

## EDUCATION FOR MEDIA LITERACY IN THE UK

Education about the media has been developing in the UK for at least 60 years. Various accounts of that history can be found elsewhere;<sup>i</sup> the purpose of this paper is to provide a sketch of the current situation (particularly in England) that may help to inform the development of media education and teacher training programmes in other countries.

It is impossible to understand the role and status of media education in any country without having some idea of the way in which that country manages its educational provision, assessment and qualifications. Given that the United Kingdom consists of four nations, each with its own education system, differently administered in each case, this is not an easy task! I shall therefore describe media education activity and provision under two headings: formal education for children and young people under the age of 16 (the legal school-leaving age); formal education for young people over 14. I shall add brief sections on teacher training provision for media education, and on the implications of this overall picture for those wishing to develop media education elsewhere.

### **Formal Education Sector pre-16**

Most UK children start school in their fourth year; compulsory schooling ends at 16. England (population 50 million) has had a statutory National Curriculum only since 1990: this covers education for all children up to the age of 16. Scotland (population 5 million) has always had its own education system and its school curriculum is non-statutory; Northern Ireland (population 1.7 million) and Wales (population 3 million) used to follow the English curriculum but are now developing their own. This devolutionary process has meant that the smaller nations have been keen to differentiate themselves from England and to resist the tendency prevalent in England for a prescriptive, centrally-driven curriculum, working instead towards a curriculum which simply specifies the more general learning outcomes that ought to be achieved and relies much more on teachers' professionalism and expertise in deciding what is to be taught, and how, on a day-to-day basis.

England may now be slowly coming round to a somewhat similar position, for example by adopting a new approach to the Primary curriculum<sup>ii</sup>, but is finding it difficult to detach itself from the unprecedented levels of political interference in education that have prevailed for some 20 years. So it may be that after the 2010 General Election different political agendas may once again try to establish an old-fashioned, content-prescriptive curriculum. And in any case, the independence of schools and teachers is fatally compromised by the determination of successive governments to maintain 'league tables' of schools based on testing and examination results, which sets schools in competition with each other and encourages teachers to focus on gaining high test results rather than on providing a broad and balanced education. Children in England are amongst the most frequently tested in the world, even within the international context that has seen a general trend towards standardised curricula and educational competitiveness.<sup>iii</sup>

In this context, education for media literacy in the UK has a fairly marginal place. Since the 1980s, media educators in all four nations have lobbied for the inclusion of references to media education within the curriculum, until recently with limited success. All curricula do now include such references, usually as part of English, but some are also in other subjects such as Citizenship and Personal, Social and Health Education. However, these rather marginal elements have not figured in national tests, teacher training or in the frameworks for school inspection.<sup>iv</sup> Consequently,

media education has so far mainly depended on the interest and enthusiasm of individual teachers, with the inevitable result that provision has been patchy and of variable quality. It is therefore not possible to talk about a 'programme' for media education in the UK in the 3-14 phase. Instead, it may be useful to describe two key initiatives which have had some success and may drive future development, but which also exemplify the contradictory and incoherent nature of development so far.

One initiative involved an informal alliance between the British Film Institute (BFI) and the National Literacy Strategy. The BFI is a publicly-funded national cultural organisation which has done much to support the development of media education in the UK over the past 60 years.<sup>v</sup>The National Literacy Strategy was set up in 1998 to raise achievement in reading and writing for 5-14 year olds; in many ways it is regarded as a very narrow and rigid, top-down set of prescriptions for how these skills should be taught, and it is due to be disbanded by 2011. Nevertheless, the Strategy's leaders did recognise at an early stage that the relationship between literacy skills and children's interest in moving image media could be a crucial factor in raising attainment. In response, the BFI developed a teaching approach to film study for younger children that located it within literacy learning, and produced seven print/DVD resources and related training for teachers of children aged between 3 and 14, based on high quality, non-mainstream short films sourced from around the world, together with guidance for teaching about moving image media with funding from the Department for Education and Skills (DfES – now renamed Department for Children, Schools and Families – DCSF).<sup>vi</sup> The Strategy's nationwide network of regional directors and local consultants endorsed these resources and encouraged schools to use them. The short film resources have so far sold 15,000 copies to schools (there are 25,000 schools in the UK). Between 2005 and 2007 the BFI secured partnerships with 61 (over 40%) of local authorities in England, who between them committed over €1 million to action plans for developing moving image media education in their schools. Each of these local authorities had BFI-trained teams whose role was to lead this development. The BFI guides and other free materials for schools now achieve over 200,000 downloads annually. A study of the impact of the BFI-local authority partnership scheme has been published by the UK Literacy Association.<sup>vii</sup> As most of the BFI materials are sold to schools at competitive prices, and the training is paid for by the local authorities, this has been achieved at a relatively low level of public subsidy and a potential market for similar resources has been created – an important factor in a country where education and schooling are not a protected sector of public finance but have many private sector characteristics such as local competitiveness and school-level control of budgets for staffing and resources.

