THE DEVELOPMENT OF MEDIA EDUCATION IN ENGLAND
A Personal View

Cary Bazalgette
Head of Education, British Film Institute

Books and Histories

Many media educators (including myself) have made brave assertions over the years about the cultural and social significance of non-print media, claiming that they should be valued as highly as books. Nevertheless, histories of media education can only be found in books: and what is more, most of these histories are constructed through references to other books. Paper-based print retains its pre-eminence as the trusted medium of historical record, not so much because it offers some mysterious guarantee of truth, but because the systems of access and cross-reference that have been developed for print are still far more sophisticated, and more widely understood, than anything yet devised for moving image, audio or online media.

So here you are with a book in your hands, expecting to find out about the development of media education in England. You are, I hope, familiar with the concept "that historical 'truth' is not unitary or one-dimensional, and that we must settle for, at best, honest representations, and for most of the time, simply representations which will need to be interpreted in relation to the interests of their sources".[i] The way that media education has developed as a subject has been covered already by others;[ii] the story I have to tell comes from my personal experience of interventions, encounters and constant struggle. I am not an academic and much of what I say is unverifiable, but it is, I hope, as honest as I can make it.

Who is speaking here and why, and in whose interests?

As someone who has worked for 26 years in one cultural institution I can be guaranteed to represent a particular perspective; whose "interests" I may be said to represent may be a little more complicated. The British Film Institute was founded in 1933 and has been funded by the British taxpayer through various Government departments as a "non-departmental public body": that is, at arms' length from Government, largely responsible for its own policies, and of course non-profit. The first BFI Education Officer was appointed in 1950, and the status, number and location of its education staff have always fluctuated through sometimes dramatic crises, for example when six staff resigned in disgust in 1971. For at least the first fifteen years of my time at the BFI, no one at senior level seemed to care very much what we did, but the education department had already established a particular ethos that continues to survive.

Like most of our colleagues, BFI education staff are conscious of their public service responsibilities. The BFI holds one of the world's great national collections of moving image material and related artefacts such as books, stills,

posters, designs and private papers, and showcases international moving image culture in the National Film Theatre in London. We talk unselfconsciously about "serving the nation" and are frequently, perhaps inevitably, castigated as a smug, patronising metropolitan elite. But the particular ethos of the education staff stems from the fact that most of us have been teachers, and maintain the learner-centred perspective that is essential if you are ever going to teach anything to anyone.

In common with education staff in many cultural institutions, this ethos can often be at odds with the management view that education is simply there to "interpret the collection": to be content-driven, in other words, rather than learner-centred. From the learner perspective, we can see that the skills of interpreting moving image media are not as simple or easily acquired as one might think. And we know, because we engage with them every day, how little the wider worlds of education and public policy care for learners' rights to acquire such skills. Our mission therefore has been, and still is, to make them care.

The BFI's education staff appropriated this mission for themselves: it was never handed down by senior management; it was certainly never imposed by government. It has often been the source of bitter internal argument, condemned by those who saw it as inappropriate and presumptuous. But it has meant that the BFI has over the years played a key and sometimes leading role in the development of media education in the UK, engaging with a huge range of external institutions and individuals, and constantly evolving its strategy in response to external threats and opportunities.

The whole of my professional life – 37 years, first as a teacher, then at the BFI – has given me a pretty extensive, and inevitably biased, view of the development of media education in the UK: in a single chapter I cannot even attempt at a full and chronological account. I am therefore going to try and describe what I see as crucial interventions, key moments, significant people and agencies, arranged in a more or less chronological order. I shall focus on formal education in schools, despite the huge range of important work in higher, continuing and informal education. And although I have worked with colleagues in the other three UK nations (Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland), I shall concentrate mainly on England, because I couldn't hope to do justice to the nations' achievements as well.

A Snapshot from the 70s

In 1971, eight years before I joined the BFI, I was one of a group of London teachers summoned to help devise a film study course aimed at sixth formers (16-18 year olds, staying on voluntarily in full time education, many of them to take courses leading to University entrance). In these digital days it may be necessary to remind you that before the late 70s the only possible way of seeing and studying film in a classroom context was to hire a 16mm print and show it yourself on a projector. Direct study of television was impossible except through

live schools broadcasts. So although there was a thriving film study sector in schools, it was inevitably very small, not only because of the lack of training, resources and infrastructure, but also because the number of prints, and the number of teachers trained to operate a 16mm projector, were inevitably limited.

