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Youth Media Democracy: Perceptions of New Literacies

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on new media literacy

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Youth Media Democracy

Perceptions of new literacies

A report on the conference



April 18th - 19th 2008





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Preface

Irish Youth Media Development was set up in November 2007 by members of the Irish delegation to the 5th World Summit on Media for Children. IYMD ideals are to promote quality media production for and by children and youth, to analyse and agitate to improve the representation of youth and youth issues in media, to raise awareness of the sensitivities of media representation of youth from the South by the media of the so called developed world and to continue to promote the UNESCO Charter on Children's Media Rights here and abroad. See www.irishyouthmedia.ie

The group was inspired by its visit to the Johannesburg Summit in March 2007. It was an enormous event, attended by more than 1800 delegates from over 88 countries worldwide, with 300 children from 5 continents and daily busloads of children flowing in from the African townships to make it a truly inspiring experience. Firdoze Bulbulia, chair of the Children's Broadcasting Foundation for Africa (CBFA), chaired and led the African Summit. Inspired by the vision to make this a truly global event, she set up an International Think Tank to advise on content and to organise Mini Summits on all 5 continents as a means to initiate public debate and inspire participation in the event.

So, in August 2006, working in my capacity as a member of the Think Tank, I held a seminar at 'The Ark', Ireland's National Children's Cultural Centre, to explore and promote these issues. Called *'Think Youth, Think Media'*, and sponsored by The Radharc Trust, it was attended by academics, media, youth and international aid workers. Inspired by these ideas, and sponsored by Irish Aid and RTÉ TV, an enthusiastic group from DIT, TCD, RTÉ, The Dán Project, the Base, Ballyfermot, Kildare Youth Television and Blastbeat, set out to represent Ireland at the African Summit.

On our return, the delegation debated how to continue the momentum established. Irish Youth Media Development was born. Jan Pettersen, Siobhan Cleary and I were joined by Estelle Clements to organise 'Youth, Media & Democracy Conference' as the inaugural event of IYMD. We were fortunate in gaining the support and sponsorship of DIT, School of Media and Centre for Social and Educational Research, the Digital Hub, Spunout.ie, Fóróige, The office of the Minister of Children and Léargas, whose Youth In Action programme provided principal financial support. We are also indebted to the Minister for Communication, Eamonn Ryan, for kindly opening the Conference and for his interest in privately attending various sessions.

The ideas and issues raised during this Conference are part of a continuum of international debate among media practitioners with which I have long been privileged to be engaged. I am honoured to have been part of the small team which helped to bring these issues to a wider Irish public and I thank them most warmly for all their hard work.

It is our hope that IYMD will continue to stimulate debate and further the ideas of the UNESCO Charter on Children's Media Rights into the future.

Marion Creely, Chair, IYMD

List of Contributors

Bertram C. Bruce is Professor in Library & Information Science, Curriculum & Instruction, Bioengineering at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, USA.

David Buckingham is Professor of Education and Director of the Centre for the Study of Children, Youth and Media, London Knowledge Lab at the Institute of Education, University of London, UK.

Milton Chen (PhD) is Executive Director for 'The George Lucas Educational Foundation in San Rafael, California, USA

Siobhán Clancy is a freelance facilitator/coordinator of arts and digital media. She is based in Dublin, Ireland.

Marion Creely is an award winning RTÉ documentary maker and Executive Producer of the European Broadcasting Union's (EBU) Children's Documentary Series and Chair of IYMD.

Tonyia Dowling is Assistant Commissioning Editor for Young Peoples Programmes in Radio Telefís Éireann (RTÉ), Television, Ireland.

Maria Helena Menezes is a researcher and academic based at Escola Superior de Educação do Instituto Politécnico de Castelo Branco, Portugal.

Máire Messenger-Davies is Professor and Director of the Media Studies Research Institute at the School of Media, Film & Journalism University of Ulster in Northern Ireland, UK.

Vitor Tomé is a researcher and academic based at Escola Superior de Educação do Instituto Politécnico de Castelo Branco, Portugal.

Introduction

There is a growing recognition of the many different ways that Media and New Technology can contribute to, or transform, the activities, roles, and relationships experienced by children and youth. The conference ‘**Youth Media Democracy**’, hosted by The School of Media, Dublin Institute of Technology, was a two day event held in April of 2008. It set out to explore the effects that new media have on the younger generation with a focus on the tremendous opportunities that new media brings.

The event had the ambitious aim to offer an integrated experience of a traditional academic conference, presenting recent research on topics like; new media; emerging literacies; the digital divide; new media as a platform for democracy in the lives of young people, and at the same time also engaging the participation of Youth through a series of workshops across different media platforms.

This publication aims to present the ‘essence’ or ‘spirit’ of the conference and therefore, it is important to point out that it is not an exact representation of the proceedings as it unfolded. Due to the rather unconventional format of the event a mixture of reports, narratives and academic papers have been included.

The first chapter of this document offers a report by **Siobhán Clancy** on the different stages of the youth portion of the conference. She describes the effort that was made to incorporate the theme of democracy and the challenges that lies within striking a balance between running two ‘parallel’ events in the context of the aim of running an ‘integrated’ event and the conflicts that inevitably occur in a mixed-age, mixed-need, mixed-experience community. Her report also provides quotes from the feedback of the youth participants and youth workers.

Professor **Chip Bruce** presents another perspective in chapter two, that of the academic who saw the conference as an opportunity to observe both the debate as well as the creation of media in practice. His experiences and extensive research, leads him to argue the case for ‘the Community as Curriculum’, which means that learning should be based on the lived experiences of young people, not on a formal sequence of facts and skills, as is often the case in formal educational settings.

In chapter three, Professor **David Buckingham** sums up the key points from his book *Beyond Technology: Children’s Learning in the Age of Digital Culture*. Here, he discuss the emerging term of the ‘New Digital Divide’, which relates to the dichotomy that exists between the substantial investment in technology in schools and the increasingly media-saturated childhoods that are experienced by children outside of the school.

As highlighted by the authors in the above chapters, knowledge is constructed through different kinds of media and it is imperative that young people understand how to analyze these messages critically and similarly, how to produce messages using media. In chapter four, **Vitor Tomé** and **Maria Helena Menezes** argue the important role that the school plays in this context. Their research based rendition, does also provide a practical

example from Portugal on how the schools can approach the issue of media literacy in a way that is meaningful to young people.

One problem with the current educational system, often raised by researchers and practitioner in the area of digital media is the three-way conflict that lies within the appetites and interests of the current generation of “digital natives” on one hand, the awkward adaptive habits among older “digital immigrants” on the other and finally, the old-fashioned nature of an educational system quickly becoming irrelevant to the vast majority of students. In chapter five, **Milton Chen** (PhD) argues that change is required if one is to provide a much more robust and engaging education for today’s students. Furthermore, his paper discusses how this change can be facilitated through developing curricula to build on the natural interest of young people in using digital media.

The ability to foster democracy and participation through the use of media was one of the main focal points of the conference ‘Youth Media Democracy’, previously exemplified by the Fairsay campaign as described in chapter two. In chapter six, Professor **Máire Messenger Davies** provides an outline of a large collaborative study on how one media channel can contribute to foster citizenship and how it could be a model for participatory media, seeking contributions and direct responses from children. The paper presents outcomes from the study, which applied a mixed method approach of survey, video diaries and group activities.

Following in chapter seven and closely related to the above, **Tonyia Dowling** provides an outline of a number of case studies from Ireland’s national broadcaster RTÉ, which aim is to empower children and afford them democracy by casting them centre-stage across all of their out-put. Each of the case studies explains their approach in practice and demonstrates the very obvious involvement and engagement of the audience, the viewer, the participant, the child.

In the last chapter in this document, **Marion Creely** discuss the problems of children’s media in Africa in its global context, and describes the history of the growing collaboration between media workers in Ireland and South Africa to effect development in youth media in both countries.

Through its diversity of topics, this publication will contribute to lay bare some of the significant issues of why young people need to be encouraged and trained to use media as a tool for active citizenship. Furthermore, it demonstrates through its many examples from practice how the educational and media institutions can support young people to effect change in how society is run and how media is used.

Jan Pettersen, Editor.

Department of Social Sciences, Dublin Institute of Technology, January 2009.

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Mark Cantwell, Bríd Cannon, Maeve Clancy, Paul Dunne, Mark Finn, Katie Gillum, Barra Hamilton, Colm Ó Mongain, Matt Pokorny, Greg Prujarczyk and Tim Weedon, Seonid Dunn, RTÉ

Chair and Panelists:

Dr Edward Brennan, DIT, School of Media; Mary Curtis, Assistant Director of Productions, RTÉ; Prof Farrel Corcoran, DCU; Ciarda Tobin, Fresh Film Festival; Dr Brian O'Neill, DIT; Checkov Feeney, Indymedia; Firdoze Bulbulia, Faith Izikpere, 5th World Summit; Michael McLoughlin, Youth Work Ireland; Marion Creely, RTÉ.

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**A Presentation of the Youth Portion of the Conference
'Youth Media Democracy'**

Siobhán Clancy

Organisational Ethos

A distinctive feature of the conference was the integrated activities programme for young people that were run in parallel with the academic programme. These activities were designed to allow the youth to share their views on democracy through participating in media projects and presenting these themselves. An effort was made to incorporate the theme of democracy in the organisational ethos of this project by coordinators. The objective of this was to facilitate 'learning by doing' opportunities for all ages attending to express their experience. This section of the Youth, Media and Democracy conference report describes the planning, development, activities and evaluation processes undergone for the youth element of the event, a process which involved a lengthy consultation with youth organisations and young people. The above is outlined in detail throughout this report.

The aim of the conference was to incorporate a collaborative endeavour across the varied fields of youth work, media professionalism and academia. Each area operates different agendas with diverse priorities, which leads to challenges for the organisers of the event. On reflection of the event, the most obvious issue is that of trying to strike a balance between that which is 'parallel' and that which is 'integrated' and the conflicts that inevitably occur in a mixed-age, mixed-need, mixed-experience participant profile. The experience has been a massive learning curve in this regard; one which we hope will benefit future ambitions for the good of all stakeholders, especially young people.

In Table 1 on the following page, each stage of the experience are summarised with recommendations for future such initiatives.

Part 1	Planning	Concept Integrated Design Consultation
Part 2	Process	Youth Attendance Demo Doc Submissions Workshops Exchange and Development Presentations and Plenaries Documentary Volunteer Input Socialising
Part 3	Reflection	Evaluation Assessment Conclusion
Part 4	Appendix	Workshops and Facilitators

Table 1: Project Cycle

Part 1 Planning

Concept

In March 2007, Irish delegates from dán Project-Foroige, The Base Media Group and The Youth Channel (A KYTV initiative) traveled to Johannesburg, South Africa to attend the 5th World Summit on Children and Media. The experience was incredible, not least because of the multitude of diversity encountered there, infected with a youthful energy and refreshing approach to self-empowerment through new media. Through participation, the Irish young people and youth workers in attendance achieved the following:

- Improved media understanding and practice through attendance at workshops, seminars and lectures
- Improved understanding of humanitarian development issues through attendance at workshops, seminars, lectures and networking
- Development of networks across the world through participation in radio and TV interviews in Africa
- Follow-up reports to own communities on their experiences through interviews on local radio and in newsletters and self-produced documentaries
- Appearance on RTÉ's young peoples show TTV before and after the Summit emphasising ideas of global citizenship
- Natasha McConnell of The Base Media Goup set up a pilot project on media literacy in Ballyfermot using ideas learnt at the Summit
- KYTV invited African links to participate in their internet TV initiative

On return from Johannesburg, Irish Youth Media Development proposed to host a conference in Ireland that would enable further dissemination of the knowledge gained at

the World Summit with the view to provide a platform that would allow for exploration of issues surrounding youth and media from an Irish context incorporating youth groups from both the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland. The contribution made by the young people at the summit in the several plenary, presentations and debates had been particularly impressive. Above all, it was this model of cross-fertilisation that we youth workers, art workers and our young people were keen to develop on and promote through genuine modes of empowerment and creative expression for young people involved.

The project was awarded funding by Léargas under the Youth in Action democracy programme and the initial proposal cited the following ambitions:

“The Conference will involve leading keynote academic speakers and will also seek to engage policy makers, media professionals and youth workers. A distinctive feature of the event will be the parallel and integrated youth media conference which will feature the views and media projects of the youth themselves. Attending youth will present their work and also participate in practical workshops aimed at enhancing their skills. They will also participate in discussion of youth issues and recommending policy for the area of youth media.”

(Application Document, Unpublished)

Integrated Design

The conference title along with the conference logo were both developed by young people at the Computer Clubhouse hosted by SWICN, under supervision of the youth coordinator in an attempt to highlight shared concerns on youth, media and democracy. A section of the IYMD (www.irishyouthmedia.icom) website was dedicated to the provision of information and relevant forms for consent etc. to youth organisations.

The event was hosted by the School of Media, Dublin Institute of Technology where the progression from curricular tuition and extra-curricular interest to further training, higher education and professionalism had a tangible feel. Here, in the computer labs, lecture rooms and theatres, adults, students and young people could interact easily and share their experiences. Technical staff in the Media Department at DIT provided invaluable

working spaces and assistance throughout the event. Elevate Learning at the Digital Hub, Dublin 8 and Blackrock Education Centre, Co. Dublin generously lent digital media equipment for use in the workshops. Apple Mac Cork and O2 donated additional media for training purposes.