The focus on moving image media was probably a key factor in the rapid take-up of the BFI's materials and training. Unsurprisingly, given its remit, the BFI emphasised the cultural importance of moving image media (i.e. film and television), rather than trying to engage with all media forms, and presented media education as a way of expanding and enhancing children's experiences and skills, rather than as a way of defending them against media influences. Although there is still a tendency for many teachers to use the short films merely as stimulus for writing, the idea that moving image media are worthy of study in their own right is slowly gaining ground, together with the recognition that distinctive critical approaches are needed in order to analyse and understand them.<sup>viii</sup> The BFI argued that it is vital to present media education in terms of positive educational gains, if it is to attain a central place in the curriculum. It asserted that critical skills and perspectives would grow more securely on a basis of having high expectations of what the media can achieve, rather than suspicion of their intentions and values.

In contrast to this 'cultural' approach to media education, a rather different initiative was established in 2003 by the Communications Act which set up Ofcom, a new regulatory body for electronic media, covering broadcasting, telecoms and the internet, but not film or the press. Ofcom was given specific responsibility for 'media literacy' – a term then less familiar to UK educators, who had more interest in the process (media education) than in the more speculative and contentious 'target' of media literacy. Ofcom's definition of media literacy is very broad;<sup>x</sup> it has encouraged the media industries to take a new and direct interest in media education, and it is carrying out useful research into people's access to media technologies and important issues such as people's trust in news media. But because it is a regulatory body, it is inevitably perceived as being responsible for protecting people from the assumed bad effects of the media, and as promoting media literacy in terms of a portfolio of basic technical and creative skills, together with some knowledge about how to block spam and how to complain to broadcasters about offensive or harmful content. And given that Ofcom reports to the Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS), it cannot automatically have any impact on educational policy, which is the responsibility of DCSF.

In this context, with the critical dimensions of media education being marginalised, the media industries assumed that they could meet their regulator's requirements for 'promoting media literacy' by creating resources and projects that offered 'behind the scenes' glimpses of media production, concentrating on the practicalities and omitting the ideological dimensions that media teachers would expect to include. This served to reinforce the perception that media literacy was really just about making media – a welcome message for the manufacturers of camcorders, mobile phones, mp3 players, laptops and related software.

However, this limited view of media literacy may change following the publication in 2009 of *Digital Britain*, a report on the measures needed to increase digital inclusion for the UK's population and to raise the level of digital participation by all sectors of UK society.<sup>x</sup> The Digital Britain agenda has taken up the technical skills and self-protection approaches that were confusing people's perceptions of what media literacy should be about, leaving Ofcom's media literacy team to focus more directly on the educational implications of trying to build a genuinely media literate population. At the same time, the DCSF has directed its own attention to the possible importance of media literacy in schools, having commissioned, jointly with the DCMS, a report from David Buckingham on 'the impact of the commercial world on children's wellbeing'.<sup>xi</sup> Buckingham, being an established authority on media education, seized the opportunity to recommend education for media literacy as a more appropriate response than regulation to any possible ill effects of commercialism and consumerism, and the Secretary of State accordingly announced plans for 'promoting greater media literacy for young people ... to look at how schools can help boost children's online skills and teach young people about how to stay safe online ... [and] setting up a panel to specifically see what place there is in the curriculum for further media literacy skills'.<sup>xii</sup> It remains to be seen whether this commitment will survive the imminent General Election.