Like my colleagues on the course team, I had begun to show films and film extracts in school out of personal interest and enthusiasm, and was enabled to do so because the Inner London Education Authority (ILEA)[iii] was already collaborating with the BFI to provide free loan of 16mm films to schools, and the BFI had begun in the 1960s to distribute not only short films suitable for classroom use, but also extracts from the major classics of world cinema. The proposed new course, set up jointly by the BFI and ILEA, took a significant step forward by establishing film study on a much larger scale. Through the autumn and spring terms, 550 students from 38 schools attended the National Film Theatre on alternate weeks to watch feature films which ranged from Don Siegel's 1964 remake of *The Killers* and Elia Kazan's *Wild River* (1960) to Wajda's *Ashes and Diamonds* (1958) but included film culture standards such as *Citizen Kane*, *Battleship Potemkin* and *Wild Strawberries*. So far, standard stuff. The radical interventions came in the intervening weeks, when the students stayed in school and worked from materials devised by the course team which took them through concepts such as film as industry, montage, symbolism and technical developments in cinema, supported not only by print material but by sets of frame stills reproduced as slides.

The course ran from 1972 for over 10 years, evolving all the time, despite resistance from some teachers who found the disciplined and systematic approach to film study hard to take. It was clearly enormously influential, establishing an approach to the study of moving image media as texts that can still be discerned in course specifications today (institutions, language, audience, representation); demonstrating the case for, and value of, including recent mainstream titles in media study; and pushing at the boundaries of resource provision to schools, in terms of both content and scale.

Mickey Mouse Subjects

A few months ago I asked a well-travelled and respected American colleague to guess at the percentage of British high school students taking examination courses in media studies. "80%?" he ventured. The correct answer, I explained after I had finished laughing, is about 6%. The reason for his misunderstanding is that for over 20 years the principal preoccupation of those leading the development of media education in Britain was to get it established as an examination course. Their achievements have featured prominently in their books and their speeches at international conferences; the fact that they rarely explain the context is understandable when you realise how peculiar our structure and administration of public examinations actually is.

Bear in mind first of all that the United Kingdom is so called because it consists of four nations. Scotland has always had its own education system and administers its own system of public examinations through a state institution. England, Wales and Northern Ireland until recently shared the same system, but are now starting to diverge in the wake of political devolution. In England at the moment (although this is under review) schoolchildren follow a National Curriculum from when they start school (usually before they are five) until the age of 16, when they can legally leave. However, at age 14 they can opt for a range of courses, which culminate in General Certificate of Education (GCSE) examinations at 16. Although the courses they choose must include the "core" National Curriculum subjects of English, Maths and Science, students can also opt for a range of other subjects, depending on what examinations their schools have decided to offer. After GCSE, students who stay on in full time education can opt to take further courses culminating in more exams at age 17 and 18. At this level there is a wide range of qualifications, some with a clear vocational emphasis, but the most widely-know qualification is Advanced Level General Certificate of Education ('A' Level) which is taken in two stages, AS Level at 17 and A2 at 18, and is the basis for admission to university courses.

The reason that schools can pick and choose subject areas like this is that 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. Three of the awarding bodies offer Media Studies at GCSE; three also offer it at A Level, and one offers Film Studies at A Level.[iv]

The whole system is regulated by the government's Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA), who naturally assert that each awarding body meets the same rigorously monitored standards and that everything is transparent and fair. Each awarding body is nevertheless open to approaches from external groups wishing to set up new examinations. If an awarding body thinks that the QCA will approve the proposed examination specification, and if their marketing department advises them that there will be a demand for it, they are likely to take it on.

It was on this basis that the first formal examined courses in film study were established in the 1970s. The system was more open (and probably a lot less rigorous) then, with a two-tier examination system at 16, more awarding bodies, and the option for schools to develop and administer their own examinations, with external moderators to maintain standards. It was through this route, called "Mode 3" that many of those who later became subject leaders were able to design specifications and courses that were appropriate as well as challenging for their students. Although assessment always had to include a written and timed examination, many specifications allowed students to present portfolios of coursework for substantial parts of the assessment.

The importance of these courses for the long-term development of media education was that they took the subject beyond the province of isolated enthusiasts and into the realm of established, visible practice. Schools offering Media Studies had to employ staff specifically to teach the courses, and to allocate budgets for resources and equipment. Although there were schools – and still are a few – whose institutional support for media teaching was incredibly mean, the existence of public examinations conferred status and sustainability.

