MEDIA EDUCATION AND THE IRISH SECOND-LEVEL CURRICULUM: PROBLEMS AND POSSIBILITIES

Eamonn Lynskey, B.A., H.Dipl.in Ed. (NUI).

Dissertation submitted Dublin City University in fulfilment of

M.A. Studies
August 1990

DECLARATION

I, Eamonn Lynskey, being a candidate for the degree of Masters as awarded by Dublin City University declare that while registered as a candidate for the above degree I have not been a registered candidate for an award of another University. Secondly, that none of the material contained in this thesis has been used in any other submission for any other award. Further, that the contents of this thesis are the sole work of the author except where an acknowledgement has been made for assistance received.

Signed.....
Date.....28.9.1990

Eamonn Lynskey

Signed.....
Date.....28-9-1990

Professor Farrel Corcoran
Head - School of Communications
Dublin City University

Signed.....
Date.....28.9.90.....

Martin McLoone
University of Ulster
Coleraine

ABSTRACT

This dissertation argues that Media Education at second-level schooling is desirable on a number of grounds and discusses the problems and possibilities, both past and projected, associated with its introduction into the Irish second-level curriculum. The term 'Media education' here denotes the interdisciplinary study of mass communication media which can inform teaching and learning in different 'subject' areas. It includes the conception of 'Media Studies' as a discrete and separate subject area in itself.

Chapter One (INTRODUCTION) traces the development of Media Education at second-level in the Republic of Ireland during the last two decades and indicate some problems encountered and some which remain. **Chapter two (POPULAR OPINION AND THE MASS MEDIA)**, explores popular attitudes to the media, the origins of these attitudes, and their implications for media education. **Chapter Three (RATIONALES and AIMS)** advances arguments for media education, grounded within curriculum theory and the writings of media specialists. **Chapter Four (CONCEPTUALISATIONS AND TEACHING APPROACHES)**, describes four conceptualisations of media education and their implications for the teaching of media studies. **Chapter Five (CORE CONCEPTS)**, separates those concepts which might be considered central to the field of study. **Chapter Six (THE IRISH SECOND-LEVEL CURRICULUM)**, traces the historical development of the Republic's curriculum,

its educational philosophy and general thrust and, in the light of the curriculum's particular aims and goal, argues for the introduction of Media Studies. Finally, in **Chapter Seven, CONCLUSIONS and RECOMMENDATIONS** are offered. A **GENERAL SYLLABUS FOR MEDIA STUDIES**, and **STRATEGIES FOR INCLUDING MEDIA STUIDIES WITHIN JUNIOR CERTIFICATE ENGLISH** are included in the Appendices.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

General Remarks

Arguments for the introduction of Media Education within the second level curriculum have been advanced in various forms over the past two decades in the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland. These arguments and have been accompanied by the development of the theory and practice of Media Studies as a school subject in a variety of timetabled formats (ie., as short modules designed as 'enrichment' courses within English and other subjects, year-long courses within 'Vocational Preparation' programmes, and senior cycle courses designed to run parallel to 'mainstream' curriculum subjects).

In the Republic of Ireland these developments in theory and practice have been neither uniform nor consistent, due in large measure to the wide variety of teaching approaches and timetable formats which have, during the past 15-20 years, traded under the banner of 'Media Studies'. Pedagogic approaches have ranged from the 'innoculative', in which teachers have sought to insulate learners from the putative 'bad effects' of the mass media, to the 'semiological' approach, which has emphasised the relationship between sign and signified and the need for an 'interrogative' analysis of media practices. Between these two very different formulations - the one equipping students <u>against</u> the media, and the other aiming at an active analytic engagement <u>with</u> the

media - there has been wide range of other teaching approaches. These approaches will be discussed in some detail in chapter three. Here it will suffice to point out that the 'Media Studies' provided within the Vocational Preparation and Training Programme has often differed substantially from what would be provided, sometimes within the same school, for a Junior 'Civics' class.

Other reasons for this inconsistency of development within the the Republic have been:

- the largely uncoordinated nature of the research and design of the various media studies courses offered at different educational establishments;

- the varying extent to which school administrations, apparently providing 'media studies' on the timetable, have been willing to facilitate these studies within their schools in terms of equipment and teacher-training;

- and the various reasons why 'media studies' has been provided in the first place, apart from its own intrinsic worth. The rapid pace of changing technology has also been a major problem for the formulation of coherent syllabus content and pedagogy.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, there has been the lack of teacher training funded by the education authorities. This, a direct result of the area's lack of

presence when and where the important decisions with respect to State Education are made, has resulted in the adoption of many very 'individual' approaches heavily influenced by the teacher's own perspective on 'the media' (which may be based on the general 'popular' views on the nature of media activity prevailing at the time: see chapter two), and by the perspective of his/her degree subject. This has meant that the three subjects which up to the present (1990) have provided most of the Republic's 'media' teachers, ie., English, Art, and Religious Education, have had a great deal of influence on the direction and ethos of the development of Media Education. Lately, too, the emergence of the so-called 'New Vocationalism' (see chapter four) within education has introduced a new emphasis on skills acquisition. Not all of these influences have been of benefit to the development of Media Education, and some - it will be argued in chapter four - have almost certainly been detrimental.

These observations are not intended as a plea for a rigid, 'absolutist' approach to media education. As the Education Officer of the Scottish Film Council wrote recently:

"It is important, because it is a discipline and not a subject, that Media Studies is not defined in an absolute way. There should be no 'exclusion by definition'" (Dick 1988:3).

However, it is an obvious point that a fragmented development such as that outlined above does little to advance interests of this, or any, area of study.

On the other hand, although developments at second-level over the past twenty years have been uneven, they have at the same time furnished much practical experience of what must be done (and what must not be done) 'at the chalkface' if the aims and objectives of this kind of education are to be achieved. For example, despite the sometimes rather expedient emphasis on 'practical activity' and the teaching of 'production skills' over the years, advances have been made on the theoretical problems associated with combining a 'skills' approach with one which focuses on the 'interrogation' of media practices.

This Introduction will, therefore, trace significant developments in Media Education in the Republic over the past two decades in an attempt to gauge what has been achieved, and what remains to be achieved, in the continuing effort to establish Media Education on a firm footing within the second-level curriculum. Developments in Britain - so influential for Ireland - should also become clear in the chapters that follow.

MEDIA EDUCATION IN IRELAND

Formal Entry to the Curriculum

Media Education in the Republic of Ireland made its formal entry into the second-level curriculum with the publication by the Department of Education in 1978 of the syllabus guidelines for Pre-Employment Courses (PEC). These courses were devised in response to changing economic and social circumstance. The Department lists among these the raising of the school-leaving age and the increased participation in second-level education as a result of the 'free education' scheme introduced in 1967 (Department, July 1978: 5). The guidelines signalled 'new departures' in curriculum content in several areas, including 'media studies'. Under the heading of 'General Studies and Personal/ Social Development' a one-page syllabus was provided for 'Communications' which listed nine areas of study, one of which - 'The Media' - was described briefly as 'a study of the functions of the Media and their comparative effects; selectivity and critical appraisal' (see appendix I: The Department of Education syllabus for 'Communications' within Pre-Employment courses).

When it became necessary to re-design the Pre-Employment Course under pressure of changed economic circumstances and the rapidly developing 'workplace technology' of the 1980s, new syllabus guidelines were published for Vocational Preparation and Training Programmes (VPTP) in

November 1984. 'Communications' was here retitled 'Communications Studies' and the syllabus included five sections which 'participants must cover'. One of these was 'Systems of Mass Communication' and, in contrast to 'Communications', a somewhat more detailed mapping of the study area was provided (see appendix II: Department syllabus for Vocational Preparation and Training Programmes - Extract from the Syllabus for 'Communications Studies', Systems of Mass Communication).

These syllabi, though somewhat vague in outline, were important as evidence of 'official' thinking regarding this area of study. They were also important by virtue of the fact of their being issued at all, given the traditional reticence of the Republic's educational authorities on curriculum matters over the years, and their reluctance to give any form of administrative 'status' to 'new departures'.

An example of this reluctance may be seen in the history so far of the 'Humanities' project, developed since the early seventies by the City of Dublin VEC Curriculum Development Unit for use at Junior Cycle second-level and within existing Intermediate Certificate structures. This project, introduced in the early seventies in a limited number of schools, has never progressed beyond the status of being a 'pilot' scheme, and at present (1990) still continues 'year to year' basis. Besides the disadvantages which accrue to the subject itself from

such an unsatisfactory status, it could also be said that this neglect resulted in the loss of many opportunities to develop media and civic education within this new area. This was particularly unfortunate, given the Unit's obvious commitment to the area, a commitment which was substantiated byn the provision of teaching materials and one of the first videotape editing suites to be made available to teachers.

It is significant, however, that the inclusion of media studies occurred within the area of 'continuation' or 'vocational education' (see appendix I) provided for those students who leave school at the end of junior cycle. No moves were made to include such studies within what will be referred to within this dissertation as the 'mainstream' curriculum, ie., the course leading to Intermediate or Leaving Certificate Programmes. These latter have remained essentially unchanged since the 1960s. There had indeed been a flurry of activity in the early seventies, culminating in the publication of a number of reports and recommendations on second-level curriculum change and reform, (such as the Intermediate Certificate Examination Report in 1974). However, subsequent official comment on these recommendations was muted and very few of them were acted upon.

The restriction of curriculum change to the 'vocational' area was eventually to have two detrimental effects on subsequent development of media education in the

Republic. Firstly, the 'vocational' aspects of skills acquisition became somewhat overemphasised. Secondly, media education unwittingly became a 'peripheral' activity associated with 'personal development', and one which could - without much difficulty - be jettisoned when the need arose and 'hard' decisions had to be made in favour of more immediately 'useful' activities, ie., those which led directly to public examination and certification, those which fitted best within the school in terms of timetabling requirements and/or staff deployment, and/or those requiring less financial back-up.

Both of these ill-effects are well-known to media teachers and will receive some discussion in the course of this dissertation. It is true also that media education was not the only area of study to suffer from this restriction to the 'outer reaches' of the curriculum. In fact, the wider and most damaging implications were for the whole curriculum itself. It will be argued in (chapter five) that this restriction resulted in a 'shielding' of the second level curriculum from the necessity for change, resulting in a serious deterioration in its relevance to the society which it purports to serve.

With regard to the Transition Year, ie., the introduction of an

'extra' year's schooling between Junior and Senior Cycles (1984), the promise of new departures for media studies as an 'enrichment activity' faded with the constriction of the course to only a few schools shortly after it commenced. In any case, no detailed syllabi were provided by the Department, although it was recommended that the year's content should include 'media education and communication skills' (Rialacha agus Clar 1984/85: 147).

The Curriculum and Examinations Board (CEB:1984) and The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA:1987)

Reluctance to admit new content to the formal second-level curriculum was to be considerably modified under the Ministry of Gemma Hussey, to whom is due much of the credit for initiating the long-overdue reform of second-level educational provision with the establishment of the Curriculum and Examinations Board (CEB) in 1984 (renamed the 'National Council for Curriculum and Assessment' (NCCA) in 1987, and re-established with a modified brief, following a change of government). Since this date, there have been many publications from the various Working Parties and Committees established by the the Board and these have put forward many ideas and suggestions. It must be remembered, though, that these are, in the last analysis, expressions of intent rather than initiations of action, exhorting teachers to expand the repertoire of pedagogy beyond what has been up to now the 'normal' range at second-level, rather than definite commitments

to curriculum change. The Minister's 'Programme for Action in Education', for instance, is long on exhortation but very short on specifics.
Media Education is not mentioned.

