming all around it, filming some peoples' interaction, some peoples' response to it and we put it all together... We have it sped up at the start, the assembly of the love heart to create the context for it, then interviews with people who came into it - a cross section you know - foreigners, young people, people who liked it, people who didn't like it, crazy people ... and then interspersed was the six films.[84]

The service is also aware of the numerous pitfalls an uncritical adoption of media technology as a tool can open up such as an over-reliance on 'issue led' media which further reinforces negative assumptions about particular communities. The question of authorship is also to the fore, Bradóg aims to simplify the process as much as possible, thus allowing the young people involved to produce, direct and script their own films. These pitfalls are, in the experience of Crossan, often a direct result of the lack of expertise available on a regular long-term basis. Due to a lack of paid positions for media practitioners or experts in the youth service sector, help is often available only on a temporary or pilot basis. Bradóg is different in that they have staff with media expertise and also have lobbied and received funding for a digital media youth worker for an eighteen-month period.

Bradóg is focused on a multiple interpretation of what Media Education can be, viewing it as firstly a tool to enhance the life skills, traditional

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[82] http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w3ODAjvVpu0. All other Bradóg videos can be viewed at YouTube simply by entering Bradog into the search function on the home

page. The film work will also likely be collected on the Bradóg website which is currently under development.
[83] 'iMovie' and 'iPhoto' refer to a Mac software application used to create digital film and photo content.
[84] The information contained here comes from an interview conducted with Shane Crossan and Pauline Brennan of Bradóg on 02/05/2007.

literacy skills, citizenship and social participation of young people from disadvantaged backgrounds. It believes community media production can allow young people to represent themselves from their own perspective, while utilising new technology to reach new audiences. Finally, it emphasises the responsibility of second and third-level education providers to make links with community projects and to allow young people to turn their pastime digital media activities into qualifications, and thus into employable skills.

Because there is no national central structure for Media Education in the youth work sector in Ireland, Bradóg is free to innovate and experiment. However, this lack of cohesion also has a downside in that other youth services cannot offer collaborative links due to lack of resources and expertise. There are no guarantees of support or of resources and there is, as noted above, currently no national recognition or educational acknowledgement of skills mastered and work produced by young people who participate.

6.0 CONCLUSION

In this final section we outline a series of conclusions and recommendations required to develop and raise the profile of CML in Ireland. A comprehensive and inclusive strategy for Media Literacy, it is recognised, will require partnerships and initiatives which are driven and supported by groups and organisations outside of the formal education sector. A major part of this is the raising of the profile of CML in order to create an environment in which public interest will strengthen and sustain the activities of stakeholders and interest groups.

6.1 Main Findings

Media education has been supported by much interest and enthusiasm over the last 30 years. However, its current status is not a healthy one and 2007 represents a critical turning point for the development of the area. The renewed interest in the concept of Media Literacy within the wider public arena offers a window of opportunity for a revitalised campaign to consolidate its position within education. The review of the Senior Cycle Curriculum offers good prospects for the future in the design and implementation of Transition Units and Short Courses which can contribute positively to Media Education, working in tandem with ongoing refinement and development of existing media strands. These are not yet available in schools, however, and are unlikely to be up and running at a national level for some time. Therefore, the current position for CML in Ireland may be summarised as follows:

1. Media Education is not uniformly available and/or supported in all schools.

The provision for Media Education has been found to be uneven. Some schools through the initiative of individual teachers, of school principals and of boards of management have made Media Education a special priority and have provided additional resources and opportunities to learn and practice media. This is not however widely available and in the main

students' opportunities to gain a formal understanding of issues of Media Literacy depend on individual teachers' willingness to use the existing, limited opportunities within the formal curriculum. The fact that these can be bypassed has not helped the cause of Media Education.

2. Media Education is hampered by low status and considered to be a 'soft' subject.

The applied and interdisciplinary nature of media studies has in the eyes of many, weakened its status within the formal curriculum. Particularly in examination years, media exploration is avoided given the pressure of traditional examination subjects and end of year exams. The arguments in favour of media as a single subject have to contend with competing demands from other areas of the curriculum and are unlikely to succeed given its apparently low academic status.

3. Media Education as it currently exists across the curriculum is unstructured. While this offers some advantages in allowing freedom to teachers to develop new innovative practices, it undermines the overall coherence of Media Studies as a subject.

Following on from the previous point, a difficulty with the current approach to Media Education in schools is that little or no opportunity is afforded for a more sustained and critical study of the issues underpinning Media Literacy. While acknowledging the opportunities for the development of rewarding and innovative special projects and modules at all levels of the educational system, the fact that there is little integration between elements has, according to Media Educationalists, undermined Media Literacy provision.

4. Community-based initiatives do not generally receive recognition nor are there serious attempts to leverage their potential – resources, expertise, methods etc.