The real expansion came in the mid-1980s when the examination system was revised and GCSE was established; and again at the end of the 80s when A Levels were reformed and specifications for Media and for Film Studies were set up at that level. Candidate numbers grew rapidly, which attracted media attention. In Thatcher's Britain, where attacking education was a favourite pastime of a large section of the press, Media Studies rapidly became known as a "Mickey Mouse" subject: it was seen as an index of how teachers were supposed to be hopelessly in thrall to "relevance" and were pandering to fashion. The same prejudice extends to higher education, where the range of media-related courses and student numbers have also expanded.

Candidate numbers for GCSE and A Level Media and Film courses have of course grown, but not as dramatically or as steadily as people tend to think. From 2001 to 2005 there was a renewed and steady increase in GCSE Media Studies, culminating in nearly 46,000 candidates or 7.6% of the age group, an increase of 14.5% on the previous year's entry. More 17-year olds take one of these subjects, with 41,534 sitting the examinations in 2005 as against only 28,340 18-year-olds sitting the A2. Both figures represent less than 5% of the total entries for all subjects, and an average 6% increase in numbers on the previous year. The total number of people in each age cohort or year group in the UK is about 600,000.

If there is anything alarming about the growth of Media Studies, it is that there is still hardly any formal initial training for Media Studies teachers, and where they find opportunities to attend in-service training, 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 QCA to ensure that all subject offers are distinct). A large segment of our activity at the BFI is dedicated to the production of resources and the provision of teacher training for this sector, but as candidate numbers increase, more teachers are required, and too many start with little or no knowledge about how to teach the subject. The worrying fact that the percentage of A grade passes for Media Studies is consistently low (currently 13.6% at A2, compared to 20.7% for English, 24.3% for Art and 34.3% for French) may relate to this, as well as to the likelihood that students do in fact find the courses extremely challenging. Media Studies makes a huge demand on students, both in terms of the breadth of content (an A Level student could expect to cover topics such as the

Hollywood studio system, the history of public service broadcasting in the UK, marketing in the music industry, gender in teenage magazines, and the technical and creative demands of a group production) and of concepts: media institutions, languages, audiences and representation are the usual conceptual areas, with a requirement to address theories such as uses and gratifications or Todorov on narrative structures. In 2005 the government has announced yet another round of reforms to the examination system,[v] providing a new opportunity to consider the range of options available to young people in the field of media education. As new technologies expand the range of media in use, it becomes increasingly difficult to justify the argument that Media Studies has to cover all media. Masterman's argument for "the importance of thinking of the media systematically, and of clarifying their common functions and practices, as well as their important differences"[vi] can be addressed through the comparison of two or three media, and must be for those students who want to study a few media in depth rather than many at a superficial level.

This is not an argument for narrowing or recuperating what has been achieved in the development of Media Studies courses, but for recognising the maturity of the field and the space for a wider range of options. It was on this basis that Ian Wall of Film Education and I worked together on a new specification, which we persuaded the Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA) in Northern Ireland to take on. Moving Image Arts, which enables students to take courses with a higher proportion of practical production work and to study all kinds of moving image media, has proved successful at its pilot stage in Northern Ireland and is piloting in three schools in England in 2005-06; we hope it will lead to an increasing breadth of course offers for young people.

This long-established sector of formal media courses for the 14-19 age group does make the UK's experience of media education distinctive and significant. This account of it may help you understand why UK teachers distinguish between Media Studies (ie the name given to accredited courses) and media education (ie the whole range of media teaching and learning, which is, as we shall see in a moment, very much wider). We do have a core sector of teachers with very substantial, long term Media Studies and/or Film Studies teaching experience who devote incredible levels of effort to keeping up with developments in the media and to helping students understand challenging concepts. We also have 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. Nevertheless, the numbers on these courses represent a relatively small sector in a total school population of over nine million. What about the rest?

Entitlement: "specialist courses are not enough"

In 1982 word got around that the schools inspectorate were having a look at media education. Paranoid fantasies flourished: could this be a plot to shut it all

down? The truth was rather more remarkable. Sir Keith Joseph, the then Secretary of State for Education, had a chauffeur who kept him in touch with the preoccupations of ordinary folk. One day this chauffeur complained to Sir Keith about a nasty influence corrupting the nation's youth: a tea-time BBC drama serial called *Grange Hill*, set in a comprehensive (high school) and portraying all sorts of allegedly shocking subjects such as drugs, bullying and impertinence to teachers. Sir Keith commanded a special screening of an episode from this (actually excellent) series, to which he invited a number of senior civil servants and schools inspectors. Of course the BBC supplied the most innocuous episode of *Grange Hill* that it could find, but in any case most of the assembled mandarins were (unlike politicians) reasonably au fait with the conventions of British realist TV drama and found little to complain about.