In summary: the current situation of media education for under-14s in England remains contradictory. With no real endorsement at Government level (so that there is no explicit curricular content, no assessment and no inspection) it is impossible to have an objective or comprehensive picture of how much media education is taught and what kinds of teaching do go on. On an anecdotal level, we know that where teaching does take place that may state some claim to being media education, it is likely to be driven by three contradictory and relatively narrow motivations. Firstly, teachers may co-opt children's existing cultural preferences and interests (TV, films

and social networking) and build some work on these into their lessons in order to motivate them and to support learning within the established curriculum. Secondly, teachers may be developing children's information and communications technology (ICT) skills by encouraging creative activities with the media – filmmaking, photography and the like. Thirdly, teachers may be trying to raise children's awareness of the commercial motives of advertisers, of bias in the news, or of ethnic or gender stereotyping in the media generally. Some teachers may attempt all three of these but their media teaching is more likely to take place within one-off, time-limited projects than as an integrated part of the curriculum, and they have no motivation within the system as it stands to pay attention to learning progression or standards. A small minority of teachers does have a more informed concept of media education as a broader endeavour that seeks to develop children's cultural experiences, critical techniques and creative abilities in an integrated way, embedded within the curriculum in order to ensure that children's media literacy learning can progress over time. But this is extremely rare.

### **Formal Education 14+**

Despite the fact that national curricula set out educational requirements up to the age of 16, young people can, in principle, choose their own curriculum after the age of 14, when they can opt for the subjects in which they wish to take examinations and gain qualifications that will lead to higher education or employment. The qualifications frameworks are complex. Young people are usually required to include 'core' subjects such as English, Maths and Science, and their range of choice in other subjects is limited to what their school or college wishes to offer: the full range of subjects is enormous. There is also a wide range of types and levels of qualification. Obviously this complexity has its problems, and there have been many efforts to simplify it, but since the 1970s it has enabled a number of specialist courses in media studies, film studies, communication studies and media arts to be established.

In Scotland and Northern Ireland, the examination systems are administered by state institutions. The Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) in Scotland offers Media Studies at several levels;<sup>xiii</sup> the Council for Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA) in Northern Ireland, offers Moving Image Arts. In England and Wales, however, the examination system is not administered by the State, but by a number of private (non-profit) 'awarding bodies', who effectively compete to provide schools with examination specifications, and to administer and mark the examinations. This system is regulated by state bodies: the Qualifications and Curriculum Development Agency (QCDA) in England, and the Department for Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills in Wales, which endeavour to ensure that the specifications conform to standard requirements and that the assessments are fair. Between them the awarding bodies in England and Wales offer a total of six specifications in Media Studies at different levels, one in Film Studies at AS/A2 (i.e. for 17 and 18 year olds) and the new Creative and Media Diploma which is available at different levels for the whole age-range.<sup>xiv</sup> Because the qualifications framework is the same in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, schools in any of these countries can, and do, adopt specifications from other nations (excluding Scotland).

As a result, specialist courses in media are now taken by increasing numbers of candidates: approximately 100,000 in 2008, out of a total cohort of 1,800,000 eligible to take examinations in any subjects at ages 16, 17 or 18. This only amounts to 5.5% of the age group. But the importance of these courses for the long-term development of media education has been that they have taken the subject beyond the province of isolated enthusiasts and into the realm of established, visible practice. Schools offering media courses have to employ staff specifically to teach them, and to

allocate budgets for resources and equipment. There are still a few schools and colleges whose institutional support for media teaching is rather mean, and the status and respectability of these courses continues to be challenged, especially by the press, and more recently by the Conservative Party who published plans in August 2009 to lower the status of what they deemed to be 'soft' examination subjects in order to ensure that they would not enable candidates to use them for university entrance, thus playing to the anxieties of parents who are keen for their offspring to take 'proper' qualifications that will be recognised by leading universities.