'Issues and Structures in Education' (CEB Sept. 1984: 17) did, however, describe four 'categories' of the proposed Curricular Framework for Junior Cycle in terms that seemed to allow the inclusion of media studies. These areas were 'Science and the New Technologies', 'Social and Political Studies', 'Communication, Language and Literature', and 'Creative and Aesthetic Studies'. The relevance of media studies to 'Social and Political Studies' will be made clear in chapter four of this dissertation. Regarding the last two, the Department mentions 'media studies' (ibid., p.18) and 'media design' (ibid., p.17) specifically.
This wide spread of potential indicated the 'official' view of media studies as a cross-curricular discipline. Subsequent mention within the syllabus for the new English Junior Certificate (draft submitted to second-level schools September 1988), shows that the Department's view to date is that this area of study can be explored within that particular subject area. In fact, the NCCA has advised teachers that

"The [new Junior Certificate] syllabus is consciously designed to retain the best elements of English teaching and learning as it has developed in the past while also allowing teachers to introduce new elements such as adolescent literature, classroom drama and media

studies". ('Comhairle': NCCA information bulletin, October 1988. Emphasis added).

This is in accordance with the view expressed in 'The Arts in Education' that '...film and media studies... are of great importance and must be taken into account in future revision of Arts curricula" (CEB September 1985: 4).

This 'official' view of media education, viz., that it is cross-curricular in essence, but capable of introduction within an established subject area such as English, is itself a reflection of what has been the thinking and the practice of most media teachers in Irish schools since the early seventies. Unfortunately, media education would seem to feature in Department planning for reasons other than its own intrinsic value as an area of study. Ministerial reference is often made to media studies within contexts which would suggest that their introduction into the curriculum was being considered on grounds other than the purely 'educational'.
For example, an article by Michael Foley in the Irish Times (3/9/1987) under the heading 'Bigger Classes to Follow £80m Education Cuts' reported, inter alia, that

"[The Minister for Education] will be looking at different ways of assessing pupils as well as introducing new subject options, including computer science and media studies, as part of the English syllabus for the first year of the junior cycle. ...". In keeping with the main thrust of her interview with the newspaper's education correspondent, and a propos of her predecessor's plans for educational reform, she is further quoted as saying "...what frightened me was that they were not costed. My reforms will be rigidly costed, be realistic and will happen". The report concludes with her maintaining that

"In a year's time the education system would be 'leaner and fitter,' but would be a sound and good system". (I.T. 3/9/87)

While it would be unfair to ascribe all the Minister's plans to introduce 'new subject options' merely to cost-cutting motives, it seems clear that financial considerations do, in some way, form part of these motives. Thus, while it may be said that one aspect of official thinking on media education is a readiness to see it introduced at Junior Cycle, such introduction will only occur within an existing subject like English, and within existing funding. This is not an auspicious omen for the future development of media education in the Republic if, as would be expected with any 'new departure', teacher in-service training is regarded as essential.

The establishment of the Curriculum and Examinations Board was widely seen by teachers, parents and school managements as heralding sweeping changes in Irish second-level in many areas, including the official recognition of media education as a desirable part of the curriculum. The Board moved quickly to set up a number of Boards of Study to examine the educational provision at second-level but, unfortunately for their own continuity, a change of government interrupted the work of these Boards. The result was that there was something of a hiatus introduced into the whole curriculum development process, with some Board Reports (for instance the report on Social, Political and Environmental Education, CEB

August 1987) apparently being shelved completely. These events illustrate clearly the intensely 'political' nature of curricular provision in the Republic of Ireland (see chapter five) and the extreme sensitivity with which any proposals for change always have to contend.

In fact it would not be unfair to say that the short history of the CEB was somewhat in line with the experience of previous government-approved initiatives in curriculum development, change or reform. That is to say, it was characterised by a seemingly endless series of meetings and reports from committees, designated bodies, consultative groups, and developmental agencies (see Introductory Bulletin, CEB May 1984) . It is not the intention here to denigrate the work of these committees or to argue that their deliberations were not useful. However, in the end, it would seem that many of these reports on new departures and alternative programmes were 'shelved', leaving the situation much as it had been in 1983, and the return of the usual 'ad hoc' approaches on the part of the Department.

As mentioned above, a most depressing example of this prevarication and inability to tackle major curriculum reform has been the 'Humanities' project - a programme which could have great potential for the development of Media Education. Initiated in the early 1970s, and with Department approval, this 'project' is still today

(August 1989) a 'pilot-scheme' existing year to year in the knowledge that it may be terminated at any time.

This apparent inability to move on curriculum development of reform has meant that teachers who have wished to see some development take place have been forced to press ahead on their own at whatever site within the existing curriculum which offered scope. This type of school-based curriculum development is without doubt a valid approach and certainly one of the best ways of closing the gap between classroom aspirations and classroom practice. For theorists such as Stenhouse it is the 'only' approach:

"The gap can be closed only by adopting a research and development approach to one's own teaching whether alone or in a group of co-operating teachers..", and he sees 'a national curriculum project' as helpful only 'sometimes' (Stenhouse 1975: 3).

However, not all teachers would agree. Certainly it is true that without the back-up of in-service provision and complete encouragement from Educational Authorities, there is the danger of a narrow focus of teaching practice and, eventually the creation of some disillusionment, not to say cynicism, on the part of the teacher who has had to spend many hours in the classroom over and above what his terms of employment strictly require.

Nevertheless, it has to be said that the CEB's successor, the NCCA, has signalled a major departure in curriculum development in the introduction of the new Junior

Certificate, a development first advised in the ICE report in 1974 and formally initiated by the CEB some twelve years later. This new-style certificate (which replaces the Intermediate and 'Day Vocational' Certificate and is scheduled to have its first 'public examination' in 1992), allows room for the inclusion of 'new' areas within English such as Media Studies (see appendix VI). Also encouraging was the appearance within the Board's literature of phrases such as 'visual literacy' and 'media literacy' ('Issues and Structures', p.19). This was seen by teachers as a welcome sign that there had indeed been a shift in emphasis from the importance of the literary or artistic work itself (Rialacha agus Clar 1983/4: 153) to the active engagement of the learner in the interpretation of that work. This, combined with a readiness to see modern forms of entertainment (CEB 1985,'Arts in Education', p.15) as relevant to the development of the learners, was of great encouragement to teachers in general, and media teachers in particular.

Vocationalism: 'Communication Skills' or 'Media Studies'?

As has been noted, 'new departures' in curriculum innovation have occurred since the mid-seventies in the area of 'continuation education', ie., in the provision of programmes for 'early school-leavers'.

There were two reasons for these developments. One was that the ground had been broken in the matter of school-

based curriculum innovation in the Irish second-level system in the early seventies. Theory and practice had been encouraged by the Department since some years earlier with the establishment of many 'pilot schemes' in various study areas (Crooks, McKernan 1984: 16-17). These developments, occurring during a time when various committees were meeting and various Reports were being made, had seemed to presage major changes in the 'mainstream' curriculum. In fact, this did not occur. However, it could be said that this activity introduced 'the notion' of curriculum development into the Irish second-level system - a system which had remained fundamentally unchanged since the late 1940s (despite the developments listed by Crooks, McKernan, op.cit.). The result was a stimulation of interest and enthusiasm among Irish teachers (who seem to have regarded themselves for long as a mere means of curriculum transmission) for active engagement in such development.

Another reason for these 'new departures' was that, at the moment when the movement towards 'mainstream' curriculum change seemed to die down, there was a sudden upsurge in 'vocational' training in schools other than the 'Vocational' schools (set up in 1930 specifically to cater for 'vocational' education, leading - as noted above - to the establishment of 'Pre-Employment Courses' and the publication of a syllabus in 1978. This upsurge came in response to changes in the economic climate of the Republic regarding employment opportunities for young

people. In this, curriculum 'departures' in the Republic mirrored simultaneous developments in the United Kingdom where similar economic problems, coincided with (or led to?) a shift in educational politics marked by a speech by then Prime Minister James Callaghen's at Ruskin College in 1976 in which he demanded that educators pay more attention to the 'needs of industry' (Alvarado et al 1987: 31).

This 'educational philosophy', which was to become known subsequently as the 'New Vocationalism', was the dynamic behind many of the 'new departures' in curriculum innovation the mid-seventies have occurred predominantly in the area of 'continuation education', ie., in the provision of programmes for 'early school-leavers'. While this provided welcome opportunities for the introduction of several 'new' areas of study into second-level, it also brought some disadvantages in the long term.

One unfortunate consequence was for media studies was that, by the late-seventies, the teaching of 'vocational skills' had become one of the more dominant approaches. The rationale underlying the whole 'provision of skills' approach as a sufficient response to youth unemployment and/or the needs of 'underprivilaged' learners will be examined in chapter three. Here it will be sufficient to note that, although there were many advances in syllabus design, pedagogy and equipment provision at second-level,

in many cases these advances were within the framework of a 'media education' often more concerned with how to use media effectively, rather than with an interrogation of media practices. That is to say, these courses emphasised 'skills acquisition', rather than the development of a 'critical intelligence' in the learner. Courses which seemed at first sight to be engaged in a media education which interrogates media practices often turned out, on closer inspection, to be largely a 'vocational skills'-type training programmes.

This dominance of the 'skills' approach is not surprising given the 'remit' of VPT programmes. Nor is it not the purpose of this dissertation in any way to denigrate the usefulness of 'skills-based' courses. Their business is, after all, 'vocational training', 'skills development' and preparation for 'work'. (see Appendix I). It could be argued too that a media studies course should have a 'production skills' dimension since there is no surer way of gaining an understanding of media practices than to practice them, even if only in simulation, and then proceed to 'interrogate' them. However, even allowing for this view, it could be said that the emphasis on the 'performance' of production skills using communication hardware, the necessity to 'come up with' an end product, and the correspondingly scant treatment often accorded the interrogation of media production practices and institutions has not always been beneficial for media education in the Republic this past decade.

An analysis of the 'skills' approach will be undertaken in chapter three. With regard to the Irish experience, one undesirable result of the emphasis on 'performance' and 'skills' under the general headings of 'Media Studies' or 'Communications' was the creation of some confusion amongst teachers (and learners) as to what was meant by 'media studies' or 'media education'. It could be said that because of the emphasis on 'practical' 'hands-on' production work over the past 15 years, Irish teachers - starved of an adequate and regular in-service provision which would have explored other approaches - have conceptualised 'communications' as a process along the lines of the many 'communication models' (as described by Fiske 1982:6-40). Certainly, there has been a considerable emphasis over the years on the refinement of 'personal communication' through improving learners' performance techniques.