Wanting to repair his reputation for responsible and decisive action, Sir Keith ordered the establishment of a working group to look at the question of popular television and schoolchildren. A group of teachers was convened under the leadership of James Learmonth, a schools inspector who had studied at the Centre for the Study of Mass Communications in Leicester and had written a thesis on media education. The group's report was modest and rather bland, to the disappointment of media education activists who had been hoping for a decree in favour of media education for all. Learmonth knew the psychology of government departments better than that: the report was cunningly worded to keep the jury out on media education, and he was allowed to set up ten regional conferences across the country to debate the topic further. Each event brought together educators and media professionals in an uneasy dialogue, but some of the conferences grew into established groups through which a new agenda for media education started to emerge.

A key, widely quoted sentence in the group's report was "Specialist courses in media studies are not enough: all teachers should be involved in examining and discussing television programmes with young people".[vii] It was to be another five years before the announcement of the first National Curriculum for England and Wales, but the "great debate" on education that prime minister James Callaghan had called for in a speech at Ruskin College, Oxford in 1976 had begun the process towards what many considered unthinkable: "a basic curriculum with universal standards". Key to this concept was the principle of entitlement: that we need to think about education in terms of what all children should have the right to expect, not in terms of imposing restrictive and utilitarian requirements.

I had started working at the BFI when my own children were very young, and had been keen to develop the concept of media education for primary school children, but was discouraged by my colleagues, who felt that it was hard enough trying to get media education courses established in secondary schools. But the Popular Television and Schoolchildren initiative fired my imagination. I was designated as the BFI link to the initiative, and travelled with James Learmonth to many of the conferences. He became my mentor and remained a good friend

until his untimely death in 2003; it was from him that I began to see the possibility of more ambitious aspirations for media education: why shouldn't it be the entitlement of every child? But I also began to learn how educational change can be made to happen.

The fact that Her Majesty's Inspectorate and the Department of Education endorsed the regional conferences made a surprising difference to who turned up. Media education began to be an acceptable issue for local education authorities to address; many began to appoint advisers with responsibilities for media education. In 1986 I decided to convene a working group for primary media education, bringing teachers and academics together to discuss and try out ways of teaching about the media with children: we met for residential weekends three times a year for three years, finally hammering out a curriculum statement[viii] which went to the working group preparing the definition of English for the new National Curriculum,[ix] and ensured a reference to media as an entitlement for all.

Hard lessons

But a curriculum statement is like a marriage in soap opera: it's the start of new intrigues, rather than a happy ending, and in any case destined not to last. The over-hasty introduction of the National Curriculum in England and Wales in 1990 was fraught with controversy and compromise. Media education was relegated to the tail end of the English curriculum in the mysterious category of "non-literary texts", which tended to mean what it had always meant in English: writing stuff in columns and calling it a newspaper; looking at magazine advertisements and spotting the stereotypes. Studying moving image media remained too much hassle for most – apart from the occasional screening of a filmed Shakespeare play. As the lead agency arguing for media education to be written into English in the National Curriculum, the BFI was criticised for failing to go to battle for media education as a separate subject. I saw that idea as on a par with overthrowing capitalism or ending world poverty: obviously desirable, but not likely in my lifetime, and certainly not obtainable from a right wing Conservative government. Their return for a fourth term in office in 1992 signalled grim times ahead for everyone in the public sector. We'd had bluff approval from Secretary of State Kenneth Baker in 1988: "I'm all for media education," he quipped at a well-fuelled lunch, "it'll show children how left-wing the BBC is!" By 1992 John Major drew derisive cheers from the Party faithful by yelling "There'll be no GCSE's in *Eldorado*!"[x] Media education had become an emblem of teacher laziness and incompetence: in April 1993 proposals for the revision of English were published, removing all requirements to study media texts in their own right.