As detailed in this report, there are many excellent examples of CML engagements in a variety of community contexts. While some have received major forms of sponsorship and have enjoyed a high profile, most are inadequately resourced, if at all. Valuable expertise has been developed within the community sector but real difficulties are experiences in achieving continuity and momentum. There are insufficient opportunities, likewise, to apply the knowledge learned within the formal education sector.

5. A lack of research and funding for specifically Irish contexts seriously undermines any attempts at gaining credibility or inspiration.

A serious problem encountered by media teachers is the lack of dedicated or localised Irish resources for the teaching of media. As a result, teachers normally have to rely on developing their own materials, itself a very time-consuming exercise and which leads to disillusionment on the part of teachers. Alternatively, teachers increasingly have to rely on imported materials often with little relevance to the Irish context.

6. There is a low rate of collaboration between schools, community and industry.

As it stands, there are few opportunities for media teachers or schools to share resources or knowledge within Media Education, leading to the isolationist nature of much Media Education practice. Similarly, there is no established pattern of co-operation or exchange between schools, the community sector and the media themselves. A common commitment to the values of Media Literacy as exists to a much greater extent in the UK would provide a much-needed boost to the field.

7. There is no 'ownership' of Media Education and a vital need for it to be endorsed.

A crucial gap in Media Literacy provision at present is the lack of any assumed responsibility or championing of the cause of Media Literacy. Some state and cultural agencies (Broadcasting Commission of Ireland,

National Centre for Technology in Education, and the Irish Film Institute) play an important role within current constraints though there remains a gap specifically within the education sector. The revitalisation of a teachers' association would be a crucial first step in remedying this, but such an association would in due course require a mandate and official support.

6.2 Recommendations

In light of the findings of this report and the broad consultation with a variety of stakeholders in the field of Media Education and Media Literacy provision, the following recommendations are made:

1. A revised and coherent rationale for Media Literacy in Irish education needs to be developed that takes into account its contemporary relevance and wider social context.

Many of the original arguments developed in favour of Media Education are 40 years old. While some of the fundamental issues that prompted the development of Media Education initiatives are still valid, the arguments can seem dated and out of touch with contemporary culture. Accordingly, a revitalised approach using a new language needs to be developed. One of the most promising opportunities to achieve this is to utilise the prominent emphasis given at European and increasingly at national level for Media Literacy as a social good. While the definition and understanding of Media Literacy may vary between its use within a national or European media regulatory framework and within education, there is a fundamental common cause underpinning it which could be crucial to the success of future educational innovations.

2. A curriculum strategy needs to be developed that takes into account its current disjointed nature and seeks to develop a more holistic, integrated approach.

To date, Media Education in Ireland has been undertaken on the basis of small scale individual elements within other subject disciplines. A curriculum development strategy is now required that includes provision for a transition between primary and secondary schools, and supports progression through different key stages of learning. Peter Johnson (NCCA) has suggested that such an approach might take the form of a 'spiral curriculum' where topics are re-encountered but with greater degrees of intensity or complexity as students advance through the school system, from early childhood through adolescence to teens. Such a curriculum also needs to provide teacher support and incentives.

3. Stakeholders within the field of Media Education and Media Literacy need to collaborate to ensure a higher profile for the subject and to enhance its status.

There is now a much wider community of interest for Media Literacy Education which includes not only schools, but parents, community groups, media organisations, cultural agencies and regulatory bodies. There is strong evidence that suggests links between the various bodies will greatly enhance the sustainability of any future strategy towards Media Literacy.

4. Responsibility for the development of Media Literacy needs to be assigned and individual roles within the field need to be mandated.

The *General Scheme for the Broadcasting Bill, 2006* envisages the overall responsibility for promotion of Media Literacy to reside with the proposed Broadcasting Authority of Ireland. This is not likely to have a specifically educational remit, however, and as a result there are a number of individual levels of responsibility which need to be developed and which include important functions for teachers' associations, for curriculum development, for in-service and for teacher training, and for supporting collaboration between education, the media and community sectors. As in recommendation 3 above, such collaboration is crucial to the future of Media Literacy and one of the important lessons learned from previous experience in the field.

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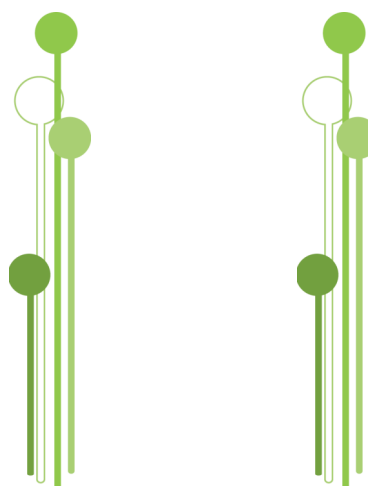
7.1 Web Resources