To be fair to the teachers, it has to be said that this type of 'busy work' (Masterman 1985:27) has often been the only type of work possible for many of the classes formed as VPTP, where suitability for 'vocational' training comes a poor second to inability to undertake the schools' 'mainstream' (ie., public examination) curriculum. It is an unfortunate fact that VPTP has often been used at second-level as an administrative device for 'syphoning off' those considered unsuitable for Leaving

Certificate studies, resulting in class compositions with extremely poor abilities generally, and lacking in particular the conceptual abilities necessary for the type of interrogation of media practices mentioned above. This 'siphoning' process may be seen as part of a larger problem within which 'working class subjects are taken by working class pupils' (ESRI 1986: 55), a topic which cannot be pursued here. However, it may be noted that, within such a scenario, it is not difficult to imagine how a media / communications course could become almost completely preoccupied with 'hands-on' type teaching, despite the best intentions and efforts of the teacher.

It could also be argued that, besides being used as a device for relieving internal school pressures, the introduction of media studies courses - and the VPT programmes of which they have often formed a part - has contributed to the survival of the predominantly 'academic' and 'third-level geared' ethos of many secondary schools and the 'academic' nature of the second-level curriculum itself by relieving, in some measure, pressures for change. 'Tokenism' might be too harsh a term to apply to this process by which only certain areas of the school curriculum (and those deemed less important in some sense or other) were allowed to move with changing times, but it is a term which might well be applied. This 'shielding' of the curriculum from the necessity for change recalls the parallel system instituted by the establishment of the Vocational System

in the 1930s which ensured the survival of the segregated nature of Irish second-level education up to and including the present day. It is, therefore, unfortunately the case that the media teacher - and his/her colleagues so much to the fore in the 'newer' areas of curriculum development may in fact be agents of curriculum (and administrative) preservation, rather than change - however unwittingly.

Another circumstance which may have led to teachers adopting the 'skills' approach so readily, and so strongly, might have been the fact that it is an approach which does not (apparently) carry any 'political' dimensions. That is to say, classroom practices, busy in imparting 'skills' do not seek to impart a critical intelligence which might run counter to the somewhat authoritarian ethos of the Republic's second-level schools. As remarked above, Irish teachers seem to have regarded themselves for long as mere 'transmitters' of the curriculum, and although by the mid-seventies some of them may have reinterpreted their roles, they would also have been aware that their Principals and Boards of Management might have shared such a reinterpretation This 'political' dimension to media education - and the difficulties it presents for teachers - will be discussed in chapter five.

Perhaps what most led to the dominance of the 'skills' conception of 'communications'/ 'media studies' was the

virtual absence of any opportunity for teachers to acquaint themselves with other approaches. These did not get under way in earnest until the early eighties when the Irish Film Institute's efforts to influence the direction of media education in Ireland began to make themselves felt.

The Irish Film Institute

An important factor in the development of media education in the Republic during the past ten years was the part played by the **Irish Film Institute** (formerly the National Film Institute) which, following the appointment in 1979 of Martin McLoone as Education Officer, made under his guidance a number of significant interventions in the area. This activity marked a fundamental change of direction for the Institute from an original concern with 'film' to an orientation more in keeping with the nature of contemporary mass media consumption. McLoone himself had definite views on the neglect of popular culture in the Irish educational system and the 'xenophobic nationalism' (among other things) which he held to occasion this neglect (McLoone 1983, in Rogers 1985: 3). His tenure of office at the IFI was to prove a powerful catalyst for the development of media education in the Republic.

Important in this development was his initiation of workshops and seminars in the early 1980s concentrating

on media-text analysis and the formulation of pedagogies appropriate for such analysis. These seminars were significant not only in their focus on major contemporary media forms (television, advertising, current affairs programming), but also because of their involvement of individuals from other Institutions interested in the development of media education. Among these were speakers from the National Institute For Higher Education (now renamed the Dublin City University), which had recently established departments in 'Communications and Human Studies' whose brief included Media Studies. The City of Dublin Vocational Education Committee's Curriculum Development Unit, and 'City Vision', a Dublin-based video production company, were also involved.

It is impossible to quantify the impact of these seminars on the development of media education in the Republic, but it is safe to say that for many of the participants (usually numbering twenty per session) it was an exposure to new dimensions of media education. Certainly, it would have been the first time they were exposed to a methodology of text analysis (on 'The Police Series', on 'Bracken', on 'Top of the Pops' - November 1982) which de-emphasised the innoculatory/hypodermic viewpoint (see chapter one) so prevalent among teachers at that time and so much a part of the 'conventional wisdom' regarding the media. It would also have been, for many, the first time they were alerted to the influence of media institutions on media representations.

These new dimensions produced considerable debate - not to say some resistance - at the seminars. Given the training and traditions through which most of the participating teachers had formed their views, this was to be expected. It was, perhaps, especially true of teachers of English, who always constituted the larger part of the attendance at any given seminar/workshop. As McLoone wrote at the time:

"The dominance of a rich literary and dramatic culture reverberates through all areas of the arts and education in Ireland. Not only does it give rise to a dominant form of criticism that is likely to be dismissive of other forms of culture, but it has also harnessed to itself an in-built resistance to educational progress. It is particularly unfortunate that in an age when all the mass media are so demonstrably popular that media studies... still have to fight for curricular acceptance" (McLoone and MacMahon (eds) 1984:10).

Ultimately, though, it can be said that the new emphases introduced by McLoone were found to be a liberation from the contemporary 'standard' approaches to media education (ie., 'process model'/'skills-based' approaches) and were readily accepted as such.

All this is merely another illustration of how a regular in-service provision can influence the development of a study area for the better. As far as the general perception of media education was concerned, there was no such development. The 'conventional wisdom' which informed teachers and parents in general still prevailed.

These dismissive, not to say hostile, attitudes to media education were well illustrated by a reviewer of the McLoone/MacMahon book who wrote that

"If exotic animals like 'realist aesthetic', 'romantic ruralism' and 'symbolic resonances' (all of which apparently abound in the TV zoo) excite your interest; if you revel in 'dynamic' and 'aesthetic' when used as nouns, and 'foreground' used as a verb, and if you aren't happy unless variations of the word ideology appear on every page, you will probably enjoy 'Television and Irish Society'" (Brendan Glacken, Irish Times, 2.2.1985).

However, with regard to the seminars organised by McLoone, despite (or because of) the 'literary' traditions evidenced by many of the participants, there was a high level of informed debate and a pronounced willingness to entertain 'new ideas'.

Another significant event during McLoone's term as IFI Education Officer was the publication, in association with Liam O'Dwyer and Dermot Stokes of the CDU, of his 'Every Picture Tells a Story'(1985). This was an important publication, not alone because it was one of the first wholly Irish-produced media studies 'workbooks' (fourteen Irish second-level schools are acknowledged as having been involved in the 'development, use and revision of these materials'), but also because of its emphasis on the interrogation of the image, rather than the examination of production practices. The book's subtitle is 'Visual Literacy'. As with many of the 'new developments' in Irish second-level education, this publication was launched within the context of VPTP /

Transition Year provision, the only 'niche' in the second-level curriculum at the time for 'new departures', as pointed out above.

The provision of regular seminars and workshops for second-level teachers was continued and expanded by McLoone's successor as Education Officer at IFI, Stephanie McBride (appointed January 1986), who also introduced an additional focus on the potential of media studies in the area of 'skills development'. This additional dimension was partly a response to the demand for a 'skills oriented' approach from the many teachers whose brief was a 'vocational' type course, and partly because of a growing awareness among media theorists and practitioners that there was no necessary contradiction between a 'skills' approach and other approaches in media studies as long as a proper balance was maintained between them. Thus, the Institute sought to encourage 'skills acquisition' through a combination of 'practical' and 'theoretical' approaches to media studies, while avoiding an overemphasis on either. The success of this approach was seen in the increased 'take up' of courses provided by the Institute, and the late 1980's saw wide teacher participation in week-long courses held at venues such as NIHE, RTE, NCAD, and the Senior Cycle College in Ballyfermot.

There was also a growing involvement of the Institute in Department in-service courses for English and Art

teachers as arrangements for the introduction of the new Junior Certificate Course got under way. In 1986, for example, IFI organised, at Department request, a three-day in-service course for Art Teachers. This course included, possibly for the first time in the Republic, a video 'component' which introduced participants to the uses of this latest development in user-friendly retrieval system. During that year also, the Education officer made contributions to English in-service courses at various venues, while the Department's Inspectors of Guidance and Psychology availed of a number of media education teachers to speak of the benefits of the study area to slow learners.

McBride's term as Education Officer also saw the foundation, in November 1985, of the Teacher's Association for Media Education (TAME), under the acting chairmanship of Jerome Morrissey, Principal of the Senior College, Ballyfermot, 'to support and encourage teachers of media education in both primary and post-primary schools' (Press Release, November 1985). This association submitted to the CEB Board of Studies on the Arts regarding the need for and the place of media education on the curriculum. The Association also commented formally on the CEB discussion document 'Language in the Curriculum' (see appendix III). A general submission from the IFI on the desirability of Media Education at second-level ('Media Education: A Proposal for Action') had already been given to the CEB in 1984.

With regard to TAME, two points need to be made. First, some type of Association for media teachers, corresponding to other subject associations, was long overdue. Media teachers were, after all, daily working 'at the chalkface' and were therefore well placed to evaluate both the content and pedagogies of new developments. Equally they were aware of the feasibility or otherwise of course introduction and implementation within the context of the existing curriculum and, consequently, were well able to offer a 'realistic' appraisal of what 'would work' or 'wouldn't work' within the actual school systems in which they taught. An Association which brought together media teachers therefore offered the prospect of harnessing this knowledge and expertise at a time when it was most needed, ie., at the commencement of the new Junior Cycle courses. Besides commenting formally on Government policy statements, as above, the Association could work to ensure clearer goals, better in-service provision, improved teaching materials, circulate a newsletter / journal, - in short, work for the general well-being of the subject area, as do other subject associations.

Second, the present state of abeyance of TAME (August 1989) has not come about because of any lessening of the need for such an Association but for other reasons. Chief among these was the decision of the IFI not to appoint an Education Officer to replace McBride (1987).

Understandable as this decision might be in the light of other events (notably the government's abolition of the Irish Film Board) which have led the Institute to address the state of the Irish film industry, it was a severe blow to TAME. Whereas the voluntary nature of other subject associations are to some extent offset by a long tradition of service and the benefit of representation on Department 'syllabus committees', TAME, a fledgeling association representing a newly emerging study area needed substantial and dedicated secretarial and organisational support if its voluntary nature was to be overcome. This support was provided by the IFI Education Officer until, and indeed for some time after, her departure from the post. Once this support ceased, TAME lapsed into abeyance.

In 1986, the Institute, again in association with the CDU, published a second media studies textbook, 'Roll it There, Colette!' Continuing the approach pioneered by 'Every Picture Tells a Story', this book, developed by McBride in association with Dermot Stokes and Liam O'Dwyer (of the CDU), took the learner's experience of TV as a starting point for the development of a critical appreciation and understanding of the medium. As with the previous publication, the emphasis was very much on 'student participation', an aspect of educational practice increasingly recommended by theorists (eg., Kelly 1982:106) and also by the CEB:

'...there must therefore be scope for pupil initiative, pupils and teacher being seen as interdependent participants in the learning process...' ('Language in the Curriculum', p.19).