The BFI decided to try and counter these proposals by setting up a two-day event at the National Film Theatre in November 1993, cheekily entitled "A Commission of Inquiry into English: Balancing Literature, Language and Media in the National Curriculum" (cheeky, because commissions of inquiry are usually set up by government) at which a panel of distinguished and impeccably middle-

of the road figures, chaired by Baroness Mary Warnock, listened to evidence for and against media education from 20 "witnesses" and delivered their verdict some months later at the front of a published transcript of the whole event.[xi] "It appears from the evidence," they said, "that the idea of learning about the media as a general entitlement is now a widely-accepted principle, which we would endorse … We recommend that flexible and gradual ways be found to ensure that the curriculum begins to incorporate both critical and creative work with media, starting from modest beginnings, and subject to careful monitoring."[xii]

While that sort of thing was never going to set the world on fire, it probably helped to save media education from being thrown into the incinerator. It would have been easy for the government to reject shrill demands from media education activists; it was much harder for them to ignore reasonable, modest proposals from respectable folk. The National Curriculum's minimal, ambiguous references to media education remained.

New Labour, New Media Education

1990-1996 were years of bitter struggle to hold on to some of what had been won in the 1980s, and to try and engage with the enormous changes happening in digital technologies, which were clearly going to transform the ways people would engage with – and learn about – the media. In May 1997, with the election of Tony Blair's "New Labour" government, we entered a new era.

Labour's election campaign had been supported by sections of the media, particularly the film industry, which had been poorly treated by the Tory regime. One of the new government's early decisions was to set up a Film Policy Review Group, whose report, *A Bigger Picture*, was produced in 1998 by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS). Like all reports on the British film industry, it had to acknowledge the fact that UK film exhibition and TV broadcasting of film are both massively dominated by Hollywood product. No one in UK government or industry, given the UK's dependence on US investment in our talent and facilities, was going to even think of the words "cultural imperialism", but the review group had to come up with something to bolster the ever-failing fortunes of British film. It proposed setting up a Film Council which would pull together all the state-funded UK film institutions and would become the BFI's funding body.

A Bigger Picture also hypothesised that the reason British audiences did not attend British films as much as they should was because they lacked the "cineliteracy" to appreciate them. The group therefore proposed the setting up of a Film Education Working Group, which would make proposals about the ways in which people could learn about film. The BFI was asked to convene this group: I was its secretary, with the responsibility of drafting the report.

The group of course included a number of key figures in British media education for whom the group's remit posed a dilemma, since none of us wanted to single out "film" in this one chance we might have for a serious influence on government

policy. For this reason, the report uses the term “moving image media” rather than “film” wherever it can, and the introduction, which is probably the one piece of writing I am prouder of than anything else I have written, clearly stakes the claim for television as part of moving image culture.[xiii]

The report’s 22 recommendations set out an agenda which, if they had all been followed, would have substantially transformed media education in the UK. One small but key triumph, agreed before the report was published, was to specify “moving image media” in the National Curriculum’s references to media education, thus preventing teachers from confining all their media work to print forms. But for the report as a whole, the political will wasn’t there: John Woodward, the BFI director who had secured the BFI’s role as the working group convener, had moved on to become the director of the new UK Film Council and had other things on his mind, while the BFI was struggling to define its new role as subordinate to an industry-led body. Nevertheless, the BFI has in fact worked since 1999, with some success, to realise the six recommendations that related to formal education. We also used the model of learning progression which was included in the report[xiv] as the basis of two general guides for teachers, distributed both as hard copies and online.[xv]

New Literacy

In the education sector, general glee at the final defeat of the Tories quickly gave way to consternation as people realised that the Labour Government was determined to continue issuing central directives and to maintain a target-driven culture. An early intervention was the National Literacy Strategy, a vast project aimed at ensuring that by 2002, 80% of 11 year olds should have reached a basic level of reading competence.[xvi] A National Literacy Framework was devised, a network of advisers set up and, more controversially, a Literacy Hour, planned minute by minute, to be followed in all primary schools every day – a concept originally proposed by the Conservative government in 1996.

Soon after it was set up, the Literacy Strategy management approached the BFI and asked us to run a seminar for them and their regional directors, looking at the relationship between print and moving image media. The seminar discussion was well-informed and objective: by the end we had agreed that the study of moving image media could probably make a significant contribution to “text level” learning, especially if this were done through the study of complete short films rather than clips.

This began a fascinating and, I believe, very important phase of work. The Literacy Framework proposes three levels of literacy learning: word level, which deals with vocabulary and spelling; sentence level, which deals with grammar; and text level, which deals with whole-text concepts such as narrative, character, genre, etc. It was this last level that teachers found difficult. We argued that text-level concepts are not medium-specific: they are concepts that very young children are learning through their television and video viewing.[xvii] We became

excited at the prospect of developing teaching resources that would, in fact, broaden the concept of literacy to include critical skills and wider viewing of moving image texts. They would enhance and extend traditional literacy learning without compromising what we would want children to learn for media literacy.