Consultation

Youth organisations were consulted in the coordination of the activities throughout the planning process. These organisations included those that had travelled to the 5th World Summit in 2007; The Base Media Group, dán Project-Foróige and Cinemagic. Spunout.ie, kindly came on board also to facilitate this event and support the young people involved. The consultation process involved several meetings and ongoing exchanges through an online Google group. This group identified the following objectives for the conference:

- To advocate democratic, intergenerational peer education through digital media forums
- To assess the relevance of mainstream media experiences to the education and development of Irish youth and their lived experience of democracy
- To explore positive developing platforms for the consumption, production and dissemination of issue-based media for and by youth
- To collate experiential insights from young participants and facilitate a genuine process of consultation in the development of policy regarding Youth, Media and Democracy

The input of these organisations was invaluable to the coordination of youth involvement. On reflection of the event, it was recommended that any future projects would invite increased contribution by youth to the overall planning of the projects in order to fully facilitate an integrated event that is youth orientated in both methodology and execution.

The above mentioned organisations also assisted in the promotion of the event through online fora, in publications, by telephone and verbally amongst their target base of youth and beyond. Young Urban Arts, an arts initiative by Dublin City Council, CityArts and CDYSB (City of Dublin Youth Services Board) promoted the conference to youth groups from all over Dublin at the 2007 Rush Film Screening where the documentary of the 5th

World Summit by dán Project-Foróige was also shown. With the assistance of these organisations, youth from both the North and South of Ireland were targeted for involvement.

Part 2 Process

Youth Attendance

Youth workers in Foróige presented the conference to the Youth Reference Panel and a group of representatives from Foróige youth clubs all over the country applied to attend. The Base Media Group and Kilbarrack Youth Group represented Dublin North and South. One young person from SWICN Computer Clubhouse applied to participate in the DV-Journalists Workshop run by Regenr8TV which provided training and supervision to a group of young people to empower them to perform as DV-Journalists covering the conference. Members of the Fairsay Group, a Dail na nÓg campaign group working in conjunction with the Office of the Ombudsman for Children volunteered to sit on panels as youth representatives during plenary sessions. Through the support of Cinemagic, Dees St. Youth Club from Belfast brought young people on board who had been previously involved in the Starlight project. Young people from The Youth Panel, an arts and media group based at OMAC (Old Market Arts Centre) in Belfast swelled numbers from the North. 55 young people aged between 13 and 18 years attended in all, 26 of whom were from Northern Ireland.

In order to fully facilitate participation by young people from a variety of social backgrounds, accommodation, meals and travel expenses were covered by the Léargas funding. Where possible, the coordinator met the groups prior to the conference. A special induction was facilitated for the groups travelling from the North at OMAC, by Cinemagic and the IYMD coordinator. This was a fun afternoon where the young people had the opportunity to get to know each other and learn about the upcoming conference.

Unfortunately, the lead-in period to the conference from planning to event was very short. While information on the conference was sent to a wide spectrum of youth bodies, not all could be followed up to the degree necessary to guarantee inclusion. For example,

schools that need to plan well in advance of such projects had restricted possibilities to get involved. Indeed, by the time the youth groups planning to attend had been confirmed, there was no opportunity to facilitate an integration event specifically for the young people. This would have greatly benefited the interactive potential of the groups and enhanced the social opportunities for the young people. It is recommended that should such an event be held again, a much longer lead-in time will be allocated not only to facilitate greater inclusion and improve the relationships of the young people, but also to facilitate direct input in the planning by the experienced youth leaders of the groups involved.

Demo Doc Submissions

Alongside the invitation to attend the conference, young people from all over the country were called on to contribute to topics of discussion by submitting their own media productions documenting the choices they face in life and how those choices are made. These ‘Demo Docs’ largely took the form of video and web articles. Submissions came from Swan Youth Service, Star Youth Group, Youth Matters KCCP, Spunout.ie and The Black Ditch Crew.

Workshops

A general callout invited individuals and organisations to submit proposals for workshops that they could facilitate at the conference. This was publicised online and through e-bulletins both in the North and South of Ireland through arts, media and youth agencies. Again, this was facilitated by the consulting youth organisations .

The actual selection of the workshops was made by a panel of three adults Marion Creely and Siobhan Clancy (IYMD), Niamh Geoghegan, (Young Urban Arts) and three young people (from The Base Media project, dán Project-Foroige and Spunout.ie). This process further facilitated the empowerment of young people to be engaged in the decision-making for events that seek to directly involve them. In future projects such as this, it is recommended that the involvement of a youth-led panel be facilitated in planning, promotion, coordination, presentation and facilitation of their peers.

The criteria for inclusion of workshop proposals were focused on the provision of quality workshops for young people and adults relevant to the themes of the event. Not only should the workshops enable participants to explore democracy, but the methodology of the facilitators and the platforms they use should also ideally reflect democratic processes of production and information sharing. While many excellent proposals were received, some were more in keeping with the topics of democracy and youth media than others. Each panellist scored the proposals out of 10 for the following:

1. Original/Fun/Interesting/Appealing to Youth
2. Address the theme 'Youth, Media & Democracy'
3. Potential for participant to learn at workshop
4. Potential for hands-on activity by participant at workshop
5. Potential for participant to apply skills/learning after the workshop

The selection was publicised on the IYMD website and conference attendees were invited to choose the workshops they most wanted to attend. Groups were dispersed to encourage interaction between young people and places were assigned in the top 6 workshops of their choice, when possible. The emphasis in the workshops was placed on an engaging process. Wherever outcomes of the workshops involved a production, samples will be facilitated on www.irishyouthmedia.ie. Feedback from young people and youth leaders highlighted the high standard of facilitation and the engaging content of the workshops. Information on the chosen workshops and the facilitators that provided them is included as an appendix to this chapter (available for download only: www.irishyouthmedia.com). Comments from the young people and youth leaders that participated are included in Part 3 'Reflection'. While all the young people attending participated in several workshops, there were few adults present, apart from youth leaders. It is recommended that in a future event of this kind, improved time scheduling will better facilitate crossover, so more adults will be able to avail of the opportunity to get hands-on experience of media production, while building relationships with youth.

At the final session of the conference, some facilitators presented the work done by the young people in the workshops. Those who attended the Hip Hop and Democracy Workshop did a fantastic live rap performance to adult and youth attendees accompanied by a special mix by facilitators Mark Finn and Tim Weedon.

Exchange and Development

Niamh Geoghegan of Young Urban Arts facilitated two ‘Think-Tanks’ to facilitate the exchange of ideas of the attendees and to develop on potential experience:

1. A Networking Session for youth and creative media workers to share knowledge and address limitations. Young people participated in the discussion.
2. A ‘Chat Café’ for youth and leaders to explore ideas on culture, identity and democracy. The discussions enabled a strong youth perspective to emerge.

Conclusions from the Networking Session

Feedback from the youth leaders attending the conference commented on the valuable networking opportunities afforded by the varied activities and speakers. At this session the following was highlighted by youth and adults in attendance:

- All attending expressed an interest in developing ways of using media as a developmental tool with young people to explore youth issues.
- Practical experience opportunities using a ‘hands on approach’ was agreed to be most effective. Film was identified by the young people present as a particularly accessible tool for youthStory boarding, scriptwriting etc enables the art and technique within film. Therefore, training is important.
- Creativity without theme was sometimes more effective in that it encourages confidence and imagination

Conclusions from the Chat Café

Whilst all the workshops and presentations touched on the subject in different ways, this session on the second morning of the conference was the only activity that involved a dedicated discussion on the theme of democracy by young people. It soon became obvious that the young participants had a lot of insights on democracy and the role of media, both from the day before and from previous experiences in their youth groups and schools.

On reflection, it is wholly apparent that young people can make meaningful contributions to theoretical discussion on these matters. In the future, it is recommended that opportunities to facilitate discussion and exchange of ideas be expanded on before, during and after an event. In this case, a brainstorming session in the first morning could have benefited cohesion of the participants and focused development in the workshops.

The input of youth workers was considerable in both these sessions and proves what an invaluable resource of information and experience can be gained from the field. Some comments from youth workers were:

“I think one of the greatest achievements is people from the youth sector and media people getting together and discussing this growing medium.”

“As a first conference, I believe the youth, media and democracy was a great success. Large numbers of young people involved, interesting workshops. As previously stated, democracy may have been a bit of a challenge to the first conference but I would see this be viable if the conference was to happen again.”

Presentations and Plenary

Speakers at the conference were invited to make presentations that would be relevant to young people, such as self-made media on WeTV with Bríd Cannon of RTÉ. Cairda Tobin, Fresh Film Festival and Joan Burney, Cinemagic facilitated presentations on both days. Young people were also invited to present their own projects. Young members of the Fatima Film Club screened part of their documentary ‘On the Block’, which was produced with coordinator and producer Katie Lincoln and shown on RTÉ earlier in the year. On the Block showed the changes in the locality and relationships of the young people under the redevelopment. Young adult members of Revolt Video, Lukas Barrett and Barra Hamilton, talked about activism amongst youth and the collective efforts of young adults to highlight issues of social and political relevance not just to them, but to society in Ireland and beyond. They used many forms of media to do this for a range of platforms such as radio, web, community television, social gathering screenings, guerrilla projections, etc.

Members of the Fairsay Campaign represented the views of young participants by sitting on panels and participating in many discussions on both days. Many other young people also attended conference presentations and discussions. This demonstrated the depth of genuine interest in media by young people attending and also their determination to fully participate in the events and make their views heard. Young people expressed a special

interest in presentations by speakers such as Milton Chen, Chip Bruce, Seonaid Dunne and Ian Prince, who invited their presence and welcomed their direct input.

At the 'wrap-up' session of the conference, facilitators Maeve Clancy and Katie Gillum demonstrated the process of a sample of workshops and showed work produced by the young people. A panel including Niamh Geoghegan, of Young Urban Arts, Paul Dunne, of RegenR8TV and Natasha McConnell, of the Base Media Group made suggestions regarding the potential ongoing contribution IYMD could make to youth and media issues which included:

1. The establishment of an interactive website that showcased youth productions, linked to relevant initiatives and hosted downloadable tutorials for youth leaders.
2. Future conference/events that invited stakeholders and policy makers in education and communications.
3. Development of accessible opportunities for young people from varied social backgrounds.

Young people that had attended the Hip Hop and Democracy Workshop performed the raps they created. Sixteen year old local rap artist Kirsty McCarthy aka 'Krisma' brought proceedings to a close with an uplifting rap from her own collection.

Documentary

RegenR8TV offered induction and an intensive 'crash-course' training to youth participants in digital video documentary/reporting of the conference. One young person from SWICN Computer Clubhouse and four from Kilbarrack Youth Group signed up for the experience. Live interviews, documentary footage and presentation techniques were implemented in the two day training. This group also worked alongside some of the team from Da Gist who were also covering the event. Da Gist was a pilot TV project by The Digital Hub in partnership with Bradóg Youth Services, where groups are trained and supported to make TV by young people for young people. A TV Report on the conference was included in the first series of Da Gist broadcast on DCTV in Autumn 2008. Extracts can be found on www.irishyouthmedia.com. A young person from dán

Project-Foróige briefly stepped away from conference to feature in a live interview on young people's RTÉ show 'TTV' telling youth nationwide about the activities underway.

Volunteer Input

An undoubtedly invaluable resource to the effective running of the conference was the huge contribution by volunteers. Students of the Dublin Institute of Technology, in association with the D.I.T. Students Union (DITSU), provided assistance on both days for registration, directions, workshop set-up and general personal assistance.

4 employees of Hibernian Insurance offered hands-on assistance to facilitators throughout the workshops. Special thanks is due to Niall McCumiskey, Shane Meally, Maria McCabe and Keith Garland for their immense support and generous donation of time, skills and good humour!

Socialising

A special dinner event catered to the culinary and musical tastes of the young people in attendance. One or two of the more 'young-at-heart' adults from the conference joined in. A double decker bus kindly provided by Dublin Bus added to the thrill of the journey to the Donore Avenue Youth and Community Centre where Manus Moynihan of dán Project-Foróige welcomed visiting young people. The relaxed atmosphere in the new youth centre allowed the young people to chill out and mingle together after an intense day of workshops and presentations, not to mention the long distance travelled by many.

Delicious vegetarian food was provided by The People's Kitchen, a collective of gourmet activists involved in social initiatives that serve democracy with conscientiously cooked meals. (See www.seomraspraoi.org) A backdrop of Hip Hop over dinner wound into a full blown live event by young performers from the Young DJ Academy and two raps were especially composed for the event. (See www.youngdjacademy.com)

Part 3 Reflection

Evaluation;

Following the conference, the youth coordinator made follow-up phone calls to all the youth leaders involved to encourage immediate feedback. Evaluation forms for youth were sent to the leaders and completed forms were received back from 25% of the attending youth groups. For any future project, it is recommended that creative evaluation opportunities be built into the event to facilitate effective feedback measures. Of those evaluations received, the following is a selection of comments by young people:

1. What did you learn about youth from other clubs/groups during the conference?

“Many people view youths in a stereotypical way and their views of our thoughts and feelings may not be an accurate reflection.”

“A vast range of groups are interested in media They come from a spectra of different backgrounds. They are more involved than I expected.”

“Each group was different but we could still get on.”

“There are many groups like mine that have different ideas, abilities, experiences.”

2. What did you learn about democracy?

“Democracy affects everyone in different ways, say between adults and ‘youth’. Adults still don’t understand how we see and are affected by democracy today.”

“That it isn’t very youth related. It mostly deals with adult issues.”

“I was surprised that so many adults actually cared in the slightest about youth (at the adult talks I found this out).”

“I learnt to speak up in order for my views to be heard.”

“That it means a lot more than politics.”.

“It has actually helped develop our technology usage.”

3. What did you learn about yourself from this experience?

“I’m cool!.”

”I have learnt how my actions can affect others and how I can participate more in society.”

“It is a powerful weapon that can be used to influence what people think.”

“Youth actually understand democracy far better than adults. Adults try and make things seem more difficult when ‘youths’ like we see the simpler picture.”

“I want to work in film when I’m older.”