It is also worth noting the encouragement and close co-operation afforded by the national television service (RTE) to the author during the writing of the book. This was all the more welcome as confirmation of a tradition which had grown up in the Republic since the inception of media education, viz., the willingness of 'the media' to involve themselves in the development of this type of school activity, an attitude at variance with that of their British counterparts (Alvarado et al, op. cit., p.12,13). Indeed, one of the first 'media education' texts published in the Republic was written by the Education Correspondent of an Irish Newspaper and was aimed specifically at second-level schools. This was the Irish Times 'Newspaper in the Classroom' project (1979) which, in the first instance aimed 'to highlight the newspaper as an important educational tool' and was doubtless a marketing strategy on behalf of the paper's proprietors. However, the user-friendly design of the booklet and the support provided by the newspaper's education department led to its having a wide circulation within second-level as a teaching aide. Indeed it could be said to have been the earliest 'home-grown' influence on news-media analysis in the Republic.

Finally, the most recent significant development in media education in the Republic could be said to be the week-

long 'Media Studies and Communications' seminar organised at NIHE Dublin during July 1988 in which 22 teachers participated. This course was wholly funded by the Department of Education - a significant fact in itself - and was important in the emphasis shown in its title, ie., a recognition that there are by now two 'traditions' of media education at second-level in the Republic, and that they can be viewed as complementary rather than mutually exclusive teaching approaches.

The Catholic Communications Centre

The Catholic Communications Centre at Booterstown, Co.Dublin was founded in 1968. Later that year a merger between it and Veritas Publications laid the foundations for the Catholic Communications Institute of Ireland (CCII). The Institute is

" ... a marriage of two sets of values - those of the Gospel and those of the mass media. Its purpose is simply stated: the Church in Ireland should be both sensitive to the potential of the mass media and professional in its approach" (CCII Introductory booklet, 1989).

By the late 1970s the Centre was active in the promotion of media education and its Director at that time - Tom O'Hare - wrote a series of articles for the Centre's bimonthly religious publication 'Outlook' on media education covering topics ranging from 'popular literature' to 'photography and popular music' (Rogers 1985:12). These articles exhibited an 'innoculative' and 'interpretative' approach to media education ("It would

be irresponsible to allow children total freedom of choice in what they hear, see and read through the mass media... we must strive to regulate, control and exploit positive aspects of media output." - Outlook, March/April 1981:22. In Rogers, op. cit., p.12) which has much in common with the 'Culturalist' approach described in chapter four of this dissertation.

This approach, somewhat modified over the years, has continued to
be dominant within Religious Education, one of the first study areas within the second-level curriculum to demonstrate a consciousness of the need for media education. In fact, RE could be said to have been the first area of the existing curriculum to provide systematic media study in the Republic. It was, too. innovative in its methodology, as was seen in its organisation of daylong visits to the Centre's fully-equipped television studio at Booterstown, County Dublin, during which learners would review the day's morning papers and produce a television news programme based on that reading - a participative and informative activity that was unusual in the Republic at the time, but which was eventually to become a standard practice of media education.

Another Centre venture in the mid 1970s was the provision of

personnel (most notably Fr. Eddie Fitzgerald) who would give
talks on aspect of 'film appreciation' to second-level schools and third level colleges. These talks emphasised the importance of 'intelligent viewing', somewhat along the lines suggested by film theorists of the early 1960s (see esp. Wills 1959). It is important to note that for many Irish teachers and learners this was the first inkling of any form of media education and resulted in the setting up of 'Film Clubs' in schools, a practice which persists to the present and which ensured some form of 'presence', however marginal, for this kind of educational activity at second-level.

It must be said again that there is always the danger of underestimating these types of 'achievement' if it is forgotten how unusual they were for their time in the Republic. They are not, however, surprising in themselves given the Church's wealth of theory and practice in the area of media education within Religious Education over many years, especially in the United States. As early as 1970, for instance, USA RE specialists were discussing the relative merits of casset recorders versus the 'reel-to-reel' models, and whether or not to invest in film strips or slide-projection equipment or 'wait for the commercialization of recent advances in video and other EVR equipment' (Babin 1970:221). The Church's opting for videotape-based teaching material in the 1980s was made on the basis of such far-sighted analysis of upcoming

developments in media delivery systems. Videotape, with its user-friendly advantages in the classroom, and its ready acceptance as a medium by learners increasingly used to seeing the visual display unit as a source of information and enlightenment, today seems an obvious choice (even allowing for copyright difficulties). Twenty years ago it would not have been so obvious.

In 1985 the Centre launched two textbooks, 'An Introduction to the Mass Media' and 'Understanding the Mass Media' aimed at the Junior and Senior learner respectively. These are attractive and colourful publications which were well received by learners in the classroom. According to the accompanying teacher's handbook, studies were to be directed towards 'helping pupils to develop an informed and critical understanding of the nature of the mass media, the techniques used by them and the effects of these techniques'(Owens, Hunt 1985:16). The general approach to media education is one of supplying informative and practical knowledge of media processes, combined with the creation of new materials by the learner. This combination of knowledge and informed activity, it was argued (ibid. p.13), could lead to the development of a greater comprehension of media messages.

This approach implies a strong 'directive' element in media teaching, leading to exploration through practice, and is in contrast with that of the IFI publications which emphasises the development of the visual skills

necessary to understand, appreciate and assess mass media products, rather than give informative 'fact' accounts or exercises to explain media techniques and structures. The two approaches would seem, therefore, to embody the two distinct, though not incompatible, approaches to media education already discussed,ie., an approach which emphasises 'skills' acquisition and production, and one which seeks to engage in an 'interrogation' of media products and processes. This would be, however, a superficial estimate of each approach because there is much common ground between them.

Northern Ireland

The following overview of developments in media education in Northern Ireland is based wholly on the Report compiled by Martin Hattendorf in 1988, (for the Northern Ireland Film and Television Working Group) entitled 'Media Express: The Journey to Media Education and Film Training in Northern Ireland', and on the report from a conference on Media Education and Training held in November of that year and organised by E Force (N.Ireland) and the Workers' Educational Association (WEA). 1988 was designated 'European Cinema and Television Year' by the Council of Europe.

Hattendorf reports that as early as 1963 some schools began to introduce annotated film excerpts and teaching packs to students produced by the British Film Institute.

These developments were, however, very much on an individual basis. In 1976, the Northern Ireland Department of Education organised a residential course for media teachers in conjunction with the Arts Council's then newly formed Film Committee. This course included theoretical sessions and exercises in 16mm film-making. By the late 1970s, a Media Studies Department had already been set up at the University of Ulster, Coleraine, and a three-year degree course was initiated. Nevertheless, there continued to be an obvious lack of teacher expertise in the many technical and pedagogical uses of the new technologies (especially with the emergence of domestic video recording equipment in the early eighties) which called for familiarisation seminars and widespread in-service training. This was not forthcoming, due to a number of factors not least of which was the cut-back in funding for education within the general economic stringency of the mid-1980s.

A media conference in 1987, organised by the Independent Broadcasting Authority (IBA), found that 'media education in Northern Ireland remains enthusiastically taught, but in a diffuse, uncoordinated and isolated fashion' (loc. cit.). The most recent development, according to Hattendorf, is the staging, for the first time in 1988, of a number of educational events in Northern Ireland by a London-based organisation called 'Film Education'. These included study workshops around two contemporary films and an introduction to media education for some 18

secondary school teachers, which was held in co-operation with the Media Studies Department of the University of Ulster, Coleraine. One month later Film Education held a three day teacher-training seminar in Belfast where the attending 35 teachers worked with Film Education's study guides and were introduced to methods of teaching narrative in film and television. All these developments were approved by the NI Department of Education. Finally, the Easter Film School, a seven-day residential course in creative video-making at Queen's University in Belfast, had 33 participants including teachers, youth and community workers and young film enthusiasts. The concept of the Easter Film School is to provide initiation training, supported by a series of lectures and a process of evaluation.

1986 saw the founding of a new centralised body, The Northern Ireland Centre for Learning Resources (NICLR), which was principally concerned with support for teacher education, from pre-service to in-service levels. It is to act as a development and production centre 'of new and advanced applications of educational technology', according to Hattendorf (p.5), and 'will have an important role to play in any future developments and support of media studies in the province'.

As a general comment on the Northern Irish experience outlined by Hattendorf, it could be said that it shares

many similarities with that of the 'South'. These could serve as a useful summary of much of the foregoing discussion on the position of Media Education in Ireland as a whole:

- media education, up to the present, has been characterised by the diffuse and uncoordinated nature of its activities;

- teaching initiatives have been mostly school-based, relying on the energy and dedication of individuals;

- teachers have suffered from a lack of expertise (of which they themselves have been acutely aware) media teaching, and especially in the technical and pedagocical uses of new technology;

- there has been a severe lack of regular and systematically organised in-service training by the relevant Education Authorities;

- this lack of in-service provision , usually explained as resulting from 'necessary' cut-backs in public expenditure, could be said to be equally the result of a lack of appreciation of the importance of media education, which in turn stems from the area's lack of representation at the level of Education Authority decision-making.

- a 'political' approach to media education would seem, for various reasons, not yet to have emerged strongly in the South. There are hopeful signs, however, that this approach might fulfil some of the aims of the 'Social, Political and Environmental Education' report made to the CEB in August 1987 and advised by the CEB itself in 'Issues and Structures' (p.20). It is evident that this approach is recognised by Northern Irish Media Teachers (Conference Report 1988:2), though to what extent it has been adopted in classrooms is unclear.

A recent hopeful sign that the experiences summarised above may be ameliorated in the future has been the growing realisation among media educators that some form of co-ordinated pressure will have to be brought to bear on the relevant 'authorities'. The advent of TAME (at present, unhappily in abeyance) and NICLR promises

something of a turning point in the development of a 'non-absolutist', but co-ordinated, approach to media education in Ireland.

Chapter Two

POPULAR OPINION AND THE MASS MEDIA

Chapter Two: POPULAR OPINION AND THE MASS MEDIA

General Remarks

Mass communication research has given rise to a number of popular misconceptions about the nature and activity of the mass media. At the same time, it has highlighted a number of concerns which help to chart the general area of study.

Reference has been made in chapter one to the 'conventional wisdom' pertaining to 'the media'. By this is meant the popular opinion regarding the mass media, the nature of their activity and the consequences of that activity. In the words of one theorist, "The commonsense knowledge which we have from personal experience underlines and gives substance to the concept of a public definition" (McQuail 1987:18). Much of this opinion is based on a number of significant findings in the mass communication research of the past. Unfortunately, it is not based on those findings in their entirety, or with a knowledge of their limitations, but mostly on synopses produced on occasion by the 'popular press', particularly when those findings have seemed to signal controversy and sensation. These synopses and sensationalised accounts contribute over time to 'the shaping of awkward materials into a smooth, closed structure', which Davies (quoted in Masterman 1985: 183) holds is 'the essence of myth'.