Since that date the BFI has developed three such resources (including one for lower secondary schools, now that the Strategy has extended to include 11-14 year olds), with five more in the pipeline, piloted with a wide range of schools and teachers, and now sold to schools, with over 6,000 copies sold so far.[xviii] On this basis we calculate that the resources reach over a million children annually at the moment; there are 6.6 million 3-14 year olds in the UK, so we have some way to go. The Strategy has supported this initiative by inviting us to train their regional directors and groups of advisers and consultants at local level: they'd like to see all primary school classes undertaking three weeks of moving image related activity in every term.

The latest development in this initiative has been for the BFI to offer advanced training to nominated individuals from local education authorities, who will become Lead Practitioners for what we're calling moving image media literacy. Local authorities buying into this scheme have to produce a costed and timed action plan for using the Lead Practitioners to roll out this approach to their schools. So far we have 40 local authorities committed to the scheme and another 33 showing interest. There are 147 local authorities in England: we hope to cover them all by 2007. We're supporting similar schemes in Northern Ireland and Scotland.

Each of the resources we have produced contains a compilation of material selected through an exhaustive process of research to find – and clear rights on – films that are short enough, appropriate for the age group, and above all rich enough to reward repeated viewing and analysis. They were not necessarily made originally for children; some are non-narrative; several are challengingly different from mainstream film. It is the powerful impact of these films on both teachers and children that has been key to the success of this initiative.

I think there are lessons to be learned here. First of all, educational change is never achieved just through curricular directives or classroom resources. It has to be supported by training and advocacy. Secondly, we have found that no educational initiative can succeed unless it is premised on the idea of offering a positive and desirable new experience for learners. However fascinating and important it has been for all of us to learn that the media are dominated by global corporations dedicated to profit, that fact on its own is not enough to open up a space in the core curriculum. Media education solely based on protecting children from exploitation and ideological manipulation is destined to occupy the same kinds of marginal curricular space – and the same status in learners' eyes – as health and drugs education. What media education has to offer to learners, if it is to occupy the central curricular role that it deserves, are high expectations

of what the media can achieve. That then offers the necessary motivation, context and rationale for an approach to media education which can and must include learning about media institutions, bias and stereotyping.

Enter the Regulator

New Labour had other plans for UK media besides the Film Policy Working Group. The government decided to rationalise the plethora of institutions set up to regulate media industries by creating a new authority, the Office of Communications or Ofcom for short, with responsibility over all broadcast and electronic media (except the BBC, which continues to be regulated by its Board of Governors), but not the press, advertising or film industries, which continue to maintain their own watchdogs. Despite this comparatively limited brief and regulatory role, the Communications Act of 2003 gave Ofcom responsibility for "media literacy": the first time that any statutory body had been given explicit powers for anything to do with media education.[xix]

All national regulatory bodies for media in the 21st century know that their powers are limited in a digital age. Most of them make some sort of nod towards education as a means towards citizens regulating their own media consumption: keeping their kids away from internet paedophiles; knowing how to complain about offensive content, and so on. So does it matter that media literacy gets "given" to a regulatory body? Ofcom has a duty to work *with others* to promote media literacy; the definition given in the Act is so broad that hardly anyone would want to disagree with it;[xx] staff at Ofcom have been clear from the outset that they have no desire to colonise the concept or extend their media literacy remit beyond what a regulator would be expected to cover: the protection of vulnerable consumers, especially children, and ensuring that citizens have the skills and knowledge necessary to access electronic media content.

So that's all right then? Yes and no. It is good that media literacy has a higher public profile, but bad that, whatever efforts Ofcom makes, media literacy is bound to become more closely associated with their remit than with the kinds of activity established over the years in the education sector. Anticipating this, the UK Film Council collaborated with the BFI and with two of the major terrestrial broadcasters, BBC and Channel Four, to set up an event in January 2004 called "Inform and Empower", designed to win a consensus from both industry and education stakeholders around a definition of media literacy that was wider than Ofcom's. The event was dominated by industry rather than education, and was successful in the sense that a wide range of media institutions did get a sense of UK media education as a diverse and active field in which a great deal of excellent work is going on (ie much more than just Media Studies courses), and they liked what they saw.