“I have a voice and films can get across what I want to say.”

“What I’ve learned about media before the conference can actually be useful.”

4. How do you feel you will use what you have learned in the future?

“We will be able to have a much better say but also to listen to other people and respect their comments.”

“I feel that my decisions will be more informed in the future.”

“Websites for free legal music to use in films/editing skills/ideas for films/ awareness of different film festivals etc.”

“I can see myself using what I’ve learned if I ever get more involved with youth and media. I can use them at OMAC too.”

“I would enjoy attending this again in the near future.”

5. Other Comments

“Have it more youth orientated; mix adults and youth in workshops.”

“I feel the staff weren’t very youth-friendly. I also think the conference could have been made more youth related.”

“The views of the ‘youths’ by adults is far off the scale. They think that because they teach ‘youths’ they completely understand them. They really don’t.”

“Great craic!”

“Thanks very much.”

The variety of opinions from the young people demonstrate the varied level of interests, needs, expectations and previous experience. In order to facilitate a thoroughly qualitative and quantitative evaluation, a longer process of research and monitoring is

required that was lacking in this event. In addition to this, it is obvious that the attitudes and methods of engagement by adults with young people has a direct impact on their experience. This again emphasises the need to work very closely with youth workers in every step of organisation and also the imperative of involving young people actively in that process. In their feedback, youth workers highlighted exactly these concerns;

The Léargas Programme for Youth in Action Projects states that: “*The participatory approach is also a state of mind, an attitude.*”

Describe how you feel this attitude was reflected in the the Youth, Media & Democracy Conference Project

“I think some of the organisers could have been a bit more youth orientated.”

“I felt that many of the organisers in particular saw the youth elements as the add-ons rather than the main event. There could have been more engagement with adults and young people as part of the conference. A clear understanding of youth work and a willingness to follow this way of working by all event organisers would have ensured a more consistent approach to the youth element.”

Other Comments

“More youth worker input, additional ice-breaker activities, increased crossover with ‘adult’ events and extra breaks would have benefited the integration of the varied social profiles of the young people attending.”

“No room for evaluation at end of project days. [In the Wrap up session] felt that any comments were being answered back. No space to let comments hang, didn’t feel like a safe space.”

“Explanations given to event organisers for particular behaviour of young people was not accepted, this would need to be dealt with if we were to participate again.”

“Agendas of all adults involved need to be clear and defined. Particular appreciation given to [youth coordinator] for all her hard work on youth elements of conference. Very approachable and considerate of the varied needs of young people.”

“Most young people enjoyed the experience and got a lot out of it. Networking opportunity was excellent. More sessions aimed at youth workers including teaching aids and practical demonstrations of how to do projects in own clubs would be welcome.”

Assessment

Achievements:

From the outset, an integrated conference for young people and adults on the themes of youth, media and democracy proved to be an ambitious, but thoroughly worthwhile effort. The achievements from this experience are only relevant as part of an ongoing process of endeavor:

1. Advocating democratic, intergenerational peer education through digital media forums
2. Providing practical assessment of the relevance of mainstream media experiences to the education and development of Irish youth and their lived experience of democracy
3. Exploring positive developing platforms for the consumption, production and dissemination of issue-based media for and by youth
4. Collating experiential insights from young participants and facilitate a genuine process of consultation in the development of policy regarding Youth, Media and Democracy
5. Implementing learning from the 5th World Summit of Youth and Media
6. Cultivating meaningful exchanges for youth, academics, media practitioners and policy makers
7. Facilitating democratic discourse through the empowered self-representation of young people
8. Sharing digital media skills and providing self-development for participants
9. Advocating positive policy development through the facilitation of effective, informed contributions by all participants
10. Creating network opportunities for academics and professionals to enhance media development and the dissemination of good practice in the field of youth and participation.

Recommendations:

Recommendations have been extracted from the main body of this chapter where they are detailed in context. They are summarized as the following:

1. Policy development and practical support for inclusion of interested young people from a spectrum of backgrounds, experience and advantage
2. Invitation to youth organizations to make increased contribution to the overall planning in order to fully facilitate an integrated event that is youth orientated in methodology and execution.
3. A longer lead-in time to achieve the above and also to facilitate improved interaction of the young people involved
4. A youth-led panel be facilitated in planning, promotion, coordination, presentation and facilitation of their peers.
5. Opportunities to facilitate discussion and exchange of ideas be expanded on before, during and after an event for participants
6. Creative qualitative and quantitative evaluation opportunities be built into the event to monitor the developing initiative and facilitate effective feedback

Youth workers were invited to comment on the viability of continuing to pursue these goals.

Do you feel this project has a potential for a sustainable future? Please describe:

“Yes, I can see this getting bigger and bigger.”

“Yes I definitely think the project would have a sustainable future however, a number of changes would be need to be implemented before I wold be comfortable engaging again. My main concern would be around particular organisers of the conerence and their attitude to young people in particular disadvantaged areas. Event organisers need to be actually aware that not all youth groups of young people are the same and their needs greatly differ.”

“We would definitely like to be involved in future events. We would advocate that youth practitioners are closely involved in the planning of the event to ensure it is pitched at right level.”

Conclusion

“The greatest lessons in life, if we would but stoop and humble ourselves, we would learn not from grown-up learned men, but from the so-called ignorant children.”
– Mahatma Gandhi

This experience has been a huge learning curve for the collective organizers. It has given us the opportunity to reflect on our own values and methodologies as practitioners in the varied spheres of youth work, media professionalism and academia. It is obvious that there is a lot of room for improvement in our collaborative efforts and a need to clarify and refocus our shared objectives. Of all the learning outcomes, the recurring realization from this experience is the responsibility of adults to facilitate involvement of young people in issues and events that concern them and not just offload them in ‘youth activities’ instituted by adults. Handpicking a few ‘experienced youth’ to represent the spectrum of experience of all young people is not only ineffective, it is dangerously tokenistic. This point was aptly stated by Fiodhna Horan-Murphy, member of Fairsay Campaign, at the Wrap Up session of the conference.

If any progress is to be made on this issue, it is the recognition that limitations on the means and opportunity for young people to self organization and expression must be lifted. Provisions must be made for responsible education, play and training in media usage for young people of all backgrounds and social advantage in order for the effort to be genuinely empowering. Only an inclusive grassroots ethos will enable young people to address their identities and their roles in their communities as whole individuals, whose experience is appreciated on an equal par with that of adults, uninhibited by their social status no more than by their age, gender, race, sexual orientation or religion.

Youth media is not just a fashionable concept. It is a social movement currently making a global impact that challenges how we think about ourselves, our communities and our values. As instigators, advocates and facilitators of quality media experience for young people, the motivation within IYMD can only prosper through understanding the fundamental importance of youth empowerment throughout processes concerning them and opportunities in their present-day lives. This will not happen without finding ways to ensure that means are provided to promote accessibility. The surest way to do this effectively is to involve young people and youth leaders in every step of the process, not just in a consultation capacity, and not just restricted to the 'youth agenda', but through active decision-making and facilitation in all aspects.

A lot was achieved through the combined effort of many people at this conference however, there is a long road ahead if we are to maintain and develop on the achievements. It is just as well that on the path to a brighter future, we may work by the sides of such earnest, articulate and positive young people.

Reflections on Youth, Media, and Democracy

Bertram C. Bruce

One of the highlights of my year in Dublin was to attend the conference on *Youth, Media and Democracy* on 18-19 April, 2008 at Dublin Institute of Technology and the Digital Hub. The conference explored the ways that new media and information & communication technologies (ICTs) affect the activities, roles, and relationships of youth, through topics such as new media, emerging literacies, digital divide, representations of youth in media, and new media as a platform for democracy in the lives of young people. It also examined how youth can express themselves through new media and showcased youth-created media.

There was an excellent programme, with presentations from youth groups using a variety of media—film (documentaries, personal stories, what-ifs), comics, hip hop, remix (VJ-ing, web video mashups), object animation, radio, and more. There were also interesting talks about the *Fresh Film Festival*, media policy, the *5th World Summit on Media for Children* held in Johannesburg, the *Story of Movies*, and much more.

These presentations extended what I had been learning during a year in Ireland looking at new media in school and community settings. Through the *Digital Literacy in Irish Primary Schools (DLIPS)* project, I visited several primary schools in the Liberties area of Dublin which worked with the Digital Hub Learning Initiative. I also visited 24 infant, primary, and post-primary schools in the Docklands area through *Technology in Docklands Education (TIDE)* project. This gave me a wonderful opportunity to see a wide variety of learning technologies and ways of organizing classroom learning. Many of the most successful classroom projects have involved some version of digital storytelling similar to what I saw at the conference.

In these visits, I saw how youth learn teamwork, collaboration, creativity and co-operative learning using a project-based learning approach. You can get a flavor of these projects from an RTÉ video at the Francis St CBS (primary level), one of the schools I've worked in: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z5DfFvRGkHsI>

There is a large set of videos posted on YouTube describing the Learning Initiative's work, including this good introduction: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TqwiqC3-yw0>. One such project, also presented at the conference, is *Digital Hub FM*, a community radio station. Community members of all ages receive training in radio production and then carry out the research, broadcasting, and station management themselves. The broadcasts include music, entertainment, discussion, local history, and youth programs.

Community as Curriculum

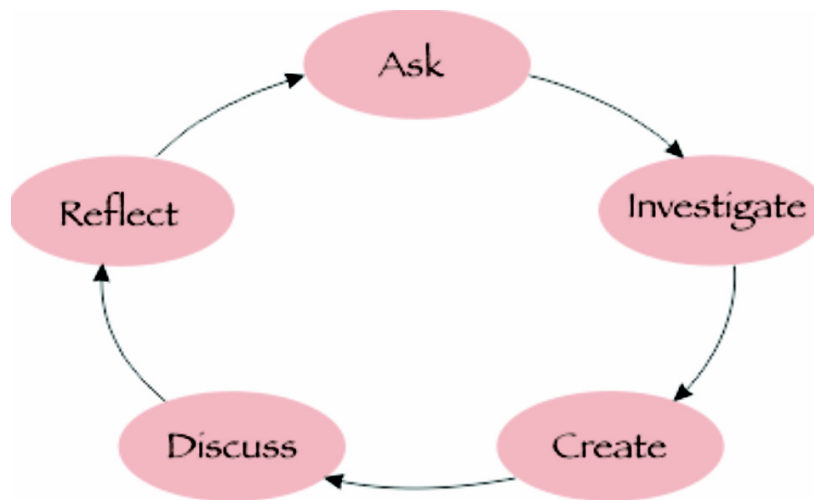
In the various presentations, I saw excellent examples of what we might call "community as curriculum". This means basing learning, not on a formal sequence of facts and skills, as we often do in formal settings, but instead basing it on the lived experiences of young people. As John Dewey argued in his report on Turkish education (1983, p. 293),

“The great weakness of almost all schools, a weakness not confined in any sense to Turkey, is the separation of school studies from the actual life of children and the conditions and opportunities of the environment. The school comes to be isolated and what is done there does not seem to the pupils to have anything to do with the real life around them, but to form a separate and artificial world.”

In contrast, the conference offered many examples of learning growing out of the "actual life of children and the conditions and opportunities of the environment." Viewed this way, media, whether that be in the form of a broadcast or a youth-created podcast, becomes not merely the means by which we communicate, but a form of inquiry.

We can then describe it in terms of an *inquiry cycle* (Graph 1, below), involving asking,

investigating, creating, discussing, and reflecting (Bruce & Bishop, 2008). The cycle represents that genuine inquiry typically involves reflection on experiences, learning to understand oneself as well as the world around; asking meaningful questions and formulating one's own goals; investigating the world through multiple sources and media; creating, actively transforming the world; and throughout, discussing with others and collaborating:



Graph 1 – Inquiry Cycle (Bruce & Bishop, 2008).

In this paper, I'd like to share some observations related to the process of inquiry, collaborative inquiry, inquiry and media, and social justice.

Genuine Inquiry: Dáil na nÓg Fairsay Campaign

Consider just one of many excellent examples at the conference: The Dáil na nÓg campaign grew out of *reflection* on mainstream media and how it portrays youth. That led to *asking* questions about what could be done to encourage mainstream media to provide more balanced coverage of youth, especially to show the diversity of youth activities and not just negative images. Dáil na nÓg means “youth parliament”. Young people come as representatives of their local area to tell decision makers in Government what they think of issues that affect their daily lives.

Following their reflection and asking, the Dáil na nÓg representatives then *investigated* media, collecting data they could use to make their arguments. Their campaign, called *Fairsay*, led to multiple meetings to *discuss* the issues and data with media and policy makers.

At the conference, the young Dáil na nÓg representatives continued the *discussion*. They gave excellent presentations and participated fully in panel discussions, demonstrating by their presence how young people can learn social responsibility, communication skills, and connected understanding through active civic participation.

All of this then led to further *reflection*. For example, the discussions revealed that the Fairsay work is only partly sanctioned by the schools. When Dáil na nÓg representatives were waiting for a media callback they had to have their mobile phones on vibrate during class. When a call came it had to be taken down the hall in the study room.

The discouraging implication is that the classroom might be a place to teach about government or media, but not to actively engage with it. Any teacher knows the many distractions available today for young people, mobile phones being near the top of the list. Still, it's unfortunate that we can't find better ways (this applies to US schools even more) to make actually participating in democracy take precedence over just talking about it.

Nevertheless, the young people at the conference showed how they could use media, at least in out-of-school settings, to move beyond the spectator role to become active participants in government and media policy. Their use of media showed that it had become a tool for their own inquiry.