One example of the unbalanced exposure suffered by a major report, and the resulting myth-creation, was the American 'Surgeon General's Report on Television and Social Behaviour' (1969). Although the conclusions of this report were drawn from earlier research, and from papers and reports contained in five volumes, only the summary volume ('Television and Growing Up') made national headlines (Lowery, DeFleur 1982: 326), thereby producing a closed, easily digestible structure of 'awkward materials' (see below) which passed into the 'conventional wisdom' of the time and much of which has persisted down to the present in the form of myth. This popular opinion takes many forms, but generally centres around conceptualisations of the media 'having much to offer', but greatly in need of 'supervision', especially in relation to young people. A more detailed discussion of these conceptualisations of the media and their implications for media education will be found in chapter four.

It is the purpose of this chapter to provide an overview of some of the mass communication research which may have given rise to this 'conventional wisdom', 'popular opinion' and 'myth' regarding the mass media, the nature of their activity and the consequences of that activity. Although it is outside the scope of this dissertation to trace in great detail all the influences of mass communication research on public opinion this century, an attempt will be made to point out the

implications of this influence for the teaching of media education. At the very least it can be said that misapprehensions often form an obstacle to valuable media study. It has often been the case that the media teacher has seen it as part of his/her role to disabuse learners of misapprehensions gathered from the conventional wisdom. But how 'disabused' is the teacher?

It is also the case that teachers, as proponents of a place for media education within the society's formal educational curriculum, may find themselves called upon to argue on behalf of the area with Education Authorities and/or their own School Board. They may find themselves confronted with a simplistic notion of the findings of past research and they will not argue their case very well unless they are able to counter such arguments.

Another point worth making is that although research findings are often based on questionable methods and assumptions, this fact is often conveniently forgotten when the findings are presented in the popular press or within 'lay' discussions on 'the effects of the media'. At best, these accounts lead to a very negative view of 'the media' and, consequently, of the whole enterprise of media education. At worst, they can degenerate quickly in scenarios of 'moral panic', within which reasoned argument is at a severely high premium, if indeed it can be said to exist at all. Media educators should learn not to be lured into such discussions based on such bland

accounts of media research unless they are familiar with the limitations, as well as the strengths, of that research. Nor should they base their arguments for media education in any significant measure upon such bland accounts. Otherwise they may find themselves reluctantly recruited into the role of innoculating learners against media 'effects', rather than willingly embracing the role which this dissertation sees as proper to the media educator: that of imparting a skilled, critical and intelligent appreciation of the media in all its complexity of institution, process, representation, and consumption.

On the other hand, and on a more positive note, it could be said that an acquaintance with past research in mass communications might, as with research in other disciplines, help chart the general territory by pointing out some of the issues and concerns that have long been central to the study of the mass media. It might be objected that it is in the nature of this type of research to outlive quickly much of its initial usefulness. It is certainly true that, unlike the generally unchanging world of the physical sciences, mass communication is part of a constantly changing social and cultural milieu that can alter both the process and its consequences. Thus, for example, the 1969 American study (the 'Surgeon General's Report') into the relationship between televised violence and antisocial behaviour offered many findings which were more or less valid for

their time. However, the significant change in viewing patterns discovered by these investigations rendered many of the findings of preceding reports (eg., 'Television in the Lives of Our Children', 1961) of merely academic interest. By a similar process of social, cultural and technological change, the findings of the Surgeon General's report of 1971 would have only limited relevance to the world of the 1990s.

Nevertheless, while the decreasing relevance of mass communication research after its time has to be borne in mind, it is a truism that all research findings constitute a nett gain to their field. No matter how 'dated' a study, there usually remains within it some residual and useful contribution. Thus, while the relevance of the aforementioned reports to the understanding of mass communication have decreased with the passage of time and with changes in social habits, they have much to offer to educators planning for media studies, if only in a general way.

Of more importance in the long term is the actual thesis which many of these studies put forward, viz., the view that there is some form of causal relationship between televised violence and aggression. In the words of the Surgeon General:

> **'...it is clear to me that the causal relation between televised violence and antisocial behaviour is sufficient to warrant appropriate and immediate remedial action. The data on social phenomena such as television and social violence will never be**

clear enough for all social scientists to agree on the formulation of a succint statement of causality. But there comes a time when the data are sufficient to justify action..." (quoted in Lowery, DeFleur 1983: 353).

This thesis acted as a powerful spur to valuable research in mass communication and led inevitably to the area being taken seriously at the highest political and educational levels.

At the same time, however, it may be said that statements such as these, widely quoted at the time in 'the popular press', and from such eminent and authoritative figures, have made a deep impression on popular opinion and tend to recur in non-specialist discussions about the mass media where they are often used, and often unconsciously, to lend support to a variety of arguments, most of which could be said to fall into either a 'salvation' or 'despair' syndrome of the mass media (see McCombs' Foreword to Lowery, DeFleur 1983).

It is hoped, therefore, that the overview of mass communication research offered in this chapter will contribute a focus on what have been, for many years, the general concerns of researchers in the area, thereby contributing to some initial demarcation of the territory At the same time, it should be possible to indicate the origins of some of the 'conventional wisdom' regarding the media, the limitations of that wisdom and something of the process of how it influences public opinion.

The overview is considerably indebted to summaries of the field of mass communication research provided by Wright (1959), Morley (1980), Gurevitch et al (1982), Lowery/DeFleur (1983), and McQuail (1987). Regarding the terms 'theory' and 'research', in what follows, 'research' will generally refer to that type of activity which seeks to gather empirical evidence for supposed developments, and 'theory' or 'writings' will generally refer to more 'speculative' verbal accounts. Since much 'speculative' writing is based on previous 'research', and since 'research' often leads to speculative writing, no clear distinction will be drawn here between the two activities.

Early Developments - The Payne Fund studies and their legacy

Communication research could be said to have begun with Plato and Aristotle, the one much concerned with the influence of cultural activities such as storytelling and drama on the formation of 'good citizens' (The Republic, Book III), and the other with the precise workings and functions of vicarious experience and the poetic functions of language (Poetics, especially I -XVI). 'Mass' communication research is, however, very much a child of the twentieth century. The term 'mass communication' as used in this chapter means a special kind of communication involving distinct operating conditions, primary among which are the nature of the

audience, of the communication experience, and of the communicator.(Wright, p.13). Research and theoretical writings in the field can be said to have first appeared towards the end of the eighteenth century when the first laboratory for the precise measurement of human reaction times was developed by the social psychologist **Wilhelm Wundt** in Leipzig in 1879 (Lowery, DeFleur, op.cit., p.20). One of the first examples of speculative theorising is the work of the French social psychologist **Gustave Le Bon** who, writing in 1895, characterised modern society as being 'the age of crowds' (Gurevitch et al, p.32). Since that date, the range and diversity of the theorists and researchers who have contributed to the development of mass communication theory is forbidding, and - as has been noted above - this overview will confine itself to some which seem to have had a bearing on the formation of popular opinion on the nature of the mass media, and which might offer some demarcation of its study area.

One such investigation was the series of studies carried out in the United States during the late 1920s and early 1930s which concentrated on the possibilities of using film and other media for planned persuasion or information. Known as the **Payne Fund Studies** (see Lowery, DeFleur, op.cit., pp.35-41) after the name of the private philantrophic foundation that funded them, they were conducted over a three-year period from 1929 to 1932. The end result was a series of thirteen specific studies,

undertaken by well-known researchers, on various aspects of the influence of the movies on children.

These studies played an important part in the development of mass communication research as a scientific field of investigation and raised several issues that are still under active investigation today and which could be seen as relevant to the formulation of media education. The studies were in the main concerned with observable movie 'effects' on:

- the acquisition of information, regarding which, **Holaday and Stoddard** (ibid., p.37) found that movies provided a special learning format that led to unusually high retention of factual material, compared to the acquisition of facts in standard laboratory memory experiments.

- change in attitudes, regarding which, **Peterson and Thurstone** (ibid.) found that films shown singly had minor or no effects, whereas two or three films on the same topic produced significant attitude modification. Furthermore, the researchers concluded that the effects of motion pictures on the social attitudes of children could persist for considerable periods of time, and that in some cases further changes could occur six months after the initial showing of the film. This latter effect, unforeseen by the researchers, was an important finding and became known as the 'sleeper' effect. Another

important finding was that the effects on attitude change tended to be greater for younger children.

- stimulation of emotions, regarding which, **Dysinger and Ruckmick** (ibid., p.38) concluded that adults had learned to 'discount' films as fantasy, but children experienced substantial emotional arousal.

- harm to health, regarding which, **Renshaw, Miller and Marquise** (ibid.) devised ingenious experiments on children's sleep. They concluded that certain kinds of films resulted in disturbed sleep and claimed that this could be detrimental to normal health and growth.

- erosion of moral standards, regarding which, **Peters** (ibid.) concluded that many of the depictions presented in the movies were contrary to the mores of the groups under study. This had important implications for the controversial issue of how the movies 'influenced' children in their moral development.

- influence on conduct, regarding which, three separate studies were devoted to the impact of films on various forms of behaviour. **Shuttleworth and May** (ibid. p.39) found that children who attended movies frequently were usually rated lower in deportment by their teachers than those who did not attend frequently. They also had less positive reputations and did worse in their academic work. **Blumer** (ibid., p.40), through the autobiographical method, probed the influence of motion pictures on day-

to-day behaviour and concluded that, overall, the content of the movies served as substantial influences on children. The subjects reported that they had imitated the movie characters openly in beautification, mannerism, and attempts at lovemaking. The movies had also stimulated a great deal of day-dreaming and fantasy. **Blumer and Hauser** (ibid.) concentrated on ways in which motion picture content stimulated children to commit acts of delinquency and crime. The subjects were delinquency-prone youngsters and, again through the autobiographical method, the investigators concluded that motion pictures played a direct role in shaping the delinquent and criminal careers of substantial segments of those studied.

Each of the investigations in the Payne Fund Studies was a work of substantial scope. Taken together, they constitute a research effort which would not be matched in size or diversity until forty years later when the federal government funded the studies of the influence of televised violence on children. In summary, it may be said that these studies probably presented a reasonably valid picture of the influences of the movies of the 1920s on the youth of that period. Today's society, however, - and modern media delivery systems - bear only a faint resemblance to those of the 1920s. Media 'pervasiveness', which will be discussed in detail in the chapter three, was not in those times the potent factor it has since become.

Nevertheless, these findings left a deep impression on the public mind as to certain 'concerns' which were perceived to be part of the mass media. Because of this, these 'concerns', such as interest in meaning theory, content analysis, 'uses and gratifications' investigations, the 'sleeper' effect, attitude change, modelling influences, and the social construction of reality, were to become areas central to mass communication research over the next few decades.

The media as a powerful influence on society and the individual: the Frankfurt School thesis of power, and subsequent modifications

One of the perennial issues of mass communication research, and certainly one which exercises the public mind continually, is the nature and magnitude of media power or, to put it another way, the nature and magnitude of its effects on the media audience. It will be readily conceded that all media have effects on their audiences, if only in trivial ways such as convincing them that the day's weather prospects require umbrellas rather than sun-glasses. Generally, though, by 'effects' research is meant investigation of the more important influences of the media on the individual and society, in such areas as the 'acquisition of information' and 'changes in attitude', ie., those areas of concern which have been

shown to be at the heart of the Payne Fund Studies outlined above.