In the wake of that event, the same quartet of agencies convened a Task Force to take forward the ideas aired during "Inform and Empower". Again, the problems inherent in giving the media literacy remit to a regulatory body surfaced

in the Task Force. Broadcasters are required to win Ofcom's approval for their media literacy activities; they do not have to win education sector approval, and in any case the Department for Education and Skills can now regard media literacy as primarily the responsibility of their sister department, the DCMS, not as something they need to add to their own already substantial list of problems.

The Media Literacy Task Force therefore devised another solution: to establish, exemplify and strengthen the fragile consensus won at "Inform and Empower" by creating a Charter for Media Literacy, to be signed by industry and education bodies alike, intended to establish the more liberal version of media literacy in the public sphere.[xxi] By the time you read this, the Charter will have either swum or sunk: I hope it swims, because it does at least present the possibility for media literacy gaining a higher public profile and wider consensus on what it actually should be. The Charter lists seven key competences that a media literate person should have, and identifies three essential elements of media education, drawn from the BFI's experience in media education over the years, but in fact no surprise to anyone in the arts education field. The elements are:

- **Cultural**: learners broaden their experience of different kinds of media form and content;
- **Critical**: learners develop skills in analysing and assessing media;
- **Creative**; learners develop skills in using media for expression and communication, and participation in public debate.

These "three 'C's" will seem pretty general and simplistic to anyone who's been centrally involved in media education over the years, but I have found them essential in talking to people who want magic bullets and one-stop solutions (usually focusing on high profile, one-off creativity initiatives and ignoring the other two "C's"), if only to keep my foot in the door and hold on to the principle that quick fixes and education don't mix.

What's happening? What next?

Reading many of the extant accounts of media education in the UK, you could be forgiven for thinking that it has somehow just evolved through some kind of natural process of growth. Changes in practice and attitudes are described but not accounted for: apparently they just happen. Although of course there is grass roots practice, and it is after all the most important aspect of media education as far as learners are concerned, but the most salient fact about it as far as any attempts at a comprehensive account are concerned is that *no one actually knows what's going on*. We can all describe the comparatively small amounts of practice that we actually see and have read about, and as I have pointed out already, in the UK we do have a uniquely extensive collection of evidence about a certain kind of media learning at a certain level, in our Media and Film Studies examination system. But to map the whole field of media education in a national context is extremely expensive and difficult, precisely because there is a lot going on in a very wide range of settings. The BFI has attempted it four times;[xxii]

Mapping Media Literacy, the most expensive of the four studies, cost its co-funders £30,000, took five months, only addressed the 11-16 age group, and even so produced very sketchy and unsurprising results:

> Overall, the levels of media literacy are low, although there is some contribution being made to media literacy, mainly through English in schools, for young people aged 11-16. This is because in media education, policy-making, planning and provision are fragmentary and this is not seen as a priority area for education.[xxiii]

The corollary of never being able to know what's going on is that no one can know who or what has really affected what's going on. As the employee of a public service institution with a responsibility, albeit self-defined, of developing media education in the UK, I find myself in the interesting position of being attacked both for being completely ineffectual[xxiv] and for having sinisterly far-reaching powers.[xxv] Of course neither is true: but I wouldn't be doing the job that I do if I felt that the BFI wasn't achieving anything through its events, resources, training, research and advocacy – most of which, I should add, I don't do: the real work is done by my fantastic team of colleagues.[xxvi] In this chapter I have, as I said I would, staked a claim for the BFI's role in the development of UK media education; however, what our real impact may have been, I leave to others to judge. What also needs stating is that there have been many other key individuals and agencies over the years – too many to list here – who have made, and will continue to make, significant contributions to media education in the UK. So how will this field develop in the future?

The danger facing media education at the moment is that it will become dominated by "creativity" at the expense of the other two C's – the cultural and the critical. The ease of access now afforded by digital technologies makes this temptingly easy. But anyone who knows anything about teaching creative subjects knows that learning in this area needs to be underpinned by cultural breadth and critical skills: a point effectively made in a recent BFI-led study of a large digital video project in England.[xxvii] The perception also persists that "creativity" with moving image media means film making, and that the creative "moment" of filmmaking is using the camera. In fact, the creative centre of filmmaking is editing, as anyone who has edited moving images will know. And if we consider what is actually feasible for large numbers of learners, we must recognise that their likeliest point of access to creative activity with any time-based media (is moving image or audio) is likely to be at a computer, working with "found" or freely accessed material to create their own meanings. The important concept of "creative commons"[xxviii] means that learners' access to material previously restricted by copyright is likely to change, and with it our notion of what "counts" as creativity. I predict that this will be the next focus of debate for media education, not only in the UK, but in many other countries as well.