Ireland	Bradóg youth Services	http://www.Bradog.com
	Central Statistics Office	http://www.cso.ie
		http://www.curriculumonline.ie
		http://www.disabilityworld.org
	FÍS Film in Schools	http://www.fis.ie
	National Council for Curriculum and Assessment	http://www.ncca.ie
The UK		http://www.childrenyouthandmediacentre.co.uk/
		http://www.bfi.org.uk/
		http://www.mediaedassociation.org.uk/index.html
		http://www.mediaed.org.uk/
		http://www.lse.ac.uk/collections/media@lse/whosWho/soniaLivingstone.htm
		http://www.englishandmedia.co.uk/
		http//:www.DfES.gov.uk.
		http:www.nc.uk.net
Nordic Countries	NORDICOM, a clearinghouse for media and communication research:	http://www.nordicom.gu.se/clearinghouse
	Danish Research Centre on Education and Advanced Media Materials (DREAM), University of Southern Denmark,	http://dream.dk
Australia and New Zealand		http://www.curriculum.edu.au.
		http://www.aqf.edu.au.
		http://www.ALEA.edu.au
		http://www.atomvic.org
		http://www.metromagazine.com.au
		http://www.name.org.nz
		http://www.mediascape.ac.nz

7.2   Appendix I
Respondents interviewed for the research project March – May, 2007.

Name	Organisation	Role
Gerry Jeffers	School of Education - NUI Maynooth	Lecturer in Innovation and Development in Schools
Helen Doherty	Dun Laoghaire Institute of Art, Design and Technology	Strategic Academic Project Manager for Digital Media
David Martin	Association of Secondary Teachers of Ireland(ASTI)	Media Studies Convenor ASTI, Media Studies Teacher
Brick Maier	Freelance Media Consultant	Teacher Trainer, Community/Youth Training
John Kelleher	Irish Film Censor's Office (IFCO)	Irish Film Censor
Alicia McGivern	Irish Film Institute (IFI)	Senior Education Officer
Caroline Smyth	Broadcasting Commission of Ireland (BCI)	Research Officer
Peter Feeney	Radio Telefís Eireann	Head of Public Affairs Policy, Freedom of Information Office
Ciarán McCormack	FIS – Film in Schools	Creative Director of the FIS project
Anne White	National Centre for Training and Education (NCTE)	National Co-ordinator Digital Content, NCTE
Sarah Fitzpatrick	National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA)	Deputy Chief Executive
Peter Johnson	National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA)	Director – Curriculum and Assessment
Fionnuala Kilfeather	National Parents Council - Primary (NPCP)	Former Chief Executive Officer of NPCP
Shane Crossan	Bradóg Regional Youth Service	Youth Media Worker

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Critical Media Literacy (CML) is a matter of major public importance. The skill-set of CML[1] is increasingly recognised at national and European level as essential to citizenship and to a healthy democracy.

Attempts to foster Media Literacy have been a feature of Irish education for over thirty years. Extensive curriculum reform has taken place to ensure that opportunities for studying the media are available across the primary and secondary curriculum.

However, in 2007 the subject retains a low profile and provision for media education is uneven. The subject has a low status within the educational system and media exploration is frequently avoided given the pressure of traditional examination subjects and end of year exams. The dispersed and unstructured nature of Media Education has offered some advantages in allowing freedom to teachers to develop new innovative practices. However, it also undermines the overall coherence of media studies as a subject.

In an international context, Ireland has fallen significantly behind other countries such as the Nordic countries, United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand and Canada where media education has been a core feature of the educational system for many years.

Media Education in Irish schools is largely informal and too often relies on individual teachers and enthusiasts for the subject. The lack of dedicated or localised Irish resources for the teaching of media has undermined the development of the subject. Teachers normally

have to rely on developing their own materials with little access to training or resources.

There is now a much wider community of interest for Media Literacy Education which includes not only schools, but parents, community groups, media organisations, cultural agencies and regulatory bodies. There is strong evidence that suggests links between the various bodies will greatly enhance the sustainability of any future strategy towards Media Literacy.

Many excellent examples of Critical Media Literacy have been developed through community-based initiatives. While some have enjoyed a high profile, most are inadequately resourced, if at all. Valuable expertise has been developed within the community sector though achieving continuity and momentum has been difficult. There are insufficient opportunities, likewise, to apply the knowledge learned within the formal education sector.

Recommendations summary
- A revised and coherent **rationale for Media Literacy** in Irish education needs to be developed that takes into account its contemporary relevance and wider social context.
- The **lack of ownership of the subject needs to be addressed** and a representative body of all stakeholders including teachers, educationalists, parents, statutory agencies and media professionals need to provide leadership for the development of the subject.
- **Links with media industries** would be widely welcomed.
- A **curriculum development strategy is now required** that includes provision for a transition between primary and secondary schools, and supports progression through different key stages of learning. Such a curriculum also needs to provide teacher support and incentives.

[1] 'to appraise critically, and assess the relative value of, information from different sources, and gain competencies in understanding the construction, forms, strengths and limitations of screen based (and other media) content' (Livingstone and Bovill, 1999)

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