Nevertheless, the existence of public examinations has over the years generally conferred status and sustainability on media education, and this long-established sector of formal media courses for the 14-18 age group does make the UK's experience of media education distinctive and significant. The UK has a core sector of teachers with very substantial, long term media teaching experience who devote incredible levels of effort to keeping up with developments in the media and to helping students understand challenging concepts. There is an accumulating evidence base about student achievement, measured against more or less constant standards, which provides an extraordinarily important source of knowledge about what media teaching and learning actually can achieve in practice.

A student on an advanced course could expect to cover topics such as the Hollywood studio system, the characteristics of German Expressionism, the history of public service broadcasting in the UK, situation comedy as a TV genre, marketing in the music industry, gender in teenage magazines and the role of social media in the development of 'celebrity culture'. A key principle of Media Studies has always been 'the importance of thinking about the media systematically, and of clarifying their common functions and practices, as well as their important differences'<sup>xv</sup> so that courses attempt to address all the modern mass media, rather than specialising in one medium or sector. Courses are therefore based on conceptual areas such as media institutions, media languages, audiences and representation. They require students to engage with theoretical debates on topics such as hegemony, uses and gratifications, narrative, realism and genre. In most courses students are also required to undertake the technical and creative demands of making a media product such as a film, a dummy magazine, or an advertising campaign. The content of Media Studies courses has been drawn from many sources over the years, but particularly the Cultural Studies tradition as exemplified by writers such as Raymond Williams and Stuart Hall, and from semiotics and structuralism. There is an emphasis on the study of media institutions, influenced originally by Marxist cultural analysis but now probably equally impelled by student interest in media careers and thus in understanding how the media are organised and financed. Representation is an important key concept, which can lead to an emphasis on simplistic ideas about stereotyping and bias, but at more sophisticated levels enables students to investigate more complex approaches to realism and modality.

While this breath of subject matter is appropriate for some students, it is less attractive to those who would like to take courses that enable a more in-depth study of a smaller number of media forms, or to have more opportunity for practical work. The recent development of a 'Moving Image Arts' specification for CCEA attempts to broaden the offer to students, and in 2005 the government announced yet another round of reforms to the examination system,<sup>xvi</sup> in an attempt to reduce the difference in perceived status between academic and vocational qualifications by setting up diplomas which should lead to either higher education or directly into employment. One of the first diplomas to be established (teaching from 2008) was Creative and Media, covering over 22 employment sectors including film, television, radio, music

and publishing, and thus widening the range of options available to young people in the field of media education.<sup>xvii</sup>

Media and Film Studies courses are taught in both schools and Colleges of Further Education. The latter comprise an enormous sector (FE), taking students from 16 years onwards, and offering a vast range of courses from the most basic literacy and numeracy learning, through literally hundreds of qualifications right up to degree level. These include vocational qualifications in media such as BTEC<sup>xviii</sup> and the more academic film and media qualifications described above. Many students prefer to take advantage of the minimum school-leaving age of 16 and enter the more 'adult' environment of FE to pursue their studies; however a large sector of the FE population consists of mature students, returning to study after a career change or having dropped out of education completely at 16. Such learners might encounter a course unit on media, written at local level and approved by the National Open College Network (NOCN), which can earn them credits towards a NOCN qualification. These qualifications are designed to broaden adult access to education, and locally-produced course units, offered in some 3000 centres across the UK (some in FE; some in other settings), are one way in which enthusiastic teachers can enable adult learners to embark on a specific area of learning such as media education. NOCN has also recently established a national media literacy qualification which is accessible to people with moderate learning difficulties or disabilities, or to people who have failed to achieve in conventional schooling.<sup>xix</sup> The qualification has seven units: Media Languages, Recognising Genre, Recognising Modality, Understanding Representation, Understanding Advertising, Understanding News and Using the Media – an array of topics that is typical of basic media courses at this level.