NOTES

[i] Len Masterman (1985) *Teaching the Media*, London: Comedia, p 257.
[ii] The best three 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.
[iii] The administrative body for education in London, later abolished by Margaret Thatcher's government in an amazing act of antidemocratic vandalism.
[iv] Those really interested can check out candidate numbers and results at www.bfi.org.uk/education/research/teachlearn/stats. The actual specifications from the different Boards can be seen at www.wjec.co.uk; www.ocr.org.uk; www.aqa.org.uk; www.ccea.org.uk.
[v] See the proposals at http://www.dfes.gov.uk/publications/14-19educationandskills.
[vi] Masterman, op cit, p 19
[vii] *Popular Television and Schoolchildren: the report of a group of teachers*, London: Department of Education and Science, April 1983, p 27. For more on James Learmonth's work in relation to media education, see his evidence to the Select Committee on Culture, Media and Sport, at http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200203/cmselect/cmcumeds/667/667we24.htm.
[viii] BFI/DES Working Group (1989) *Primary Media Education: A Curriculum Statement*, London: BFI.
[ix] *English for Ages 5-16* ("The Cox Report") National Curriculum Council 1989.
[x] *Eldorado* was a particularly dismal and short-lived BBC soap opera set amongst British ex-pats in Spain.
[xi] Cary Bazalgette (ed) (1994) *Report of the Commission of Inquiry into English: Balancing Literature, Language and Media in the National Curriculum*, London: BFI.
[xii] Ibid. p 16
[xiii] "Introduction: Why Movies Matter" in Film Education Working Group (1999) *Making Movies Matter*, London: BFI, pp6-7; available as a pdf at http://www.bfi.org.uk/education/research/advocacy/mmm.
[xiv] "Becoming Cineliterate", ibid. pp 73-79.
[xv] Look Again! (for primary schools), available at http://www.bfi.org.uk/education/teaching/lookagain/ and Moving Images in the Classroom (for secondary schools), available at http://www.bfi.org.uk/education/teaching/miic/.
[xvi] For more on the Literacy Strategy see http://www.literacytrust.org.uk/Update/strat.html#Background.
[xvii] This view has been influenced by the important work at the Univerity of Minnesota by Paul van den Broek and colleagues; see http://www.ciera.org/library/archive/2001-02/04OCT99-58-MSarchive.html.
[xviii] The first three resources are *Starting Stories*, for 3-7 year olds, *Story Shorts*, for 7-11 year olds, and *Screening Shorts*, for 11-14 year olds. For more detail and new titles go to www.bfi.org.uk/education/teaching.
[xix] The two terms tend to get confused, but needn't: education is a process; literacy is an outcome. So you get to be media literate by having media education.
[xx] To see the Act's extremely generic definition of media literacy, go to http://www.ofcom.org.uk/consult/condocs/strategymedialit/ml_statement/annexb/?a=87101.
[xxi] The Charter is available online at www.euromedialiteracy.net, and is also being promoted across Europe as a way of building a European network of media educators.
[xxii] P. Dickson (1994) *A Survey of Media Education in Schools and Colleges*, London: BFI; James Learmonth and Mollie Sayer (1996) *A Review of Good Practice in Media Education*, London: BFI; A.J.B.Barrett (1998) *Audit of Media in English*, London: BFI; Tony Kirwan, James Learmonth, Mollie Sayer and Roger Williams (March 2003) *Mapping Media Literacy*, London: BFI, BSC and ITC.

[xxiii] Press release at http://www.ofcom.org.uk/static/archive/itc/latest_news/press_releases/release.asp-release_id=679.html.
[xxiv] see Andrew Hart (Feb 2001) "Researching media education in schools in the UK" in *Studies in Media and Information Literacy Education*, Vol 1 no 1, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, at http://www.utpjournals.com/jour.ihtml?lp=simile/issue1/hartfulltext.html.
[xxv] see Len Masterman (2002) *Down Cemetery Road*, privately published.
[xxvi] For the full list see http://www.bfi.org.uk/education/about/whoswho.html.
[xxvii] See the report by Mark Reid and others at: http://www.becta.org.uk/research/research.cfm?section=1&id=532.
[xxviii] See for example http://creativearchive.bbc.co.uk.