One of the most famous 'effects' theories was that formulated during the 1930s by a group of media theorists - most notably Theodore Adorno, Herbert Marcuse and Max Horkheimer - associated with the Institute for Social Research founded in Frankfurt in 1923. This formulation, the so-called **'Frankfurt School'** of thought, held that the media define for society and the individual the very terms in which we are to 'think' (or not 'think') the world. Media influence has to be assessed

> **"not in terms of what we think about this or that particular issue, but in terms of the way in which they condition our entire [world-view]" (Bennet, in Gurevitch et al, p.44).**

The result of these media influences, according to the Frankfurt School, is the creation around the individual of a society in which he/she has no creative role - other than as a small ('atomised') part of it - and within which the critical function of Art is destroyed. The view that the 'popularisation' of high culture leads to its debasement was echoed in the contemporary writings in Britain of FR Leavis, the distinguished literary critic, which will be discussed shortly.

This severely 'pessimistic' view of media effects (which owed something to contemporary events in Germany during the rise of Fascism), and the magnitude accorded these

effects, would not be widespread today. However, it has undoubtedly left its mark on popular opinion of the present day, especially as evidenced in the all too frequent broadsides directed at the media's 'corrupting influences'.

As is so often the case, this residual and enduring 'pessimistic' influence on popular opinion has outlived later findings which indicated quite a different perspective. Morley notes that by the 1950s this view was 'unacceptable to American researchers' because it proposed too direct and unmediated an impact by the media on its audiences...' (op.cit., p.2). This, he notes, led to a more optimistic view of media effects. However, an important point for media educators is that both 'optimistic' and 'pessimistic' theses shared an implicit theory of the dimensions of 'power and influence' which media have in relation to audiences (ibid.).

The 'Frankfurt School' view of media power, and similar theories (McQuail, p.54), are important in the context of media education as markers for the limits of an extreme view. And whereas it is now generally believed that no such extreme power has ever existed, it is by no means certain that it will never exist. This consideration alone promises much within media education in the way of raising debate about the nature and function of mass media power and the nature and function of propaganda. One theorist notes that although the media offer mankind

'new creative possibilities', these may be at the expense of 'covert (or at least unadmitted) forms of social control' (Armes 1988: 4 and 7). This consideration could also offer a bridge from media education to writings in other disciplines concerned with these issues, such as those of George Orwell and Aldous Huxley. Certainly, the conceptualisation of the media as 'powerful and influential' will be seen to surface many times during subsequent discussion of the rationale for media education in chapter three, an indication of its importance in arguing the desirability of this type of education as part of the formal educational curriculum.

Finally, the general emphasis that the Frankfurt School placed on the media as a powerful mechanism for containment of change has survived and is to be found in some recent 'hegemonic' theories of mass communication (see McQuail 1987) which stress how the media are, among other things, powerful agents in the formation and maintenance of a society's ideological structures. This 'ideological' function of the mass media is one of the important strands within the 'Political' approach to media education (see chapter four). However, the theory and research that underlies this view - what has come to be termed 'political communication effects' research - has had a chequered career, as will be seen from the outline which follows.

'Political Communication Effects' research.

Because of the growing conviction among media education theorists of the importance of the 'political' approach to the study area (Alvarado et al, 1987:35), a consideration of the so-called 'political communication effects' research in the United States and Britain would seem useful to the media teacher. Again, certain of its findings have, through 'media sensationalisation', become the common property of public opinion.

From the time of its inception, this type of research has undergone several shifts of direction:

> **"In an initial phase, which lasted from approximately the beginning of the twentieth century to the outbreak of the Second World War, the mass media were attributed with considerable power to shape opinion and belief. In the second period, from approximately the 1940s to the early 1960s, they were believed to be largely impotent to initiate opinion and attitude change, although they could relay certain forms of information and reinforce existing beliefs. And in the current third stage[1983], the question of mass media effects has been reopened..."** (Blumler and Gurevitch, **in Gurevitch et al, p.240).**

In this 'second period', some American studies seemed to substantiate the 'all-powerful media' thesis (eg., **Vidich and Benseman, publ. 1960** in Bennet, op.cit., p.39). However, 'the preponderant tendency... was to undercut rather than to underwrite' this thesis. (ibid.). Studies of elections in America (**Lazarsfeld, Berelson and Gaudet, 1944** in Lowery, DeFleur, op.cit., pp.89-90) and, later, in Britain (**Trenaman and McQuail, 1961** in Gurevitch et

al, op.cit., p.15), showed no significant association between the movement of opinion and how the voters had followed the election campaign. In short, these studies, and many others, maintained that the mass media had very little effect on the 'political' intentions of voters. Furthermore, other studies (such as **Janowitz, 1952** ibid., p.39) demonstrated that mass media, rather than destroying local communities and, consequently 'atomising' individuals (a favourite theme of the Frankfurt School), often played a vital role in their maintenance. Studies of audience reaction to and use of the media suggested that the average member of the audience 'reacts not merely as an isolated personality but also as a member of the various groups to which he belongs and with which he communicates' (**Lazarsfeld and Kendall, 1949**, ibid.).

Doubts were also cast on the 'all-powerful media' thesis by the work of **Merton** (1946, discussed in Morley, ps.3-5) who maintained that research had previously been concerned almost wholly with the "content rather than the effects of propaganda" (Morley, loc.cit.). In so doing, Merton admitted that it had delivered much that had been of use in so far as it had focused on the 'appeals and rhetorical devices, the stereotypes and emotive language which made up the propaganda material.' However, the 'the actual processes of persuasion' (loc.cit.) had gone unexamined, and as a consequence 'the effect' of the materials studied had typically been assumed or inferred,

particularly by those who were concerned with the debilitating effect of 'violent' content.

In Merton's view, an analysis had to be made of both the content of propaganda and the responses of the audience. He retained the notion that the message played a determining role for the character of the responses, but argued against the notion that this was the only determination and that it connected to response in a simple cause and effect relationship. He argued that the message cannot adequately be interpreted if it is "severed from the cultural context in which it occurred" (ibid., p.4).

These arguments, with their emphasis the complexity of the media artefact and its reception by its audience anticipated the work of **Barthes** (1977), **Neale** (1980), and **Morley** (1980) and underlie the conceptualisation of media education as a 'sociological' activity (see chapter four). Here it should be noted that, according to Morley, Merton's work remained neglected during subsequent years when

> **"the analysis of content became more quantitative, in an effort to tailor the description of vast amounts of 'message material, for the purpose of effects analysis" (op.cit., p.4).**

His work, therefore, played little part in the post-war reassessment of the media as a powerful influence, which

was accomplished by the works cited previously (Lazarsfeld, etc.).

This process of significant reassessment (and the neglect of significant research findings at the time) demonstrates the volatile history of mass communication research (and especially 'political communication effects' research) and consequently the stability of the theories to which it gives rise. This point should be borne in mind during the formulation of media education programmes, lest too much emphasis be laid on one particular conception of the nature of mass media activity which happens, for one reason or another, to be dominant in the prevailing 'conventional wisdom'. At the same time, the obvious - if somewhat elusive - 'political' dimensions of media activity should not be neglected, if the media education programme in question is not to become just another 'safe' anodyne study of the mechanisms of 'media effects'.

Mass Media and Culture: FR Leavis and the 'unique few'

During the period which saw the first formulations of the Frankfurt School in Germany (ie., the early 1930s), the speculative writings of FR Leavis were beginning to appear in Britain. According to Leavis,

> **"In any period, it is on a very small minority that the discerning appreciation of art and literature depends: it is only a few who are capable of**

unprompted first hand judgements" (quoted in Gurevitch et al, p.38).

On the basis of this analysis, the advent of mass communications, with their 'popularisation' of art, and their inundations of 'popular' and, therefore (in Leavis's view), 'inferior' music, literature, etc. were a very bad thing for people, societies and cultures. Consequently, a media education programme which would base its rationale on this theory of 'the unique few' (see Willemen, in Neale 1980:1) would risk becoming a highly 'innoculative' and hostile approach to media study, a point that will be pursued in detail in chapter four.

The writings of Leavis were to have enormous influence, which has continued to the present day, on media theory and the formulation of media education. Their 'literary', rather than 'sociological', bases have ensured their ready appeal within cultures - such as that of Ireland - which have a strong 'literary' tradition. As in the case of the American 'Surgeon General's Report' published some forty years later, this influence has endured long after many of its conclusions have been exposed as questionable, dubious, or even altogether absurd. In keeping with the process of myth-formation, as instanced at the beginning of this chapter (ie., 'the shaping of awkward materials into a smooth, closed structure'), the 'Leavisite' view of the mass media and their effects on society and the individual has survived the many

contradictions and rebuttals over the years and may be said to have moved from the status of being 'speculative hypothsis' to the status of myth.

The Leavisite view is most strongly to the fore in 'Culturalist' conceptualisations of media education (discussed in detail in chapter four), although it has affinities with the 'skills-provision' approach, where the skills in question are those of the 'critical intelligence' kind rather than the 'vocational'. It also exhibits a concern with 'the threat of moral disorder' which was to be a theme of later American 'sociological' research, particularly with regard to television. One of the major researchefforts ever attempted in this area - 'The Surgeon General's Report' of 1969 deserves discussion, since it restated many of the concerns of the Payne Fund Studies, the Frankfurt School and the of the 'Leavisites', as well as introducing others. It may be said, therefore, to have continued the process of myth-formation and directly influenced popular opinion.

The advent of television: USA research and the re-emergence of the 'Powerful Effects' theory

Television had been widely adopted in American society by 1960, and the first major study of the impact of the medium on children seemed to confirm the idea that it had only minimal effects. **Television in the lives of Our Children** (1961) showed that the medium provided for a great deal of incidental learning, and that children used

its contents in their fantasy life. Yet, whether due to limitations of methodology or other reasons, no dramatic or threatening influences were identified. This situation was to change as the sixties moved on with a number of official committees issuing reports.

The so-called **'Surgeon General's report on Television and Social Behaviour' (1969)** (Lowery, DeFleur, pp. 326-355) was itself a consequence of a report issued by the National Commission on the Cause and Prevention of Violence. This latter Commission, set up by President Nixon in 1968 in response to the widespread public disorder of the 1960s, concluded after a year and a half of study that the cures to this disorder had to be based on a reforming of the criminal justice system and on a restructuring of urban life. However, in addition to this final report, a number of reports from its investigating teams were issued. One of these was **'Violence and the Media'**, edited by researchers **Baker and Ball** (op.cit., p.301ff).

This report concluded that television portrayals of violence were 'one major contributory factor which must be considered in attempts to explain the many forms of violent behaviour that mark American society today.' Television, as the most popular medium, had the most powerful and hence the most dangerous effects, but all the media were held responsible for contributing to the

nation's disorders. 'Exposure to mass media portrayals of violence over a long period of time socialises audiences into the norms, attitudes and values for violence contained in these portrayals.' And, echoing the Payne Fund Studies of forty years earlier, the report held that the probability of such socialization increased as the age of the viewer decreased.

These, and other conclusions reached by this report, were marred by the fact that its authors did a great deal of extrapolation from previous research and summary papers and often included many conjectures and suppositions in the conclusions which didn't fully accord with that research. Nevertheless, the report is of lasting importance in the field of mass communication research because it summarised important issues and also included concrete information on the very violent content of American television. In addition, the report's content analysis showed that the television world of violence was a patterned one in which violence was portrayed in an unrealistic but potentially dangerous manner.