Learning Together: Digital Literacy in Irish Primary Schools (DLIPS)

In one school I visited, I saw a fourth class of boys who had read *The Hundred-Mile-An-Hour Dog* by Jeremy Strong. They then used storyboards, clay animation, a digital

camera, and online music to create a digital story. There were six groups and each one responded to a different chapter in the book,

The novel was the overall winner of the 1997 Red House Children's Book Award. You can get an idea of the story from Strong's description:

Streaker is a dog that can run as fast as a whirlwind. Unfortunately she is badly trained. She doesn't know her name and doesn't know what 'Stop!' means either. She is driving everyone mad. Then Trevor takes on a bet with nasty Charlie Smugg. Trevor will train Streaker in two weeks, or he will have to bath in a tub full of muck and frogspawn. Can Trevor's friend Tina help - or is Tina after something else quite different?

When A. and I talked with the boys we had exchanges such as:

A/C: Do you like this?

B: Yes!

A/C: Can you tell us why?

B: Because it's fun, not work.

A/C: But aren't you working hard?

B: Well, yes, it's work, but it's different.

We also heard, "it's easier to think in groups," "[when you have a question] you go back to the story," and "[when we disagree] we talk it out." The activity combined art—sketches, coloring, clay figures, collage backdrops; group work—planning, sharing work, dispute resolution; technology—audio files and editing, digital photography, photostory; as well as reading and writing.

The principal says that activities like this—it's really a whole program—have totally changed teaching and learning in the school. It's boosted self-esteem and helped the school re-connect with the community. She "can't imagine the school without it." The work develops multiple intelligences, fosters project work, leads to integrated learning, and addresses the standard curriculum goals in the process. Teachers learn from each other, and maybe from the children, too. In the conference, we saw these ideas extended

to computer clubs, after-school programmes, community centres, online sites, and a variety of other settings.

Inquiry and Media

Many people would say that new technologies speed up life, indicated by terms such as “fast forward” or “multitasking.” The same people might add that because young people live in a fast-paced, digitally-enhanced world, we need to change schooling accordingly. If we don’t use technologies to match their pace, we’ll lose them. Moreover, there is so much more to learn today. We need to use podcasts, mobile technologies, video, on-demand resources, blogs, SMS, and other tools to speed up learning for the millennial generation.

Other people question the rush to new learning technologies. They argue that it’s good to learn in a slow, considered, and reflective way. Better to immerse oneself in a book, to read, even re-read difficult passages. Schooling should counter, not acquiesce to, the blur of modern life.

This debate is unlikely to reach an easy resolution. But as is often the case, the polar opposites here share some unquestioned assumptions. Both seem to think that the new technologies accelerate; they just disagree about whether that’s a good or bad thing.

However, when I have observed learning in both classrooms and out-of-school settings involving a thoughtful use of new technologies, I have often seen the contrary: Learning seems stretched out or slowed down. This applies to many of the activities reported at the conference.

For example, students working with *The Hundred-Mile-An-Hour Dog*, built dioramas for scenes in the story, constructed clay figurines for the characters, photographed events in each episode, wrote narration for the scenes, checked grammar and spelling, and eventually created a photo story. This took many class sessions and involved discussions about the story, choices in design and presentation, and referring to the text for details.

Certainly the new technologies (digital camera, computer) made it easier to carry out aspects of the project. But the overall effect was to engage the students in a deeper, more critical form of reading and response.

During this time, they didn't read as many stories as they might have, or write as many words. One might say that their learning slowed down. At the same time it had become more substantive and meaningful. In contrast, their usual activities are sometimes rushed and unreflective.

So now, I would like to flip the debate. Those who embrace the new technologies need to say that they're good, not because they accommodate the fast pace of modern life, but because they slow it down. And those who oppose them need to realize that we often use the old tools in cursory, shallow ways which might be corrected with new technologies.

Social Justice and Youth Development

Youth at the conference showed what I see as a realization of the *social justice youth development model* in which self awareness, social awareness, and global awareness guide growth. Shawn Ginwright and James, Taj (2002) present this as including the elements of:

- Analyzing power within social relationships
- Making identity central
- Promoting systemic change
- Encouraging collective action
- Embracing youth culture

These were elements in many of the projects, workshops, and presentations at the conference. Jeannie Oakes and John Rogers (2006) develop similar ideas, showing that engaging young people in community-based research in collaboration with universities can be a powerful force for learning and change.

Young people need to use language to solve problems that are meaningful to their daily lives in order to take charge of their own learning. They also need to learn how to

participate actively in community building. In the Paseo Boricua neighborhood in Chicago (Bruce, 2008, Bruce, 2008, June; Bruce & Bishop, 2008; Flores-Gonzalez, Rodriguez, & Rodriguez-Muniz, 2006; Johnson, 2005) there are three aspects to the curriculum, a curriculum that spans from early childhood to old age and from school to community. The first involves *learning about the world in a connected way*. Literacy follows Paulo Freire's idea of learning to read the word in order to read the world (Freire, 1998/1970; Freire & Macedo, 1987). It means actively participating in that world as both critic and creator. This philosophy positions each student as a whole, living being. One rarely hears talk of deficits, but rather of caring, strengths, and potentials for growth.

The second area focuses *learning how to act responsibly in the world*, by first understanding themselves and their Latino heritage. This ensures that the continuity of lived experiences is a present reality for youth that their daily challenges can be conceived in relation to the larger world and the experiences of others.

The third area is *learning how to transform the world*, to give back to the community. Classes include video, 'bomba y plena' (two different percussion-driven musical traditions), dance, guitar, and journalism, as well as analysis of community resources and challenges. Recently, for example, youth have been making pod-casts about their school and community. Across disciplines of history, biology, English, mathematics, and others, youth learn about themselves as active participants in their community.

Conclusion

The *Youth, Media and Democracy* conference became both medium and message. We heard about, viewed, and participated in a wide variety of projects in which youth participate in democracy through new media. But as we experienced the two days, we also reflected upon youth today, on media, and on what makes a democracy. We asked new questions; we investigated in a hands-on way; we created; and we discussed with the youth and each other. Thus, the conference not only reported on *Youth, Media and Democracy*; it became an opportunity to continue the inquiry.

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THREE

Beyond Technology: Rethinking learning in the age of digital culture

David Buckingham

Promises, promises...

Technology, we are frequently told, is fundamentally transforming education. It challenges existing definitions of knowledge, offers new ways of motivating reluctant learners, and promises endless opportunities for creativity and innovation. There has been a long history of such grandiose claims, dating back well before the advent of computers. Early advocates of the use of film and television in education, for example, made similarly fantastic predictions that these media would lead to far-reaching changes in the nature of learning – and indeed that the school itself would soon become redundant.

The current push to insert computers in classrooms is principally driven by commercial companies seeking new and predictable markets for their products; and by governments that are apparently desperate to solve what they regard as the problems of public education. Both typically espouse a form of technological determinism, and a belief in the all-conquering power of technology. This in turn results in an instrumental view of technology's role in education. Technology is seen as a neutral mechanism for delivering information; and information itself is regarded as a kind of disembodied object that exists independently of human or social interests. This has led to a neglect of basic educational issues, not only about *how we teach* with technology, but also about *what children need to know* about it.

Despite the claims of the marketers, there is now a growing body of research that suggests that the impact of technology on teachers' everyday practice is quite limited. Many teachers resist the use of technology, not because they are old-fashioned or ignorant, but because they recognise that it does not help them to achieve their objectives. There is very little persuasive evidence that the use of technology in itself improves

students' achievement. Of course, some teachers are using technology in very thoughtful and creative ways; but most uses of technology in schools are narrow, unimaginative and instrumental.

When faced with this evidence, advocates of technology tend to say that it is still early days, and that real and lasting change is just around the corner. Yet digital technology has been in schools for more than a quarter of a century: the promised revolution has not yet happened, and there is little reason to believe that it will arrive any time soon. Nevertheless, my own position is not one of outright opposition to technology. I feel there has been an unhelpful polarisation in the popular debate between the dewy-eyed enthusiasts who regard technology as the saviour of education and the gloomy pessimists who believe we are all going to technological hell. It is surely time for a different approach.

The new digital divide

As a media educator, one of my primary interests is in the relationship between children's everyday cultures and practices outside school and those they encounter in the classroom. In relation to digital technology, there is now a significant – and perhaps widening – gap between what children do in school and what they do in their leisure time. This is what I call the new digital divide. Despite massive investment in technology in schools, and despite the far-reaching enthusiasm that has accompanied it, much of what takes place in education has remained relatively untouched by technology. Yet outside school, children are living increasingly media-saturated childhoods. Children's independent access to media technology has grown significantly; and they are participating in an increasingly diverse and increasingly commercialised media culture – a culture that some adults are finding it difficult to understand and control.

I am not suggesting that the old digital divide has been superseded. On the contrary, there are still significant inequalities in access to technology, and in the skills and competencies that are required to use it; and these are inequalities that schools absolutely must address. Indeed, we should be wary of the easy rhetoric of the so-called 'digital

generation’ – the notion that young people are all busily communicating and creating online, and that they have a spontaneous affinity with technology that older people do not.

Even so, when we look at what children are doing with this technology outside school, it is clear that it is primarily a medium for popular culture. Children who have access to computers at home are using them for playing games, surfing entertainment sites on the internet, instant messaging, social networking, and downloading and editing video and music. Beyond doing functional tasks for homework, very few of them are using technology for anything that much resembles school learning. By contrast, what they are doing with technology in school is very limited. The subject of Information and Communication Technology is largely about word-processing, spreadsheets and file management – in effect, the *Microsoft Office* curriculum. It offers little more than decontextualised training in functional skills. This is not to say that these skills may not be important for some people at some stage in their lives; although it is certainly debatable whether it is necessary, or even a particularly effective use of resources, for children to be trained in them in school.

There is now growing evidence that children generally find the use of technology in school boring and unimaginative. Some are resigned to this, seeing it as an inevitable fact of life; but others are positively disaffected, and some actively resist it. Particularly for those who are most engaged with technology in their everyday lives, and who may well go on to seek technologically-focused employment, the use of technology in school is largely perceived as irrelevant. This is hardly surprising. Historically, schooling has often been characterised by a blank rejection of students’ everyday popular culture – and indeed there is a kind of paranoia about the loss of control that happens when popular culture enters the space of the school. To this extent, what I am calling the new digital divide merely reflects a broader historical disjunction between young people’s everyday leisure culture and the culture of the school.

Addressing the new digital divide

Can we do anything about this situation – and indeed, *should* we? Some would argue that what children do outside school is not the proper concern of teachers: children get enough of this popular culture in their daily lives, so why should they need to think about it in school – let alone study it? Many would argue that what happens in school is necessarily different from what happens outside – that schooling is a form of induction into high-status knowledge, and that school learning is necessarily formal in a way that out-of-school learning is not. While I have some sympathy with this argument, it is obviously one that sees little scope for change: it seems to assume that high-status knowledge is to be taken for granted, and it accepts as given distinctions between high culture and popular culture that are in fact historically and culturally relative.

For my part, I feel that schools have a responsibility to address the realities of children's lives outside school – which self-evidently includes their engagement with popular culture, and their leisure uses of technology. However, we need to be wary of a superficial response. For example, there are some who seek to celebrate children's engagement with computer games. They point out (quite correctly) that playing games can involve a whole series of complex learning processes. Yet they argue that it is here that the most significant learning is taking place, and that the school is almost a lost cause. This celebratory argument typically entails a wholly positive, uncritical stance towards popular culture. Those who extol the benefits of computer games for learning tend to ignore the commercial dimensions of games, and avoid awkward questions about their values and ideologies. They also engage in a rather ill-defined valorisation of 'informal learning', in which formal learning is seen as something inherently bad. This argument takes very little account of the realities of schools and classrooms – and indeed of the very many problems that would be entailed in using games for learning.

This approach is symptomatic of what we might call the 'edutainment' strategy – the idea that we can take elements of entertainment and use them as a way of making the traditional curriculum more palatable or engaging, particularly for disaffected children (who these days are increasingly boys). This is what the media industries typically call

‘fun learning’, and it is a growing market both in homes and in schools. The idea that we can sugar the pill of education with a little dose of fun has a long history. Yet it is a superficial approach that almost invariably fails. Our research suggests that children can easily see through it: they know the difference between a real computer game and an educational game, and they know which they prefer – and they also become very adept at taking the sugar while leaving the pill behind.

Towards digital literacy

The problem with the strategies I have described is that they lead to an uncritical, unreflexive use of technology. They see technology as an instrumental teaching aid, a tool or a technique. In the process, fundamental questions about how technologies mediate and represent the world, about how they create meaning, and about how they are produced, are inevitably marginalised.

Many years ago, the Italian semiotician Umberto Eco wrote that if you want to use television to teach somebody, you first have to teach them about how to use television. As this implies, education *about* media is an indispensable prerequisite for education *with* or *through* media. I would argue that the same is true of digital media. If we want to use the internet or games or other digital media to teach, we need to equip students to understand and to critique these media: we cannot regard them simply as neutral means of delivering information, and we should not use them in a merely functional or instrumental way. What is needed here is a coherent and rigorous conception of ‘digital literacy’ – in other words, of what children *need to know* about these media. This is much more than a matter of technical know-how or functional skills. Children also need a form of critical literacy that will enable them to understand how information is produced, circulated and consumed, and how it comes to have meaning.

The ‘key concepts’ of media education – representation, language, production and audience – provide a comprehensive and systematic framework that can easily be applied to digital media such as the internet and computer games. For example, in relation to the internet, this approach raises challenging questions about *representation* – about bias,

authority and ideology – that are typically neglected in accounts of information technology. It calls for a systematic analysis of the *language* (the grammar or rhetoric) of the web as a medium – for example, in relation to links, visual design, mode of address, and so on. It includes an analysis of *production*, of the commercial and institutional interests at stake, of how web texts are produced, and of how they relate to other media. And it looks at how all this impacts on the *audience* or the user, how users are targeted and invited to participate, and what they actually do, what they find meaningful and pleasurable. I believe this approach takes us beyond limited questions about whether or not the information on the web is true, or whether it can be trusted. It addresses the social and cultural dimensions of technology in a systematic and rigorous way; and it seeks to engage very directly with students’ out-of-school experiences – not in order to celebrate them, but to interrogate them critically.