### **Teacher Training**

Unfortunately, there is still hardly any formal initial training for Media Studies teachers, and where they find opportunities to attend in-service training (which is available from a number of both non-profit and commercial agencies), schools are often reluctant to pay the teachers' course fees or to release them from school to attend. There has been a perception at Government level that Media Studies is pretty similar to English and that therefore any English graduate could teach it (despite the efforts of the regulatory bodies to ensure that all subject offers are distinct). The worrying fact that the percentage of A grade awards for Media Studies candidates is consistently low (currently 13.6% at the most advanced level, compared to 20.7% for English, 24.3% for Art and 34.3% for French) may relate to this lack of training, as well as to the likelihood that both students and teachers do find the courses extremely challenging.

The immense complexity of the examination system means that initial teacher training in the UK cannot possibly prepare teachers for all the examination courses they may be required to teach, especially in newer and more marginal subjects. Most teachers – in secondary schools anyway – qualify as teachers by taking a one-year course (the Post-Graduate Certificate in Education or PGCE) after the completion of their first degree. Most of the time in a PGCE course is spent on practical training in schools, rather than in the academic classroom. There is therefore little time to allocate to specialist study. For this reason, initial teacher training departments in universities tend to admit students who have a first degree in a mainstream school subject (i.e. not media), so that they can be assumed to have good subject knowledge and the teacher training can focus more on pedagogic technique. The university is thus more likely to achieve a higher pass rate.

Although candidate numbers for specialist courses in media subjects – Media Studies, Film Studies, Moving Image Arts etc – are increasing at both GCSE and A Level, putting this sector into the top ten of student preferences, the relative novelty of the subject area means that the State system of funding for initial teacher training is only now beginning to recognise media as a subject warranting its own funding.

Currently, many schools want to offer media subjects because they are attractive subjects to students and thus help the schools increase their numbers of students aged 16+, for whom they can then get additional funding. But the schools find it very difficult to appoint experienced media teachers. Often they adopt the same attitude as Government: ‘anybody who can teach English can teach media’. In consequence, there are many teachers desperate for in-service training in media, which effectively in this case counts as another form of initial training, since they have never had any media training so far. These people face two hurdles: firstly, having to get their school to accept that they really need it, fund the training and release them to attend courses; secondly, finding a provider within reach who will offer appropriate training.

Most teachers of examination courses in media attend at least one training day offered by the relevant Awarding Body. But such training usually concentrates on the technicalities of the examination itself, rather than on subject knowledge. Aspirant media teachers are thus driven to seeking training where they can find it. This may be from private companies specialising in teacher training, or it may be from non-profit organisations such as the English and Media Centre and the British Film Institute, both of whom offer accredited courses in media teaching. In addition of course, many teachers work very hard to train themselves, using books and the internet to develop their own subject knowledge.

As explained above, all four UK nations now require some kind of media learning in their general school curricula for children and young people up to the age of 16. These curricula are obligatory in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, but are offered only as ‘guidance’ in Scotland. The specified content is minimal and is mainly located within English, although there are some elements in arts subjects and Citizenship, and in Wales within Welsh language teaching. Media learning is also only formally required at secondary level, although in Northern Ireland there are now also some requirements at primary level too. The marginality of the requirement means that initial teacher training takes little account of media, allocating maybe a day or two within the whole PGCE course.

However, interest in media education continues to grow in the UK, and there is increasing recognition within the teaching profession that it should be seen as a normal part of every child’s general literacy, rather than something separate and optional. A few local authorities, particularly those who worked with the BFI between 2005 and 2007 (see above) have made a continuing commitment to ensuring that teachers in their schools can get training and support in teaching and learning about the media – particularly film. The growth of specialist media arts schools – of which there are now over 40 in England – means that primary schools located near to such schools are developing their own media education expertise, because it is part of the specialist schools’ remit to work with their local community including their ‘feeder’ primary schools and to share their expertise and usually lavish resources.<sup>xx</sup> At initial teacher training level, some universities offer optional additional sessions or course modules in media, so that there are increasing numbers of newly qualified teachers in the UK who have some sort of ‘taster’ training in media education.