'Violence and the Media' identified the relationship between violence in media content and violence in society as a potentially important and disturbing one. This relationship was immediately perceived by politicians as a problem that might be posing a 'public health risk' for the American society. Since the available data on the role of media content left many questions unanswered and

since the problem looked like one which threatened the very survival of democracy itself, a groundswell of popular opinion led to the federal government assuming a responsibility to resolve the issue once and for all.

It was this political situation, a classic example of the 'moral panic' which can seize a nation regarding the influence of 'the media', which prompted the United States Congress to probe the linkage between violence portrayed in mass communication and aggressive behaviour among its consumers. The Surgeon General William H.Stewart (on orders from President Nixon) announced in March 1969 the formation of an advisory committee of distinguished men and women to 'help resolve the question'. The following three years of work resulted in a monumental collection of five volumes, comprising more than forty scientific papers of sponsored research from 'recognised experts' in the behavioural sciences and mental health disciplines. These became known collectively as **'The Surgeon General's Report'**. In addition, a sixth volume contained a summary report compiled by the advisory committee itself entitled **'Television and Growing Up'**, in which the committee states its conclusions about the relationship between viewing television violence and social behaviour.

Becuase of the intense debate to which this report has given rise, and because certain of its comments, conclusions and recommendations still underpin many

popular opinions regarding the mass media, a brief outline is here provided:

VOLUME ONE is concerned with the content of television and how it comes to be what it is. Analyses by **Gerbner** (op.cit., p.328) showed that while violence had decreased somewhat in 'adult' programmes since the 1969 Report, there was an increase in violence in children's programmes. In fact, **Cantor** (ibid.) found an overall indifference on the part of the producers regarding the possible harmful effects of television on children. Other major findings were that violence was usually excluded from the familiar, was least common in urban settings and was typically presented with an absence of suffering. There were many examples of a racist perspective, with non-whites, foreigners, and persons of low economic status shown as likely to become involved in violence. In fact, the most striking aspect of the television violence was its unreality: people, settings, places, relationships and times all depart from real life. This finding did little to support one widely-held thesis that television simply mirrors the world as it is.

Gurevitch (ibid., p.332) commenting on a group of papers at the end of the volume which compare U.S. television content to that of Great Britain, Israel and Sweden, notes that the proportion of violence in American programmes was then greater than that broadcast for any of the other three nations. Furthermore, a substantial

proportion of the violence in those countries was provided by imported American programmes.

VOLUME TWO was concerned to determine the nature and extent to which social learning occurs as a result of children watching television. More specifically, the reports are concerned with the nature of observational learning, or modelling. That is to say, the way in which the behaviour of children changes as a result of observing the behaviour of others. The experiments were of the laboratory-type, and took as their starting point a study by **Bandura** in 1965 (not in relation to television) which showed that children learn aggressive behaviour and can reproduce it when the situation encourages such behaviour. In the Surgeon's Report, **Liebert and Baron** (ibid., 336) reported experiments which concluded that

> **"...at least under some circumstances, exposure to television aggression can lead children to accept what they have seen as a partial guide for their own actions. As a result, the present entertainment offerings of the television medium may be contributing, in some measure, to the aggressive behaviour of many normal children. Such an effect has now been shown in a wide variety of situations." (Liebert, ibid.).**

This was a startling conclusion, but the validity of generalising from laboratory experiments to the real world remained (and remains) a subject of controversy.

VOLUME THREE considered the relationship between television and adolescent aggressiveness and the

methodological focus shifted from small-scale laboratory experiments to field studies which examined the attitudes and behaviour of adolescents in real-life settings through surveys. Important findings were that time spent watching television decreases throughout adolescence, that there was a negative relationship between television use and mental ability and socio-economic status, and that adolescents saw violent shows as more 'realistic' than news or documentary programmes.

A follow-up study to this volume by **Lefkowitz** (ibid., p.340) found that ten years later the television habits that had been established by the age of eight had an influence on boys' aggressive behaviour throughout childhood and into their adolescent years, suggesting that the effects of television violence on behaviour is more cumulative than immediate.

VOLUME FOUR attempted to provide a current picture of the pattern of television viewing in the early 1970s. **LoSciuto** (ibid., p.342), for instance, reported that most adult Americans watched television daily and that they watched for at least two hours. Detailed statistics were provided on the viewing habits of many different groups, including nursery school children and adolescents. A study by **Bechtel** (ibid., pp.344-5) revealed that the level of attention to the television screen was constantly varying. This variety of attention, which anticipated something of the complexity of audience media

consumption later revealed by British researchers (notably Morley), was divided by the investigators into six levels, ranging form 'participation' (where subjects were actively responding to the television set or to others regarding content from the set) to 'not in the room' (but able to hear the set). Bechtel's findings seemed to call for a redefinition of what is meant by 'watching' television.

VOLUME FIVE provided some rather inconclusive evidence of the effect of television violence by using laboratory-style experiments which tested sleeping experience immediately after viewing.

VOLUME SIX comprised **'Television and Growing Up'** (ibid., p.347) the report prepared by the Advisory Committee itself and the one most often read by experts and 'laymen' alike. In it, the Committee attempted to provide several 'definitive' statements about the relationship between the viewing of televised violence and aggressive behaviour in children. Many of these statements seemed a 'toning down' of the research findings and a subsequent controversy revealed a significance presence of media personnel as members of the Committee.

Quite apart from the statements of the final report and the controversy, three main conclusions can be drawn from the five volumes of research (ibid., p.353):

1. That television content was heavily saturated with violence.

2. That children and adults were spending more and more time exposed to violent content.
3. That, overall, the evidence suggested that the viewing of violent entertainment increased the likelihood of aggressive behaviour.

These conclusions could be said to be three of the salient features of the 'conventional wisdom' regarding the mass media in general, and television in particular, which are current within popular opinion at any time, including the present day . Again, the point is made here that these 'conclusions' were of a severely qualified and limited nature, as the researchers made clear at the time (and as is apparent even from the brief summary given above). It is not, however, in the nature of public opinion to pay much heed to qualification and limitation. As Morley observes

> **"despite [gestures] to mitigating or intervening social influences, the conviction remained that a medium saturated with violence must have some direct effects." (Morley, p.6).**

In Summary

Since the beginning of the century, mass communication research has led to the formulation of three types of theories (Lowrey, DeFleur 1983: 22-29) concerning the influence of mass communication media on the individual and society. These have emerged chronologically as:

- Theories of Uniform Influences;
- Theories of Selective Influences;
- Theories of Indirect Influences,

This progression from simplistic assumptions of relatively 'straight-forward' media power and influence (the so-called 'magic bullet' formulation, whereby the media influences were supposed to have a direct impact on their audiences), to an appreciation of the dialectic inherent in media-audience relationship (the 'negotiated responses' claimed by Morley op.cit.) points up the undesireability of relying extensively on any one particular type of theory, particularly since it is often the case that a theory, seemingly discredited, has later re-emerged within another formulation.

Other points to be borne in mind when the media educator looks to past developments as a guide to his future practice are that

(a) all research is subject to major mitigations and qualification from a host of contributing factors;

(b) it is in the nature of mass communication research to outlive quickly much of its initial usefulness, being itself part of a constantly changing social

and cultural milieu that can alter both the process and its consequences;

(c) it is in the nature of popular opinion to ignore, or be unaware of, these difficulties of interpretation.

These considerations serve to underline how it is that popular opinion and the conventional wisdom - although having much to offer the media studies programmer - deal in broad outlines only and are subject to the pressures and prejudices of various interested parties. Popular 'formulations' as to the nature of the mass communication process and what precisely should be going in the media studies classroom should, therefore, be treated with a great respect, but with an even greater caution.

Regarding the findings of mass communication research itself, its implications for the mapping of the territory of media studies are clear:

- the area of study will be concerned with the nature and extent of media power and influence;

- the area of study will investigate this power and influence by examining how the media operate and how they are consumed by their audiences;

- these investigations may take place through at least three different, though inter-related approaches: a focus on on the relationship between mass media, the individual and society (the 'sociological'

approach), a focus on the relationship between mass-media and a society's traditions and inherited culture (the 'culturalist' approach), and the relationship between the mass media and a society's ideology (the 'political' approach). To these may be added the 'skills' approach discussed in the Introduction.

In addition, certain strands of popular opinion might well be addressed directly in the classroom:

- the common perception of the media as a potentially harmful influence on society, and particularly on children, and the 'moral panics' about 'media effects' to which this perception can give rise;
- the common perception of 'media education' as an inoculation against harmful media effects, rather than the acquisition of a skilled, critical and intelligent understanding of the media in all its complexity of institution, process, representation, and consumption;

Finally, it may be said that the theoretical writings reviewed in this chapter, and the practical classroom experiences discussed in the chapter one, should alert the media educator to a number of things that Media Education should NOT be about. It is important, for instance that media education is not hijacked as an

antidote for the bad effects that media might have on young people; or as an ally in the fight to save society in times of moral panic; or as a special plea for one particular Religious, Political or Economic philosophy; or as an adhunctive activity which supplies useful 'vocational' skills at the expense of broader educational objectives.

There remain, however several more potentially fruitful and 'positive' conceptions of what it is that Media Education <u>should</u> be about. These could well be regarded as the corner-stone for an enlightened media studies programme, as the chapter three and four will attempt to make clear.

Chapter Three

RATIONALES AND AIMS

Chapter Three: RATIONALES AND AIMS

General Remarks

Advocates of media education could well argue that whereas many established curriculum subjects may be said to concentrate on what the learner **ought to be doing**, media education tends to concentrate on what learners **are doing** now at this moment of their lives. It could be argued that what pupils are doing NOW underpins all their other learning activities and is central to their development as individuals and members of society. If this is conceded, an educational activity which focuses on the learner's life 'as it is lived now' is seen to be as important as any other area of study.

Furthermore, such an educational activity might be far more relevant to the needs of learners in today's world than are many parts of the second-level curriculum which were mapped some thirty, forty or fifty years ago. Such studies might also help to bridge the gap that often exists between the 'real world' of the learner's experience and the 'world of school', thereby making the teacher's teaching load somewhat easier and the learner's learning somewhat more meaningful.

These arguments might be generally acceptable, but they do not in themselves amount to a cogently argued rationale for media education and the studies best suited to it. For example, the argument in favour of media

studies as a 'bridging' activity could be used to justify many other areas which might link youth subculture with school studies, and (the argument runs) thereby lend relevance to the school curriculum. Furthermore, this argument begs the question of why it is that the curriculum lacks relevance for today's young learners. Is there a danger of media studies being used to shore up a structure that needs a complete overhaul?

It is also the case that, in these days of rigorous examination of what a formal educational curriculum should provide for learners, cogently argued rationales are, quite rightly, the order of the day. It is the purpose of this chapter to advance cogent arguments for Media Education which could not be seen as partisan, superficial or disingenuous, but as grounded within curriculum theory and the formulations of media education specialists.