However, just as print literacy is about both reading and writing, so digital media literacy should also be about both critical reading and creative production. The advent of digital authoring tools has created significant new opportunities in this respect: students can now make high-quality websites or digital videos with easily accessible tools. Nevertheless, media education is not just about developing technical skills, or about some half-baked notion of creativity. It is about developing a critical understanding of cultural forms and of communication processes. Here again, technology does not precipitate change in and of itself. It needs critical interrogation – and its value depends crucially on the educational contexts in which it is used.

The end of technology?

Media education provides a challenging, rigorous and engaging perspective on technology that the subject of Information and Communication Technology transparently does not. It offers a way of connecting in-school uses of technology with out-of-school, popular culture – albeit in a critical rather than a celebratory way. It raises critical questions that take us well beyond a merely instrumental or functional use of technology. I believe that media literacy should substantially replace the compulsory specialist

subject of ICT in schools, and also be much more centrally integrated within the core subject of English.

Digital technologies are an unavoidable fact of modern life. Teachers are bound to use technology in some form or another – and the book is just as much a technology (or a medium) as the internet. We cannot simply abandon media and technology in education and return to a simpler, more natural time. Digital media like the internet and computer games do have enormous potential for learning; but it will be difficult to realise that potential if we persist in regarding them merely as technologies, and not as forms of culture and communication.

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FOUR

Media Education in Castelo Branco (Portugal); Empowering youth to become media literate citizens

Vitor Tomé and Maria Helena Menezes

Nowadays almost all knowledge comes to us through media, both printed and digital, but media messages are not a mirror of reality. They are constructions of that reality and citizens must know how to analyze these messages critically, and how to produce messages using media. The school has an important role in this objective, which makes Media Education more urgent than ever.

In the last few years, the European Union has made a substantial effort in the field. The main aim has been to reach the Media Literacy levels of countries like Australia, New Zealand or Canada. For example, the European Network of researchers in the area (Media-Educ), was established in 2004. In 2006, the EU published the European Charter of Media Literacy, which defends the integration of Media Education in all curricula and teacher training in the field. The following year, after an on-line public opinion poll with the objective of identifying best practices on Media Education, the European Commission published a document which advises all member-states to insert Media Education in the curricula at all levels, the teacher training in the field, and the need for defining standards to assess the Media Literacy level of the European citizens (European Commission, 2007).

Research based on school newspapers

To develop our research in the field, we thought that we could work with school newspapers either printed or on-line, because as of yet, new media has not replaced traditional media (Lievrow and Livingstone, 2006). We also decided that this was the best approach as “newspapers are an important resource to develop critical sense, reflexive styles and habits and creativity, respect for diversity of opinions and an interest in up-to-date news” (Pinto, 1991).

In Portugal, since 1991 there has been a National Contest of School Newspapers promoted by the daily newspaper Público (2005) and the Ministry of Education. Every year around four hundred contestants participate with either paper, or on-line editions. Our research was mindful of the help and support often required by teachers and students need help in the production of school newspapers, so in response to these needs we developed the Multimedia CD-Rom “Let’s produce school newspapers”. The CD-Rom would aid in the following areas:

- i)* Help students (5th to 9th grades) to improve the quality output of their school newspapers.
- ii)* To contribute to integrate Media Literacy in the European curricula.
- iii)* Help with the training and motivation of teachers and students for the pedagogical use of newspapers and ICT in the classroom.
- iv)* Develop abilities in students which will encourage them to become critical and reflective consumers and producers of media messages.

The CD-Rom encompasses traditional media (school newspaper) with new media (CD-Rom, online newspapers). It explains the phases of newspaper production and the different types of news. It also motivates pupils to search information and to assess the work developed and puts forward activities related to the school environment. In summary, it motivates pupils to produce newspapers, to read and write critically and to become better citizens. Furthermore, the CD-Rom also motivates students to search information and to assess the work developed, presents activities related to school and the community environment, and encourages students to use the internet (i.e. for accessing search engines and e-books).

The CD-Rom has been validated by multimedia specialists, by media researchers and journalists. In the academic year of 2005-2006, the CD-Rom was tested with 104 students from four classes (two from the 6th grade, one from the 7th grade and one from the 8th grade). The activities took place in Portuguese classes in an IT room, with group-work activities to produce the newspaper content. For the purpose of data collection, these

classes were audio and video recorded and the researchers utilized both direct observation and field notes.

Research results

After analyzing the data, four major result categories were identified. Firstly, prior to the project, only a few students participated in the making of the school newspapers, mainly students from classes of the teachers that were involved in the school newspaper production team. When the project was completed, the two schools had approximately 50 students on the school newspaper team, producing content (text and photographs) for the newspaper, which was a great leap forward in terms of student participation.

Secondly, prior to the project students participated mainly with class work chosen by teachers, so they did not write for an audience outside the classroom or school. After the project, the students participated mainly with news stories expressly written to be published in the school newspaper.

Thirdly, before the project students' contributions (apart from class work) were articles about subject matters, other school activities (i.e. study trips) and important dates like the Father's Day, Mother's Day, St. Valentine's Day, and so on. After the project, the news stories written by the children were qualitatively different, because the students had chosen the subjects, or negotiated these with the teachers. The main issues students would write about were animal protection, sports, music, but also issues related to school life (i. e. the school canteen schedule, the poor quality of the food in the school canteen and so on).

Finally, before the project most students and teachers lacked journalist experience. However, after the project, and in the opinions of the teachers, the students had improved their journalism abilities (i.e. different journalistic genres like news, report, interview, opinion article, and so on), but also about their knowledge of copyright and plagiarism issues.

Media Education in Castelo Branco region

In October 2007, a three year scientific research project commenced, founded by Fundação para a Ciência e a Tecnologia (FCT) and the CD-Rom “Let’s produce school newspapers” was the research starting point. The team involved in the research comprised researchers from several Portuguese and foreign universities, a newspaper and a software enterprise and the research activities included field work with 29 groups of schools from Castelo Branco region, aiming to produce school newspapers in the schools that did not have them yet and to try to improve the existing ones.

The website of the Project, www.literaciamedia.com (image 1), has an English version and showcases the essential news to be developed during the three years of the Project, the Project team and the vast number of people that are collaborating within the Project. During the first months the news evolved largely around the visits to schools and the presentation of papers in international conferences as well as the partnerships (i.e. Media Smart).



Image 1; Project Website

Going forward, the website will provide a means to get in touch with the newspapers produced in schools by students and teachers, while also having a fundamental role – to strengthen the relationships among the researchers and the teachers of the participating schools. In addition to supporting the members of the project in schools whenever necessary, the main objective is to take advantage of the benefits that new technologies can offer in this context. It is envisioned that doubts and problems that may arise will be

dealt with through the creation of a user forum on the project website, which will eliminate the requirement to travelling around the region and saving valuable time for all involved.

Although authors, such as Breda (2005) and Gonçalves (2007) consider it is too early to expect what they call “ciber derive” of the school newspapers (as they estimate that the number of schools that edit a school newspaper does not reach more than 10 per cent), we decided to create tools so that students and teachers could produce on-line school newspapers on a regular basis, even without expertise in the field. The template for online newspaper production can be viewed below.



Image 2: Template for on-line newspapers production

We created a platform, to be available to all participating schools during the first semester of the school year. In that platform each school can produce one or more newspaper, with different editions of each one. The platform content can also be in various formats such as text, images, audio, video, as well as files with more than one format, i.e. multimedia. Finally, the platform has a system that allows news to be visualised in PDA cell phones.

Conclusion

Children and young people must be prepared to use media in a World where the new concept of literacy implies the use and interaction with media either digitally and/or a traditional format. That's why we developed the project Media Education in Castelo Branco Region”.

The media resources of the project “Media Education in Castelo Branco Region” were developed between October 2007 and June 2008 and have been available to the schools since October 2008. The aim is that students and teachers will use these resources in the production of school newspapers either printed or online. The Project will finish in September 2010 with a final assessment made by international experts in the field.

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FIVE

Training the Eye: Expanding the “Language Arts” with the grammar of film

Milton Chen

A great irony of this much-heralded Digital Age is that today’s youth are immersed in digital media and its many forms of entertainment but are rarely instructed in how these media are designed and assembled. This perfect storm of the continuing pace of change of media and technology, the appetites and interests of this generation of “digital natives”, the awkward adaptive habits among older “digital immigrants” (author included), and the old-fashioned nature of an intransigent school bureaucracy have created an educational system quickly becoming irrelevant to the vast majority of students. We could provide a much more robust and engaging education for today’s students if we developed curricula to build on their natural interest in using digital media to read, write, share music, shoot photos, and create films.

Decades ago, in the 1970s and 80s, when “media literacy” meant gaining a hard-won foothold in American educational discourse, its tenets and curriculum were limited to young people analyzing the media produced by adult professionals. Media tools remained out of reach for young people in cost and portability. As digital media tools have become ubiquitous, every child so inclined has the potential to become a photographer or filmmaker. Youth media organizations, after school programs, and some schools have attempted to meet the growing interests of youth, encouraging them to pick up their cameras and laptops and start “telling their stories.”

What’s usually missing is an education in the cinematic arts. Filmmaking, like law, architecture, or business, is a profession worthy of rigorous coursework and practice. As with the larger issues of school improvement, we lack trained educators and a modern curriculum. Working for a filmmaker who has redefined the nature of filmmaking, our Foundation has a special perspective on these issues. We believe it is time to reassert the

primary of the visual and cinematic arts, not as arts per se, but in a broader definition of the “language arts” and communication as subjects of academic study.

In commenting on today’s youth, George Lucas (2003) has said, “They know music. They may not know the grammar of music. They know cinema, because they spend a huge amount of time in front of the television. So they know visual communication, they know the moving image. They intuitively know a lot of the rules, but nobody’s actually taught them. We go through school and learn the grammar of English punctuation, capital letters, run-on sentences, what a verb is. But nobody teaches what screen direction is, what perspective is, what color is, what a diagonal line means....Somehow in the educational system, these need to be balanced out so that kids can communicate using all the forms of communication, especially in this day and age where the power of multimedia is coming to the children.”

Digital cinema is still viewed with suspicion, resentment, and ignorance in many quarters of the educational system, which still honors and reveres the written word as the *sine qua non* of communication. To be sure, reading and writing are critical skills for every student to master. Digital photography and cinema, in fact, return us to an era long before Gutenberg’s printing press made the written word accessible to the public. Music, painting, and sculpture were forms of communication in many indigenous cultures, not merely forms of art. Today’s digital media bring us full circle from Gutenberg’s invention to a larger toolbox enabling students to express knowledge in its many forms, through words, images, color, and sound. However, the value of image and sound has yet to be fully acknowledged and has not achieved legitimacy in academic studies.

This battle for legitimacy is being fought in both schools and universities, but will only be truly won when higher education embraces multimedia forms of expression, since higher education sets the model and standards for schools. One important beachhead has been established at the University of Southern California in the United States, whose School of Cinematic Arts and Institute for Multimedia Literacy (IML), funded by the Annenberg Foundation, have been diligently working for nearly a decade to integrate the

cinematic arts across the curriculum. As Dr. Elizabeth Daley, Dean of the USC School of Cinematic Arts observes,

“Since the Enlightenment, the intellectual community has valued the rational over the affective, the abstract over the concrete, the decontextualized over the contextualized. These values, along with a deeply ingrained suspicion of practice and the creation of product, make it difficult to bring the vernacular of the contemporary into the academy” (Daley, 2003).

She goes on to add, “The current situation is further complicated by the widespread assumption that students already have an adequate knowledge of screen language and multimedia...However, they have no more critical ability with this language than do their elders, sometimes less....Multimedia, so ubiquitous to their experience, often seems to be particularly hard for them to analyze or deconstruct.”

Through USC’s IML, more than 50 faculty members from many departments and 2,500 students have learned to teach, author, and analyze in multimedia formats that include photography and film, sound and music, and even game-like simulations. One of the keys to their success has been pairing professors with skillful graduate students who support their production of multimedia, without burdening faculty with the details of learning software such as Dreamweaver or Photoshop.

This type of education can and should begin much earlier, so that elementary and middle-school students learn to be active media interpreters and producers instead of passive media consumers. Importantly, those students with what psychologist Howard Gardner (1993) would suggest are multiple intelligences beyond the verbal, including visual and musical intelligence, deserve to experience the success of using their native talents. Multimedia can be the tools for student expression of multiple intelligences.

A Curriculum; The Story of Movies

The best curriculum we have found is *The Story of Movies*, produced by The Film Foundation of Los Angeles beginning in 2005 in partnership with IBM and Turner Classic Movies (Chen, 2007; Standen, 2006). While the curriculum is intended for middle-school students, like most good curricula, it can be aged up or down for elementary and high school students.

As introduced by The Film Foundation, “*The Story of Movies* was not to be just another curriculum on how to make a movie or how to compare a movie to a book. Rather, the focus was to guide students in learning how to read moving images. Although teachers frequently use films in the classroom, film as language and as historical and cultural documents is not widely taught.” With the advice of the U.S.’s National Council of Teachers of English, the National Council of Social Studies, the International Reading Association, and others, the curriculum’s producers chose three classic films for in-depth study based on their quality, educational value, student interest, and age-appropriateness: *To Kill A Mockingbird*, adapted from Harper Lee’s 1962 novel about racial discrimination in the Southern United States; *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington*, the Frank Capra classic commentary on America’s political system from 1939; and *The Day the Earth Stood Still*, directed by Robert Wise in 1951, an allegorical science fiction work. When the free curriculum kit for the first unit, *To Kill A Mockingbird*, was promoted on Turner Classic Movies, more than 10,000 sets were distributed, an encouraging sign that teachers are hungry for quality materials on multimedia literacy.