The latest policy initiative in teacher training is the establishment of a Master’s level qualification (Master’s in Teaching and Learning)<sup>xxi</sup> which is ultimately intended as the

instrument for securing a more highly qualified profession, and is designed as a qualification that can be gained within the school (in partnership with a university) and can take account of individual teachers' interests and talents. The third year of the MTL will focus on specialist areas of learning, which (at least in the present plans) are not centrally prescribed. This clearly opens up an opportunity for those teachers with an interest in media education to acquire a more solid base of both theoretical and practical knowledge. It is going to take some years to establish the MTL as a qualification available to all, and a change of Government could alter or abolish the scheme, but if it does survive, it could be an important factor in establishing media education in schools in England.

### **Implications of UK media education for other countries**

Despite the obvious idiosyncrasies of British education, there are some key principles (none of which is actually unique to the UK) that educators in other countries can take into account when considering the relevance of our experiences.

#### **1. What motivates media education?**

The two commonest reasons for establishing media education in schools are (a) protectionist (education designed to counter the supposedly bad effects of the media) and (b) cultural (education designed to resist globalised media forms – ie usually from the US – and promote a national or regional language, culture or religious affiliations). Of course these two motivations can easily overlap. It should be noted that (a) is never particularly effective in terms of genuine learning, although children can be adept at regurgitating the protectionist line in order to please their teachers. Media education – like any other education – needs to be grounded in sensitive and thorough analyses, firstly, of children's existing knowledge and interest in relation to the media, and secondly, in an objective assessment of what is most likely to be useful to them in the longer term – whether in employment, leisure or family life.

A more sophisticated 'protectionist' line, derived from theoreticians such as the Frankfurt School, demands that students analyse the financial and institutional structures of the media in order to understand why they are more likely to serve the interests of those in power and to help maintain the status quo. This is important and useful learning, but if it omits any consideration of how the media might change, or any attention to alternative or subversive forms, it does the students little service other than encouraging cynicism.

#### **2. Whose interests does media education serve?**

As the UK examples show, media education can be driven in different directions by different agencies and institutions. It is noticeable that university media departments have played little part in the development of media education in UK schools: the impetus has come from practitioners or those close to them in NGOs or in university education departments. This has probably been an important factor in ensuring that media education is not over-intellectualised or made subject to an academic agenda. Media departments in universities throughout the Anglophone world have been enormously important in providing the critical theory that underpins specialist media courses, but has been of little use in defining what might be taught to all children up to the age of 14.

Other agencies that may drive media education – the media industries themselves; hardware and software producers; specialist Government departments or institutions – can be helpful to media education but much depends upon their own policies and their reasons for getting involved. Opportunities to link media education to particular sectional interests or policy



agendas, such as the linkage between media literacy and public health in the USA,<sup>xxii</sup> may demonstrate dramatic short-term outcomes but are rarely sustainable or credible in the longer term.

### **3. Top-down or bottom-up?**

Media education can't be effectively fostered unidirectionally. Government diktats and grass-roots movements are both important, but either on its own is likely to be less effective, and it is certainly counterproductive if they are working against each other. Planning for media education needs to take a large-scale, strategic view. A programme of teacher training needs to take account of the likely attitudes and practices that will need to change, and to plan accordingly. Untrained teachers are most likely to hold protectionist views on children and media, and to assume that this is what will be required of them. Changing this attitude is not a simple task. Teachers are also likely to know little about children's own media experiences and preferences, and indeed may know little about the media in general. This presents a considerable challenge to media education trainers. It can be more effective – as in the BFI/National Literacy Strategy example – to plan a growth model for media education training, starting with intensive training for selected leaders and ensuring that the structures are in place at school or local level for them to develop initiatives with colleagues over time – and to return for second-level training when they are ready for it. And teacher training on its own is useless without resources for the classroom for them and their colleagues to use, and senior management endorsement of the training so that it has professional status.