These three films address significant periods in American history, include children in major roles, and address middle-school standards related to civil rights and racism and the role of government and the legal system. The curriculum states, “In the 20th century, moving images changed not only how the world communicated but also how we viewed other people and cultures and ourselves. We live in a visual world....In the 21st century, the ability to read critically and evaluate moving images has become an integral part of literacy....*The Story of Movies* is an interdisciplinary curriculum developed in accordance with the following fundamental principles:

- First, film is a language....students study the way in which images are framed, sequenced, paced and combined with sounds. They analyze the purpose of a shot as well as its suggested meanings.
- Second, film is a cultural document through which we can explore the values and social issues of the past....students explore the historical period in which the film was made and the social issues relative to the film's themes.
- Third, film is a collaborative art....the result of the collaboration of many different professionals and artisans...span[ning] science and cinematography, literature and language arts, music, art and design, and digital technology (p. viii).

The *To Kill a Mockingbird* curriculum kit includes the DVD of the film, an extensive 150-page Teacher's Guide, a Student Activity Booklet, and an instructional DVD. The Teacher's Guide is divided into four chapters entitled What is a Movie?, The Filmmaking Process, Film Language and Elements of Style, and Historical and Cultural Contexts focusing on, for instance, America's Jim Crow segregation laws and racial violence in the 1930s. Three appendices of Teaching Resources provide chapter tests and answer keys, performance-based assessment standards, and the National Film Study Standards developed by The Film Foundation.

In the chapter on Film Language and Elements of Style, students are led to consider composition of the frame, the meaning of camera distances and angles, principles of frame lighting, such as direction, intensity, and quality of light, arrangement of shots to suggest sequential action, and how the rhythm, dynamics, and pitch of music communicates meaning. Many of these lessons are keyed to stills or scenes from the film on the instructional DVD, which also contains other resources, such as a documentary on Martin Luther King, Jr.'s Letter from a Birmingham Jail.

The DVD also includes an overview of the project, with teachers at Bloomfield Middle School describing how students learn "how to read a movie, and not just sit there and

passively watch it.” They relate how the curriculum addresses standards of visual literacy, language arts, and history and report that their students translate techniques such as foreshadowing into the films they see in the theaters. The DVD also includes commentary from directors Clint Eastwood and Martin Scorsese on their own misconceptions about film when they were boys, such as not understanding that films were shot out of sequence or the amount of planning that goes into each shot.

Conclusion

Two students, Jody Sutula and Herschel Mirabel, recount their understanding of how one sequence of scenes from *To Kill a Mockingbird* communicates. Atticus Finch, the lawyer and widower played by Gregory Peck, is putting his daughter Scout to bed. Scout asks Atticus about her mother, whom she doesn’t remember. The camera moves out of Scout’s bedroom window to see Atticus sitting pensively on a two-person porch swing, with his arm around the back. The students describe how these scenes illustrate the inner emotional life of the outwardly stoic Atticus, of how he is missing his wife, who would have been sitting next to him on the swing, and is concerned about raising his children without their mother. As director Martin Scorsese, chair of The Film Foundation believes, “What you’re doing is training the eye, and the heart, of the student to look at film in a different way, by asking questions and pointing to different ideas, different concepts.”

In our own work at The George Lucas Educational Foundation, we have profiled students and teachers at Peabody Charter School in Santa Barbara, California who have used the curriculum. Students brought lamps into their classroom to look at the properties of light and shadow and analyzed how various musical scores conveyed different emotions. Other documentaries on our website show how, armed with such knowledge, students are developing their own filmmaking talents. Social studies teacher Marco Torres at San Fernando High School north of Los Angeles is seen working with Latino students in a well-equipped Apple classroom. Their films, also archived on their website (sfett.org) and shown in their annual summer film festival, often address social justice issues, such

as neighborhood violence and sweatshop workers. Their work has been broadcast on TV networks and shown at international conferences.

On the opposite U.S. coast, Steve Goodman's Educational Video Center (EVC) in New York continues more than 25 years of work with young media-makers dating back to the day when they carried ¾" U-matic cameras and recorders 10 times the size of today's handheld cameras and minicassettes. EVC is currently involved in designing a high school around this expanded concept of visual literacy. Goodman has also written an excellent book on the philosophical and educational foundations of student filmmaking (Goodman, 2003).

These efforts are just the beginnings of brave educators enabling more students to be successful in school and life, to paint academically with a fuller palette and on a larger canvas. Our common goal should be to move their early innovations into the mainstream of schooling, redefining the nature of school, curriculum, and student success.

Perhaps, in the year 2020, in place of current required courses in language arts and literature that sometimes appear with elective courses on "Filmmaking" or "Film History" taken only by a few artistically inclined students, there will be one integrated course required for all students teaching all forms of media called "Communication."

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SIX

Children, news media and citizenship: a study with 9-15 year olds in Northern Ireland, Scotland, Wales and England

Máire Messenger Davies

This paper draws on data from a study funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council, UK, and the BBC, as part of their Knowledge Exchange programme. (<http://www.ahrc.ac.uk/FundingOpportunities/Documents/ahrc%20bbc%20funding%20c%20all%20details.pdf>). The study, which was carried out in collaboration with Cynthia Carter (Cardiff University), Kaitlynn Mendes (University of Nottingham) and Stuart Allan (Bournemouth University), set out to examine whether, and how, the BBC's children's news programme, *Newsround*, could help to foster citizenship and how it could be a model for participatory media, with children contributing and responding to the news directly. The study was carried out in 2008 by academics in the universities of Cardiff, Ulster and Bournemouth in the UK, working with children in four civic regions of the UK (Glasgow, Cardiff, Bournemouth in the English South West and the Coleraine area in Northern Ireland). There were 219 children in the study, aged between 9 and 15, in school years 4, 5, 6, 7 (Primary School) and 8, 9, 10 (Secondary School). This paper will focus on the findings from the 54 Northern Irish children, and, where appropriate, it will make comparisons with the other children in the study. It will begin by describing some of the theoretical and policy background to the issues of children, citizenship and news, and then goes on to describe some of the findings, and their implications.

Research Context

The study took place against a background of major changes in both British and international broadcasting and in children's viewing habits, leading to an assumption among some broadcasters that children in middle childhood are migrating away from television viewing and towards interactive media, including the world wide web (See Ofcom, 2007; Lemish, 2007; Livingstone, 2007). This was also a theme at some of the sessions at the World Summit on Children and Media in Johannesburg in 2007, where the

relationship between the internet, broadcasting, children's media creativity and children's citizenship was intensively debated. The contribution of Irish broadcasters and media educators in demonstrating how young people can be empowered by media activity was significant at this event (see other papers in this collection and Davies, Creely and Morrey, 2007). Our AHRC/BBC study came about, because the BBC as a public service broadcaster, with a commitment to children's broadcasting, wanted us to explore children's appreciation for current news provision and how children themselves saw future children's news services.

Academic research on children and citizenship

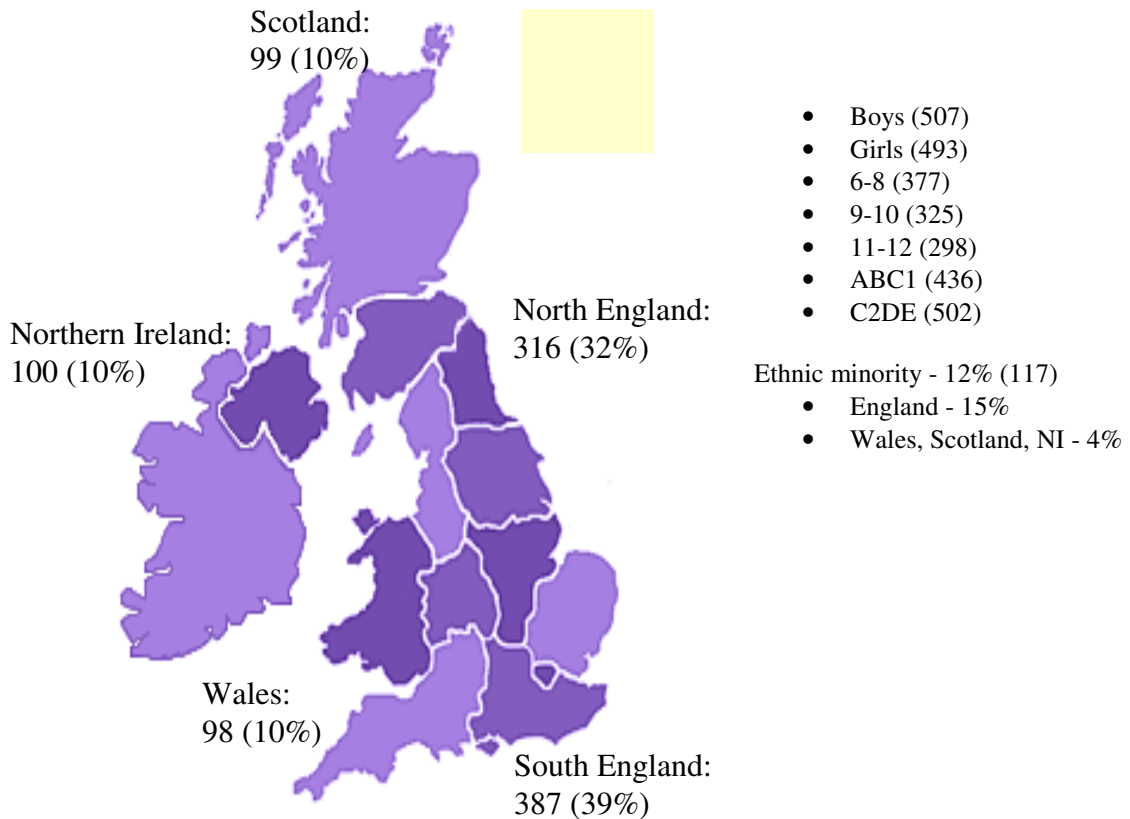
Academic research on the relationship between children and citizenship has identified two distinct paradigms (Bennett 2008). Researchers in the first paradigm suggest that children are politically "disengaged" or "apathetic." (Putnam, 2000; Iyengar and Jackman, 2003; Bennett, 2008). Other studies – constituting Bennett's second paradigm - challenge the view that young people are politically apathetic (Buckingham 2000; Chekaway et al. 2003; Cushion 2006; Hine 2004; MacKinnon 2008). Buckingham (2000: 223) argues that educators must enable young people to build connections between the personal and political in order to prepare them for participatory forms of citizenship. It is here that the participation of children in news media becomes relevant to broader questions of civic and political engagement. In a forthcoming article (Mendes, Carter and Messenger Davies, in press) we argue that the news media have a critical role to play, providing children with opportunities both to express themselves publicly and to see their interests reflected in news media. (See also Carter 2007 and Messenger Davies 2007).

The BBC/AHRC study's methods

This study, conducted in 2007-08, involved written questionnaires, group based activities, and video diaries with 221 children between the ages of 9 and 15 in the four nation/regions of the UK, as well as interviews with former and current *Newsround* editors. Regional/national comparisons were considered to be an important feature of the study, as much research on children and media emanates primarily from London, including some audience research carried out by broadcasters themselves. We felt it was

important that children from ‘outlying’ parts of the UK should be consulted about questions of news and citizenship; we were interested in how aware children were of regional/national identities and emerging nationalist discourses in Scotland and Wales – with the Northern Irish situation (and its recently formed Assembly) also raising long-standing questions of national identity. The data given below are drawn mainly from the questionnaire analyses and the group-based activities. With regard to national/regional differences, comparisons are also made with a Childwise survey carried out on 1000 children across the UK in 2007 on behalf of the *Newsround* team.

Children in the UK: Childwise survey for *Newsround*. Who they talked to...



Children, news and new media: findings from N. Ireland, (questionnaire data)

1. Favourite place for news

Within the main study, one of the strongest and most intriguing findings was the overwhelming popularity of television as the ‘favourite place for news.’ Over half of all the children (52%) named ‘TV only’ as their favourite source; when TV combined with another medium, such as ‘TV and the internet’ or ‘TV and newspapers’, was added to this total, 67% (two thirds) of all children mentioned TV. Within the Northern Irish group, this preference for TV was even higher: the majority (70%) of the fifty-five 8-14 year olds preferred to use TV for information about the world, rather than the internet or other sources. Local radio such as Radio Foyle, was mentioned too.

2. Who in your home is most interested in the news?

In our UK group as a whole, 32% mentioned ‘mum’ as the main consumer of news at home. This seemed surprising to us, given stereotypical assumptions about men being interested in current affairs, and women being interested in fashion and celebrities (see for instance Sunday newspaper sections). We think this finding would merit further investigation. In Northern Ireland, the total was a little less than in the whole sample, but ‘mum’ still produced the highest single number of answers. Mum (29%) was the most likely person at home to be interested in the news, followed by ‘both parents’ (17%); dad was mentioned by 15%. However, this ties in to some extent with the Childwise (2007) finding that mum was seen as a more influential person than dad by the majority of children in all region/nations, with 72% of boys and 80% of girls saying that ‘mum’ was the first person they’d turn to for help.

3. Relative value of TV versus internet

Northern Irish children valued TV because it ‘explains things’ and ‘shows pictures’. However, two children valued the internet more because it ‘gives you more time’ to review information. As with the main sample, the majority of Northern Irish children used the internet mainly for games (71 per cent).

Quotes from group based tasks: sample comments from Northern Irish children

How are children shown in adult news?

“The adult news shows children as something to be discussed – like what to watch on TV. You never hear the child giving their opinion” – Alexander, Portrush, age 12.