### **4. Lack of standards and assessment models?**

Specialist courses in the UK's post-14 education sector have been effective and have grown substantially because they offer a clear framework for learning and assessment. The growth of media education in other phases remains patchy and uneven because we lack such a framework. We do not have – in the UK or anywhere else – robust and credible models of learning progression in media literacy, to tell us what might be appropriate learning aims and pedagogies for children and young people between the ages of 5 and 14. Hypothetical models have been produced but they are not grounded in long-term experience and practice. Any programme for the development of media education thus needs to ensure that those involved have opportunities to share and reflect upon their practice and to modify it in the light of new insights on teaching and learning.

### **5. Integration**

One of the biggest barriers to media education in the UK has been the perception that 'the curriculum is overcrowded'. On the other hand, sneaking media education in by the back door, for example as 'a stimulus to writing', sends out a signal that it is marginal and unimportant. And simply adding media education to a long list of 'extras' that teachers have to fit in somehow across the whole curriculum is likely to mean that it won't be done at all. It is a bigger challenge, but may be more effective in the long run, if more radical thinking about the curriculum can be undertaken, to show how the conceptual framework of media education can be aligned with the key concepts of one or more other subjects.

Media education, after all, is not merely an extension of subject content. To recognise the value of media education is to take up a position in relation to teaching and learning that may be different from the mainstream. It involves recognising, or accepting, for example, that modern, popular cultural forms are worthy of serious study: this can challenge accepted hierarchies of knowledge in the school and the academy. It involves recognising that learners can bring more

to this subject in terms of knowledge and enthusiasm, than they may bring to other curricular subjects: this can challenge accepted pedagogic styles. It involves confronting many accepted commonsense ideas – for example that the meaning of a film or photograph is ‘obvious’ – so the process of winning assent can be slow and difficult. It can undermine established ideas about what is appropriate – and achievable – at different ages and stages: this can challenge school organisation.

These are some of the barriers that we have experienced – and continue to experience – in the UK. Although we can now say that media education is better established in our schools than at any other time in the past, it is still marginal and it is still uneven in quality. Probably the most useful insight that can be gained from our experiences is that even this level of achievement can take a very long time.

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## **NOTES**

<sup>i</sup> The best four histories of media education in the UK are, in my opinion: Manuel Alvarado, Robin Gutch and Tana Wollen (1987) *Learning the Media*, London: Macmillan Education, Chapter 1, pp 9-38; Manuel Alvarado and Oliver Boyd-Barrett (eds) (1992) *Media Education: An Introduction*, London: BFI, Part I, pp 9-186; David Buckingham (2003) *Media Education: Literacy, Learning and Contemporary Culture*, Cambridge: Polity Press, pp 6-17; and, especially for the early days, Terry Bolas (2009) *Screen Education: from Film Appreciation to Media Studies*. Bristol: Intellect Books. My own rather personal 'take' on this history appears in Flood, Brice-Heath and Lapp (eds) (2007) *Handbook of Research in Teaching Literacy Through the Communicative and Visual Arts Vol II* Mahwah NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

<sup>ii</sup> Jim Rose (2009) *Independent Review of the Primary Curriculum*, Department for Children, Schools and Families, at [www.dcsf.gov.uk/primarycurriculumreview/](http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/primarycurriculumreview/).

<sup>iii</sup> There is a good and succinct account of this tendency at [www.answers.com/topic/testing-standardized-tests-and-educational-policy](http://www.answers.com/topic/testing-standardized-tests-and-educational-policy).

<sup>iv</sup> For the media references in the current Scottish 5-14 Guidelines, see <http://www.ltscotland.org.uk/5to14/htmlunrevisedguidelines/Pages/englang/main/elng6069.htm>; information about the Welsh National Curriculum can be found at <http://old.accac.org.uk/eng/content.php?cID=5> for primary and at <http://old.accac.org.uk/eng/content.php?cID=6> for secondary.

<sup>v</sup> For an account of this history see Bolas, T. (2009) *Screen Education: from Film Appreciation to Media Studies*. Bristol: Intellect Books.

<sup>vi</sup> For more details of BFI education provision for media education, see [www.bfi.org.uk/education](http://www.bfi.org.uk/education).