This comment is typical of children right across the sample. All children were aware of, and complained about, the fact that – even when children were the topic of a news item – children themselves were not consulted.

How could Newsround be improved?

“It could be longer and talk a bit more about Ireland” – Ronan, Portrush, age 11.

Again, this was typical, particularly of Northern Irish children’s comments. Scottish and Welsh children also wanted more regional emphasis – but not so persistently as the Northern Irish children. This comment is interesting in that Ronan specifically asks for news about ‘Ireland’, not just ‘Northern Ireland.’

In *Newsround’s* study conducted by Childwise, on 1000 UK children, the 100 children in Northern Ireland were more ambivalent about nationality than any other group. Asked what their nationality was, 50% (50) ‘didn’t know’ – there were no ‘don’t knows’ in the other three nation/regions. Of those who did answer, out of the 100 NI children, 23% said British, 14% said Irish, 4% said English. In contrast, 86% of Scottish children said they were Scottish, 76% of Welsh children said they were Welsh and the Northern and Southern English children were more or less evenly divided between British and English.

How could the website be improved?

Although children did not use the website much, unless directed, for anything other than games, this year 6 group of 9-10 year olds in Portrush had many constructive ideas for improving the *Newsround* website, again including information about their own nation/region. These are some examples:

“There should be a link about history (a history bar)”

“There should be more about Northern Ireland, and maybe a whole section for each of the regions”

“There should be a world map where people can click on to find out stories on a certain region”

“The press pack should make it clearer on how to join and become a member”

Other trends

Northern Irish children were similar in many ways in their requirements of *Newsround* to children in the other regions, particularly Wales and Scotland. Regional news was a key issue in Scotland. Children’s sense of identity is certainly partly based on where they live, but with all these children and young people, there was also a sense of ‘childness’ – of belonging to a group in society which is under-represented in news media, simply because of its youth. As 10 year old Jack in Portrush put it: “It would be better if children read out the news and did interviews”. *Newsround* does its best to represent these aspirations but it now targets an audience whose upper age limit is 12. Thus, as we found, younger children are happy with *Newsround* but older ones feel it does not represent them. These are the ‘citizens in the making’ who are not being catered for by the brave new digital world of converged broadcasting and webcasting.

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SEVEN

Engaging with Youngsters; Case Studies from RTÉ's 'The Den' and 'TTV'

Tonyia Dowling

RTÉ Television is Ireland's Public Service Broadcaster, and has been making and transmitting children's and young peoples' television since the foundation of the station in 1962. We have two distinct audiences – Children and Teenagers – and each schedule segment throughout the day is branded and focused to specific target age groups. *Den Tots* is for preschoolers and under 5s; *The Den* programming is from 5 to 12s and *TTV* is for Teenagers and Young Adults. All this is scheduled on the RTÉ Two platform and transmits weekdays from 7am to 7pm and also on weekend mornings. We produce on average 400 minutes of original programming every week and currently employ 52 full time staff in our in house department. In addition to our own in-house production and acquired programming, we also commission programming from the independent sector.

It is a pretty busy department and a fairly hungry TV schedule which needs to be filled by us for 50 weeks in the year. So we have to be very innovative, creative and resourceful in devising ways that will *engage* our varied target audiences. The core values of every programme we produce or commission are uncomplicated.

If one is to perceive RTÉ to be 'a local broadcaster' - as opposed to an international digital broadcaster or a British terrestrial or any one of a number of channels you find on a satellite package - *The Den* will be [or is likely to be] the first engagement with television that most Irish children will experience. This, obviously, carries with it a significant weight of responsibility.

Within the island, only TG4 and RTÉ are commissioning and transmitting output aimed at children and in many ways this represents the ultimate Public Service. Competing against cash-rich, international commercial brands like Disney and Nickelodeon – who

are largely unrestricted by advertising codes, marketing caps, etc – is quite a challenge, but by giving a voice and a sense of ownership of the channel to all Irish children and young adults, we legitimately feel like we can hold our own. And given how well our programming performs in this context, then we are obviously doing something right.

By endeavouring to make home-grown output aimed at, based-on and featuring at its core all of the children and young adults in the country, we feel that we are fully embracing the core RTÉ philosophy :- unlike other channels, we feel that we can most accurately reflect and respond to the needs, humours, cultural references and interests of all Irish children, whoever and wherever they are.

Ostensibly, our aim is to *empower* all children on the island, and what better way to achieve this than by casting them centre-stage across all of our out-put?

In order for The Den and TTV to compete and endure with any degree of credibility, our programming must be totally inclusive of and reachable to our audiences *at all levels*. Children and young adults watching our programmes must feel like they can dictate or have a say in the editorial, enjoy the material on their own terms, feel ownership of, and a commitment from our programmes and feel, simply, that we are a bus-ride, a telephone call, an audience ticket or a text message away from them. We are inviting them to studio or we are going out to them – we have visited or have had kids from every part of the country on our schedule, several times so far. We are a company that is funded in part by the tax-payer, so we *have* a responsibility to, if you like, ‘*be there*’.

Within the realm of Young Peoples Programmes there exists a far greater latitude and none of the binding conventions you would find, possibly, in other areas of Irish television. One of the great freedoms of working in this genre is exactly that, - the fact that children who participate in all of our out-put can, literally, turn the world on its head. While we operate within carefully formed parameters of taste, decency, appropriateness and suitability, we are not bound by the conventional norms of delivery, execution, tone or content. We can experiment and have fun!

The best way I can illustrate how we ‘engage’ our diverse young audiences is to talk you through just some examples of the output on our schedule over the last twelve months or so. The diversity of our output is marked and is very much in keeping with our remit, and demonstrates the very obvious involvement and engagement of the audience, the viewer, the participant, the child.

One Minutes Junior

The first example is from a project called ‘The One Minutes Jr workshop’, which is an international work-shop for young film-makers. For the last three years, RTÉ ‘Young Peoples’ have hosted a Dublin-based seminar and workshop, run by international film-makers and featuring Irish young people from all demographics and social backgrounds. Over the course of an intensive week of hot-housing, the kids, ranging in age from 12-20, get to devise their own one minute films from scratch, to work-shop them within groups, and to shoot and edit them for transmission and also for banking into an on-line archive. As part of our involvement in this programme, we transmit the films during our TTV strand, weekdays on RTE2 from 5.30pm to 7pm.

In keeping with our over-all philosophy, this project is not about technical excellence, nor should it be. It is about tooling up young members of Irish society and opening the air-ways to them to articulate a position, a thought, a moment in their lives. There is nothing especially revolutionary in the core idea; it is just that, for one full minute in their lives, the air-waves have become a point of access, with no restrictions.

Its worth noting that in November 2006, 18 year old Darren Kennedy from Lifford in Co. Donegal won the inaugural “One Minute Junior Festival People’s Prize” for his film ‘Look Who’s The Loser Now’, as voted by young people all over Europe at the prestigious Annual International One Minutes Festival in Amsterdam.

Eye2Eye and NERTY

At the other end of the spectrum is our popular live music entertainment series Eye2Eye which we have run for the last 3 years. This programme offers young music fans the opportunity to see quality live music up close and personal and to engage with performers and artists on a level that would be usually denied them. During every session, one hundred young fans – all of whom are younger than the standard age for access into most live music venues – get to hang around, ask questions and get to meet and greet their favourite artist after the curtain comes down. And of course they also get to hear their favourite songs at close quarters and feel – or at least should feel – that they are part of the most intimate session possible. Artists like The Thrills, The Blizzards, Paddy Casey and Brian McFadden have taken part and in 2008, Eye2Eye will expand its brief and play host to stars from the fields of sport, television, literature, comedy, magic and music.

One of the most difficult elements of programming making for children is that, more often than not, it is adults who are defining the schedules and the production models. Ultimately of course, the best children's programmes are just like the best adult programmes, they don't either take their audiences for granted or patronise them. One of the more positive aspects of Eye2Eye is the fact that, although the series is scheduled to transmit during morning time or afternoons, it has as much if not more production value than most of these kind of shows you would see in prime time.

When we move up the age line and get to teenagers and young adults – it can be a lot trickier for us to get it right in terms of devising or commissioning formats that will engage this age demographic. In the last couple of years we have done really well with No Experience Required Transition Year (popularly referred to as NERTY among our viewers) – which was an adaptation of the successful Lifestyle format by Liberty Films 'No Experience Required', where we gave Transition Year students an opportunity to try their hand at their dream job for a short time. This had a careers education dimension but told through a mix of entertainment and documentary story telling.

ICE – ‘My Life’s a Jungle’

Elsewhere on The Den, ‘ICE’ is a 20 minute live, afternoon magazine show for 8 to 12 year olds and is now in its second successful season.

Presented by Brian Ormond, Sinead Kennedy and Rob Ross, ICE is a studio-based show that is themed across the week, with Fridays dealing with sports previews, Mondays dealing with entertainment gossip, Tuesdays with young performers and so on. There is an informality to the programme that’s central to its appeal, but it also puts children to the very core of every single item. It is an access-model programme; children can communicate instantly with the show and can, and do often dictate the editorial. In many ways, some of the editorial is quite traditional; in one weekly strand called ‘My Life’s A Jungle’ some of the dilemmas and issues encountered by children of all ages and demographics are addressed through drama re-enactments and followed by studio discussion. Examples of the themes which are covered include bullying, friendships, domestic violence, relationships, self-esteem, isolation, education and so on. The audience is encouraged to text or call the programme with any opinions and views they may have on the situation in question, and some of the aspects of the dilemma are then debated in studio.

In many ways this strand is kicking against the perceived ‘cool’ of many competitor programmes and channels. It is not shot with hand held cameras or with buzzing, contemporary soundtracks. But it does not have to be. By rooting itself, literally in the living rooms and kitchens of Irish households, it seems to have struck a particular chord. It has also become clear to us that once children feel engaged and reflected in a particular subject, that they are more than capable of informed and intelligent contribution.

On The Block

As if to reinforce the point, I want to tell you about a multi-award winning documentary film that was made two years ago by the children of Fatima Mansions, in Dublin’s inner city. Of all the programmes I would like to discuss here, this one captures the democratisation of The Den’s media arguably better than all of the others.

The name of this film is 'On The Block', it is a documentary film that was facilitated by adults in terms of shaping the form of the story. But that aside, it is a story by a particular group of children who, quite simply, have a terrific yarn to tell about a year in their lives when their old familiar homes were torn down as part of a housing regeneration scheme.

We broadcast this programme for the first time on Christmas day, 2006. Buried among the tinsel and the cheer, it provided an antidote to the standard portrayal of the 'child at Christmas'. This is the child empowered with the capacity to be taken seriously, to tell their own story rather than it portrayed by an adults interpretation of what life in the Flats is like.

The documentary has already travelled the world and won awards all over and its charm has been that it captured the universal essence of what it is to be a child told from their point of view. There is an enduring sense of hope running right through this, and it is the wonder and the brazen optimism of the key characters that gives it its strongest impact. It is a strong story told by strong characters, that is all.

KAZOO

One of the biggest challenges facing The Den is that, in many respects, the channel is obliged to be all things to all Irish children; by which I mean that its neither a dedicated pre-school channel like, say, CBeebies, a dedicated channel for eight year olds like Nick Jr, or a specialist channel like Cartoon Network. Rather, it is aimed at children between the ages of fourteen months and fourteen years. Yes, 'The Den' is a mongrel channel, but we like to think that like the best cross-breeds, it has a personality and a spirit that sets it apart. Those child psychologists among you, either professional or amateur, will agree that there is often a world of difference between two children born on the same day, in the same hospital and under the same conditions but to different sets of parents. Imagine the difference, then, between a six year old and an eight year old?

Then factor in the fact that, across all children's television, the demographic of the audience, its loyalty and allegiance, breath of interest and reference, boredom thresh-hold

and general development, changes every six months! It is just an occupational hazard, at this stage.

KAZOO is a daily Den programme aimed at five to eight year olds. Of all of the programmes we make, it is pitching at arguably the most difficult audience, or audiences. The team working on this strand is small but exceptionally vocational, and it needs to be. Every week Kazoo puts forty different children through its system, either via location inserts shot on single camera or through contributions from children who come 'to Kazoo' in the studio, with results that are often just too grotesque, unprecedented, bizarre and unpredictable for words. And yet, under-pinning all of this is the sense that Kazoo is facilitating and giving vent to 'PLAY', in whatever kind of form.

As with the ICE strand, all that this programme does is to attempt to highlight and profile aspects of the universe as seen through the eyes and heard through the ears of children. It is probably the most accessible programme in Ireland; dial the number and you could be talking to its presenter, who is exactly in the flesh as she appears on screen, within seconds. This is access television, but again it is more playful than anything else. It's not the quality of the contribution, it is the idea behind the contribution. No job or proposal, no hobby or make-and-do idea, dance routine or freaky physical contortion is too obtuse for this programme. In fact, they revel in the variety.

And so we are almost at the end. And in the best of traditions, I'd like to finish with a song.

'Jam' is a music series we have commissioned from Big Mountain Productions for the last four years now. It is ostensibly a music-mentoring show, a little bit of what is lazily called 'reality television' and no small degree of old fashion performance and entertainment. Over the course of one week, aspiring teenage musicians, be they rock, classical or musical theatre singers, are put through their paces by a group of professional mentors. At the end of the week and the end of the series, one group is deemed to have excelled further than the others, and wins a relevant prize.

Once again, this series places the young person at the centre of the production and narrative. The series is exceptionally uncomplicated (but with incredibly ambitious production values) and the drama, when there is a drama, is unforced and very innocent. Unlike, say, a series like 'X-Factor', Jam is a straight forward affair. It is more about participation and the participants than it is about faux-humiliation or celebrity and it is probably all the richer for that.