<sup>vii</sup> Marsh and Bearne (2008) *Moving Literacy On*, UKLA. For a link to the summary of this report go to Marsh's blog at <http://digitalbeginnings.blogspot.com/2008/01/blog-post.html>.

<sup>viii</sup> See for example Bazalgette, C. (ed) (forthcoming) *Teaching Media in Primary Schools*. London: Sage.

<sup>ix</sup> 'the ability to access, understand and create communications in a variety of contexts' See [http://www.ofcom.org.uk/advice/media\\_literacy/of\\_med\\_lit/whatis/](http://www.ofcom.org.uk/advice/media_literacy/of_med_lit/whatis/).

<sup>x</sup> Department for Culture, Media and Sport and Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (June 2009) *Digital Britain: Building Britain's Future*, at [www.culture.gov.uk/images/publications/digitalbritain-finalreport-jun09.pdf](http://www.culture.gov.uk/images/publications/digitalbritain-finalreport-jun09.pdf).

<sup>xi</sup> DCSF and DCMS (2009) *Impact of the Commercial World on Children's Wellbeing*, at <http://publications.dcsf.gov.uk/eOrderingDownload/00669-2009DOM-EN.pdf>.

<sup>xii</sup> Ed Balls, press release 14<sup>th</sup> December 2009, at [www.dcsf.gov.uk/pns/DisplayPN.cgi?pn\\_id=2009\\_0251](http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/pns/DisplayPN.cgi?pn_id=2009_0251).

<sup>xiii</sup> For details of the Scottish Media Studies examinations, see: [http://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/sqa\\_nu\\_display.jsp?p\\_service=Content.show&p\\_applic=CCC&pContentID=2438&](http://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/sqa_nu_display.jsp?p_service=Content.show&p_applic=CCC&pContentID=2438&). Statistics for 2005 examinations in Scotland can be found at [http://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/sqa\\_nu\\_display.jsp?pContentID=14775&p\\_applic=CCC&p\\_service=Content.show&](http://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/sqa_nu_display.jsp?pContentID=14775&p_applic=CCC&p_service=Content.show&).

<sup>xiv</sup> Candidate numbers and results for media studies in England can be seen at [www.jcq.org.uk/national\\_results/index.cfm](http://www.jcq.org.uk/national_results/index.cfm). The actual specifications from the different Boards can be seen at [www.wjec.co.uk](http://www.wjec.co.uk); [www.ocr.org.uk](http://www.ocr.org.uk); [www.aqa.org.uk](http://www.aqa.org.uk); [www.ccea.org.uk](http://www.ccea.org.uk).

<sup>xv</sup> Len Masterman (1985) *Teaching the Media*, London: Comedia, p19.

<sup>xvi</sup> See the proposals at <http://www.dfes.gov.uk/publications/14-19educationandskills>.

<sup>xvii</sup> For details of the Diploma go to [www.skillset.org/qualifications/diploma/](http://www.skillset.org/qualifications/diploma/).

<sup>xviii</sup> The BTEC Nationals are vocational qualifications to prepare students equally for direct entry into employment or for progression to higher education. The new qualification has three sizes, all at National Qualification Framework Level 3: BTEC National Award, BTEC National Certificate and BTEC National Diploma. See <http://www.ucas.ac.uk/candq/btec.html> for more detail.

<sup>xix</sup> See 'Media Literacy' at [www.nocn.org.uk/qualifications/qcf-qualifications](http://www.nocn.org.uk/qualifications/qcf-qualifications).

<sup>xx</sup> Secondary schools in England are encouraged by Government to opt for 'specialist status', securing private sponsorship as well as additional government funding, to offer a curriculum which emphasises a particular area, such as languages, sport, technology, media, etc.

<sup>xxi</sup> See [www.tda.gov.uk/leaders/teachers/mtl.aspx](http://www.tda.gov.uk/leaders/teachers/mtl.aspx).

<sup>xxii</sup> [www.medialit.org/reading\\_room/article420.html](http://www.medialit.org/reading_room/article420.html)