Conclusion

This paper aimed to display how, in its own way, RTÉ is looking to give a voice and an outlet to every single young person in Ireland who has a story to tell, a song to sing or a horrific sister they would like to cream pie! We are reminded from time to time that we live in an allegedly democratic society. Where we work, that sense of democracy does not just belong to those old enough to vote.

EIGHT

Children's media in the developing world: Giving African children a voice

Marion Creely

Children, defined as persons under 15 years, comprise approximately 42% of the population of Sub-Saharan Africa. In contrast, in Europe the figure is 16%¹. Despite these figures, children's access to quality media in Africa is greatly less than in Europe.

Firdoze Bulbulia and Faith Iziakpere, media workers and children's rights activists addressed the Conference on the many and complex reasons behind this situation, on their work to bring international attention to the problem, and on the ways in which such challenges can be overcome. The presentation was followed by a discussion on the image of the African child as portrayed in the Western media, led by panellists, Katherine Meenan, of Connect World, Owen Feeney of Irish Aid and Antoinette Rademan of the Embassy of South Africa in Ireland.

This paper provides details of the research background to their presentation and discussion, sets the problems of children's media in Africa in its global context, and describes the history of the growing collaboration between media workers in Ireland and South Africa to effect development in youth media in both countries.

Founders of The Childrens' Broadcasting Foundation for Africa, (CBFA), a not-for-profit organisation dedicated to the promotion of quality media for children in Africa, Bulbulia and Iziakpere, were also the organisers of the 5th World Summit on Media for Children², which took place in Johannesburg in 2007. This extraordinary event led directly to the establishment of the IYMD's inaugural conference and to this workshop.

As a former activist in the fight against apartheid, Firdoze has always been profoundly aware of the contribution made by South Africa's youth to the struggle against the

oppression of apartheid. Thus, throughout her career as a media producer, she has consistently maintained a focus on children's rights, particularly applying herself to the issue of African children's media rights.

There are many and complex reasons for the limited nature of children's media in Africa. The media infrastructure in Africa was inherited from a complex colonial past and suffers from chronic underinvestment. Television is an expensive medium requiring significant infrastructural costs. In many parts of Africa it is seen as an expensive luxury, with a low reach outside of urban areas. Africa is blessed with many languages, but these too impose logistical and cost restrictions.

In addition, children's media has its own economic demands which broadcasters in the economically developed world also find a challenge. Since the deregulation of children's television in the Reagan era³, quality children's TV has been under serious pressure.

A children's audience is not homogeneous. The content producer must provide programmes for the pre-school, 6-8 year old, 8-12, early teens and 'youth'. This is expensive. Yet to try to produce a 'one size fits all' programme will not work given the radically different needs of these age groups. European children are protected by a public service dominated ethos which provides indigenous age appropriate material to the many nations which make up the continent. But here too there have been serious erosions of choice.

In 1989, the EU published *Television Without Frontiers*⁴, which sought to encourage competition within the media market in Europe. The effect, when added to funding cutbacks in PSB funding, was to greatly increase the amount of TV available to children, but also diminish the choice available to European youth. Satellite TV brought expanded children's television services to European youth, but much of it was imported, predominantly from the US.

A pan-European study of the effect of commercial children's television upon European public children's TV between 1990 and 1995 shows just this⁵. During this period, the quantity of children's programming increased by an average of 28%. The quantity of domestically produced children's programmes decreased absolutely; from an average of a half of total output to a third. In other words, acquisitions, mostly American, dominated the schedule.

Children's programming worldwide has come to be dominated by American produced material. In a recent survey of children's television in 24 countries, all countries except US, UK, Australia, Canada and China, 80% of the programming was imported and mostly from the US.⁶

The balance between genres also worsened. There was an increase in entertainment and animation programmes and a decrease in drama and factual. In effect, the child saw less and less of themselves on TV, or of their lives as lived. Instead, they saw entertainment programmes featuring created characters living lives in a world far removed from their own.

What this clearly demonstrates is that quality children's television in all parts of the world will not survive in a deregulated context. By quality children's television is meant product which is truly audience-specific, educational in orientation, respectful and reflective of local culture and language and, of course, appealing and entertaining.

The question of the impact of globalization of children's television upon the personal values and cultural identities of this media generation is a matter of separate debate. This paper argues from the perspective of the belief in the right of a child to encounter their own life experience and to hear their own voice in contemporary media. It is a belief that goes to the heart of the concept of children centered education.

While some awareness of the special needs of the sector has grown in recent times with the release of the European Parliament's Tongue Report⁷, and US legislation in this area

being enforced⁸, the recent closure of ITV's (Independent Television, UK) children's production department shows that even in the so-called 'developed world', children's television remains a system under pressure. As we speak, one of the founders of the Summit Movement, Anna Home, formerly head of BBC Children's is chairing the Save UK Children TV Organization⁹. So the fight goes on.

One would imagine that the UK, with its English language base would have little difficulty in making profitable children's programmes. But the globalization of children's TV makes for heady competition. Children's television is now big business.

Sesame Workshop, Nickelodeon, Disney and the Cartoon Network dominate the marketplace. Nickelodeon's consumer products division brought in sales of \$3 billion in 2003. And in 2001, Nickelodeon was received in 90 million households in over 70 countries, including many in Sub Saharan Africa.¹⁰

As with European broadcasters, many African broadcasters are mandated to offer indigenous children's programming reflective of their heritage and culture. But with the exceptional additional difficulties facing broadcasters in Africa, such as poor infrastructure, multiple languages, limited financial and facilities resources, it is unsurprising that the state of children's broadcasting in the region is especially precarious.

Why is this important? In the increasingly globalized and commercialized media marketplace, it is important to be able to tell your own story in your own voice. Without a viable media industry, the African voice can be lost. A version of the African story will be told by others. There is considerable concerned debate around this issue. Consider some of these comments:

'The lifeways of approximately 700 million peoples in fifty-four countries representing, for non-Africans, unimaginable multicultural, poly-ethnic, poly-religious, multi-political, and mega-economic groups are perpetually denigrated....by Western media';¹¹ or

‘The problem about Western media reporting on Africa goes beyond professional inadequacies and structural bias. Socio-cultural factors have continued to account significantly for the stereotyping archetype, which has remained a hallmark of Western collection and dissemination of information about Africa;’¹² or

‘The images of Africa in the Western media are, by and large, images of misrepresentation.’¹³

While some western media commentators may disagree with aspects of these arguments, there is no doubting that for the general public in the West, the majority of images of the African child with which they are familiar depict a victim of war or famine. In fact, the image of the African child as victim is the poster image of the development aid industry.

Does this matter? Firdoze Bulbulia and the CBFA board believe it does. The African continent is a complex entity. There are wars and famines certainly, but there is also an economic and cultural renaissance in many parts of Africa to which the western media gives little media space. For Africa to grow it, too, needs a media capable of communicating the positive and challenging the stereotype. It is, therefore, vital that the next generation has access to media tools so as to experience images and stories of the African child which project a positive and can-do attitude.

The first step is recognition of the issue. CBFA has worked assiduously in this regard. Inspired by the Children’s Television Charter, adopted by the first World Summit on Media for Children Conference (www.5wsmc.com), CBFA worked for the creation and adoption of The African Charter on Children’s Broadcasting.

But changing the landscape of children’s media requires product, not just Charters. Thus, Moments produced ‘African Pen-pals’ – a series of award-winning child-centered documentaries which profiled the true life stories of 12 year-olds from throughout Africa. The programmes were popular with children’s audiences, but were also used to raise awareness of the issue of the portrayal of the African child in Western media.

In 2001, I led a master class for European children's documentary makers entitled 'Directing Children in Documentary'. The master class was organized by the European Broadcasting Union (EBU) for whom I executive produce the award-winning EBU Children's Documentary Series.¹⁴ This is a series which exemplifies the concept of child-centered programme-making and true cultural diversity. Initially a project aimed at allowing PSBs on limited budgets to screen a TV series of children from many cultures telling their own stories in their own voice, it has now expanded far beyond its European borders to include PSBs from the Far East, the Middle East and Africa.

It was there I met Firdoze who was invited to screen Penpals and raise awareness among programme makers of this issue. I resolved to promote awareness of this issue here in Ireland. There have been many projects along the way, culminating in this workshop, the Youth, Media & Democracy Conference itself and this paper.

My first project was to collaborate with the Irish National School Teachers Organization (INTO) in screening African PenPals in Irish national schools. The programmes were successfully used as an educational tool. The teachers found them a unique instrument instruction as no other such material exists.

Subsequently, I organized a collaborative project with Sithengi Children's TV Festival. I screened PenPals in Irish schools and Sithengi screened some of the EBU children's documentaries. The children filled in surveys to discern their impressions of the world depicted in the documentaries and of the images of children conveyed. Other issues of taste, style, etc were addressed.

The Irish children claimed that these programmes gave them a whole new view of African children which contradicted the impressions they had formed from the international media. The views of the harshest critics of Western media were innocently confirmed by what the children said. African children were strong, positive and capable and not helpless victims. 'They are not all helpless victims like we usually see on telly' they concluded. 'They are definitely poor, but they have fun and smile a lot'.

The African children had thought-provoking insights into the European world. They concluded that European families were small and lonely; that our children are alone a lot and don't smile as much as African children. The survey was by no means scientific, but the children's observations from both continents are thought-provoking.¹⁵

This project was presented at another CBFA media initiative, the Children's TV Festival, held annually during Sithengi Film and TV Festival in Cape Town. Youth aged 12-16 were brought from Tanzania, Namibia and other countries to attend creative and practical media workshops. Over time, some of these teenagers have gone on to work in the media industry.

In 2003, CBFA successfully tendered to host the 5th World Summit on Media for Children. Firdoze assembled an International Think Tank of media workers, educators, academics and children's rights advocates to provide advice and support. Pre-Summit Conferences were held on all continents to maintain the focus on children's media rights between Summits and develop an agenda for Johannesburg.

As a member of the Think Tank, I promoted the agenda ideals in Ireland and in Europe with my own special emphasis on the image of the African child. In 2005, I organized a series of meetings with educators, media workers and development agencies here in Dublin for CBFA.

Following these meetings, Dr Brendan Tagney and Macu Arnadilloo Sanchez of Trinity College Dublin (TCD), Centre for Research in IT in Education (CRITE)¹⁶ brought their Inner City outreach programme to the Sithengi children's workshops. African children could now experience the CRITE workshop which used mobile telephony as an educational tool to create short digital movies. The following year, TCD presented this workshop at the Speak Africa event run by Unicef and led by CBFA in Dar es Salaam. Teenagers from 15 African states learned to be creative with mobile technology.

Throughout Africa over the last decade, considerable youth media initiatives have formed. Plan West Africa runs youth-led radio shows across 11 African countries.¹⁷ Many of these focus on raising awareness of children's rights and improving their ability to communicate with parents and guardians. They are tools towards enabling the next generation to become active citizens.

Bush radio in South Africa has for several years run a highly successful series of weekly shows devised and led by children. International movements like Kids for Kids Festival and One Minute Junior have come to Africa, and Unicef has funding projects to train young African animators.

New technology, mobile telephony and the internet offer young Africans the opportunity to communicate directly with children in other parts of the world. By making direct contact, they can tell their own story in their own voice and circumvent the limited perspectives of the global media industry. Youth from Tanzania, who learnt their skills at Sithengi, have collaborated with Irish youth in an internet based media project which allows youth from Kildare and Dar es Salaam to directly tell their stories. The two youth groups met at the 5th World Summit in Johannesburg.

The holding of the World Summit on Media for Children in Johannesburg was the culmination of many years of effort. It came at the right time to show case some of the developments taking place on the continent. There is an African cultural Renaissance and the Summit gave it a platform.

The Summit has also encouraged other initiatives which will keep the focus on the problems and opportunities facing African children's media. The International Clearing House on Children, Youth and Media, at Gothenburg University, has this year devoted its year book to a major study of African children's media, *African Media, African Children*.¹⁸ Hopefully, this will help maintain a focus on this important issue.

Bulbulia and Isiakpere are now planning the first Pan African satellite children's TV channel ABC, Africa's Best Channel.

While the Summit drew much needed attention to children's media in Africa and has helped to encourage many new media initiatives on the continent, the event and its preparations had worldwide impact, as CBFA intended. In the economically developed world, there are many challenges facing the children's media industry.

Here in Ireland, the *Think Youth Think Media* event which I organized in The Arc, with sponsorship from the Radharc Trust, led to a very active Irish involvement in the Summit. We went to Africa to learn about ourselves. The visit led to this Conference, which maintains the Irish Africa interaction in the field of children's media that began with a chance meeting at the EBU master classes in Holland in 2001.

At the panel discussion following Firdoze's presentation to the conference, it was clear that there exists much empathy for the complex problems to which she referred. Kathleen Meenan is CEO of Connect World¹⁹, whose mandate is to promote more and better coverage of international development issues. Her organization, which is supported by Irish Development Aid sector, was born of a concern to counteract the limited and sometimes stereotypical approach media can take to coverage of the Southern hemisphere. She committed to an augmented awareness of the image of the African child in media coverage for the future.

Owen Feeney, Counselor, Irish Aid, spoke of the many media projects which Irish Aid supports, but resolved to attach more significance to future projects with a youth media bias.

Antoinette Rademan, Counselor, South Africa Embassy to Ireland, spoke of the many positive contacts between Ireland and South Africa happening at local level which she hoped with collaboration and the power of new media could enrich both communities.

The guiding spirit of the 5th World Summit as conceived by CBFA was the African philosophy ‘*Umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu*’. This is the spirit of *ubuntu*, meaning ‘I am because you are’ - or one owes one’s humanity to other people.²⁰ This spirit is reflected in the fact that Irish Youth Media Developments (IYMD) was inspired by the African led Summit. The spirit of *ubuntu* lives on.

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