An area of study may be justified for inclusion within an educational curriculum on grounds supplied **curriculum theory**, and on grounds inherent in the **area of study** itself. Where there is an **existing curriculum**, the educational philosophy and general thrust of that curriculum should also be taken into account. Accordingly, the purpose of this chapter will be to advance rationales for media education and media studies grounded within curriculum theory and within the inherent worth of media education itself. Further rationales will

be advanced in chapter six, having regard to the particular bases of the Irish Republic's second-level curriculum.

The terms 'media', 'mass communications media' and 'communication media' are in common English usage often interchangeable and can cover very wide and diverse areas. Indeed, twenty- five years ago **Thompson** commenting on the report of a 1960 Conference of the National Union of Teachers on 'Popular Culture and Personal Responsibility', observed that

> **"the word 'media' was felt to be a misnomer; they were not just vehicles for transmitting news and views and entertainment - they provided the views, filtered the news, and devised a special kind of entertainment" (Thompson 1964: 15).**

However, it is an established common usage to speak of 'them', ie., 'the media' as a heterogeneous entity, as do the writers cited in the first two chapters of this dissertation, and this usage will be followed in the ensuing discussion.

Curriculum Theory suggests that there is a general theoretical framework within which questions of content-inclusion may be considered, quite apart from arguments supplied by the proposed 'new' content' or by the particular curriculum under review. Such a theoretical framework would be useful to curriculum planners, given that 'new content' proposals are often argued so plausibly and persuasively and that it is always possible

that a poorly argued but worthwhile content might be overlooked while something of ephemeral importance gains recognition because of a superficial, but cleverly presented attractiveness.

A rationale advanced within the framework of curriculum theory, would have regard to those 'bases' which theorists agree should underlie ANY curriculum and, therefore, give it a more universal validity. Accordingly, it will be useful to leave, for the moment, the arguments advanced by media specialist and explore a rationale for Media Education within the framework for curriculum content inclusion provided by a number of curriculum theorists.

Curriculum Theory and Media Education

Theorists in the field of curriculum studies maintain that any school curriculum will be seen, upon analysis, to be built on a number of 'bases' which are located in the surrounding social, political and cultural milieu.

> **"All civilised societies establish schools and programmes of education in order to induct the young into the culture and to transmit the society's culture and values... Today, the work of the school must be constantly conducted in the midst of social and economic pressures and changes..." (Hass 1987: 7).**

'Curriculum bases', therefore, may be taken to mean those social, economic, and other pressures, which chart the

content area of a curriculum and supply its range and scope and general goals.

The particular bases recommended by theorists as proper to the building of curricula, and the resulting range afforded to content-inclusion, have varied over the past thirty years. In the 1950s, **Virgil Herrick** (Neagley and Evans 1967:2) proposed three bases: man's categorised and preserved knowledge, ie., the subject fields; our society, its institutions and social processes; and the individual to be educated, his nature, needs and developmental patterns.

Hilda Taba (1962:9-13) agreed that curriculum decisions "need to be made on the basis of some valid criteria" and maintained that these criteria may come from various sources: "...from tradition, from social pressures, from established habits...". However, Taba argued for curriculum decision-making which

> **" follows a scientific method and develops a rational design... [within which] the criteria for decisions are derived from a study of the factors constituting a reasonable basis for the curriculum... These factors are the learner, the learning process, the cultural demands, and the content of the disciplines..." (loc.cit., p.10).**

Glenn Hass lists possible criteria for content inclusion

as ranging from 'individual differences' and 'self understanding' to those of 'systematic planning' and 'the teaching of values' (op.cit., p.8). In his view, all these criteria can encompassed by planning with regard to

four 'bases' in particular: Social Forces, Human Development, Learning Process, and Knowledge (ibid.).

In an ideal situation, it might be possible to 'scrap' all existing curricula and begin afresh, thereby allowing decisions on content-inclusion to be taken in the light of the most expert, disinterested, and most up-to-date advice given by curriculum theorists. Unfortunately for curriculum planners and the advocates of 'new' content, such 'ideal situations' rarely obtain. Most school curricula are accretions of decisions made on a wide range of grounds over a long number of years. Some of these decisions were made in the more 'old-fashioned' scenario outlined by Herrick, some in the confident 'scientific' scenario of the 60's outlined by Taba, and - less frequently - some were made in the more 'planning-conscious' context of the 1980s described by Hass.

This 'mixed' nature of curriculum decision-making, and the actual 'real-world' curricula which it has produced is the inheritance with which most curriculum planners must work, if the advocation of new content is to be anything more than an exercise in theorising. This point will be pursued in chapter five with respect to the Irish Republic's second-level curriculum. Here, it may be observed that, whatever the mix, it should be possible to ground a rationale for Media Education in all three scenarios, since they are all, and despite their differences, united in at least one respect: they are

attempts to cater for the formal education of the individual within his/her social milieu.

Much of the concern about mass communications apparent in chapter two was centred around the role of the media within 'social processes' and the effects they might be having on the 'developmental patterns of young people'. It could be argued, therefore, that there should be little difficulty in seeing an area of study like media education as desirable within the curriculum base envisaged by Herrick ('...the individual to be educated, his nature, needs and developmental patterns...') and Hass ('Human Development'). However, caution would need to be exercised if such studies were not to end up as strategies for 'innoculation'. Indeed, early ventures in Media Education, or more correctly, in 'Film Appreciation', exhibited precisely this feature (Alvarado et al, 1987:16-19). Chapter four will discuss how this negative approach to media studies is still very much alive, especially within the so-called 'culturalist' approach.

Hilda Taba's view that a curriculum should encompass the 'cultural demands' of a society (op.cit., p.10) supports the inclusion of studies which would provide the learner with an initiation into that culture. This is part of the function of most school subjects, but it could be said that insights into the formation and transmission of culture are especially facilitated by Media Education

(see chapter four). Another criteria advanced by Taba for making curriculum decisions is 'the nature of knowledge and the specific characteristics and unique contributions of the disciplines from which the content of curriculum is derived' (op.cit. p.11). She continues that

> **'... especially today, in an era of exploding knowledge, a constant restudy is needed of the basic disciplines from which the content of school subjects is derived to make sure that the concepts around which the school subjects are organised are consistent with developments in those disciplines' (ibid.).**

Put simply, a curriculum cannot afford to ignore the world it purports to serve. Developments in science and technology have changed the face of those teaching areas within second-level schools these past two decades, and rightly so. But the role of the media and the process of re-presentation of society has undergone fundamental growth and change within the same period, and the curriculum should be responsive to this also.

In short, it may be said that writers in the field of curriculum theory recognise a number of bases which should provide the nature and scope of a formal educational curriculum. These could be included under three broad headings:

- the nature of the society out of which the curriculum arises;
- the learners whose needs it addresses;
- the knowledge and skills which it seeks to impart.

It is argued here that media education might readily be included education under any of these headings. 'The nature of society out of which the curriculum arises' is profoundly influenced by the controlling and shaping activities of the mass media, as will be outlined in the course of this chapter. Learners, 'whose needs' are addressed by the curriculum, will shortly become citizens of that society, and will need an education which takes into account this influence on their perception of 'social realities'. The 'knowledge and skills' which media education can impart are in no sense 'general' or readily found in other study areas but are, in large measure, the result of 'an era of exploding knowledge'. A curriculum should have the flexibility to include new content recently developed and demonstratively in line with curriculum bases.

Media Power and Influence and Media Education

Rationales may also be advanced on grounds inherent in the **area of study itself.** With regard to media education, two contexts present themselves as grounds for arguing a rationale, both of which could be said to be at the centre of all debate, research, analysis, discussion and controversy concerning mass media. These are the context of **'media power and influence'**, and the context of **'media operations'.**

As has been shown in chapter two, the **power** of the media, and the concern of society as a whole with the manifestations of that power, is well attested by numerous writers in the field of mass communications research, although considerable controversy surrounds the precise nature of the **influence** and specific consequences of that manifestation. And, although 'power' and 'influence' may be regarded as two distinct concepts, in the matter of advancing a rationale for media education, no fine distinctions will be here made between them. Thus, 'media power and influence' as a term will be used to embrace most of the five 'propositions', upon which McQuail (1987:3) bases his assumption that the media are 'important' and therefore worth studying.

[In Summary, these five 'propositions' are:

- **that the media provide employment, produce goods and services, feed related industries, and comprise an institution in themselves;**

- **that they are a power resource,ie., a means of control, management, and innovation in society, which can substitute for force;**

- **that they provide an arena where the affairs of public life are played out, nationally and internationally;**

- **that they are often the location of developments in culture, manners, fashions, styles of life and norms;**
- **that they have become a dominant source of definitions and images of social reality for individuals, groups and societies, expressing values and judgements inextricably mixed with news and entertainment. (op.cit., emphasis added)].**

The concept of the media as a powerful entity wielding enormous influence is implicit or explicit in the language used by many writers when discussing 'the media'. For instance, the **Crowther Report**, ie., the 'Report of the Central Advisory Council for Education' (1959), spoke of "the bewildering and bludgeoning nature of the impact made by the mass media of communication...".
In 1962, a **United Nations** Seminar on the Rights of the Child (Sullivan 19672:VII) argued for 'screen education' in order "to protect the modern child against the barrage of visual impressions to which he [sic] is being subjected increasingly...". **Thompson** (op.cit., p.10), wrote that school leavers were "often a ready prey for the mass media", and he was anxious that schools "provide children with standards against which the offerings of the mass media will appear cut down to size" (ibid., p.17).

Hall, in 1977, put the matter more precisely:

> **"...the mass media are more and more responsible (a) for providing the basis on which groups and classes construct an 'image' of the lives, meanings, practices and values of other groups and classes; (b) for providing the images, representations and ideas around which the social totality, composed of all these separate and fragmented pieces can be coherently grasped as a whole. This is the first of the great cultural functions of the modern media: the provision and the selective construction of social knowledge" (in Masterman, 1985: 4. Original emphasis).**

Masterman adds that

> **" the very act of selection itself marks out some events, issues and explanations as being more important and significant than others. The media tell us what is important and what is trivial by what they take note of and what they ignore, by what is amplified and what is muted or omitted. 'What is noted,' Roland Barthes observed, 'is by definition notable'" (Masterman, ibid., p.4).**

This view of Hall and others of media power differs substantially from the often crude formulations surveyed in chapter two. There is in these later writers a much more complex conception of 'power'. This conception owes much to the conclusions of researchers who found that, while a media audience may retain little in terms of specific information, they may well retain general 'definitions of the order of things' (Hartmann and Husband 1972, in Morley, 1980:8). It is a conception which surfaces in many later writings, for example **Hennessey:**

> **"As an institution of knowledge, television produces knowledge effects. These can be understood in terms of the ways in which television provides interpretative frameworks for understanding the world" (in Lusted and Drummond1985: 83).**

McQuail expresses the all-inclusive nature of this power in writing that

> **"The entire study of mass communication is based on the premise that there are effects from the media , yet it seems to be the issue on which there is least certainty and least agreement. This apparent uncertainty is the more surprising since everyday experience provides countless examples of small effects. We dress for the weather under the influence of a weather forecast, buy something because of an advertisement, go to a film mentioned in a newspaper, react in countless ways to television, radio or music. We live in a world where political and governmental processes are based on the assumption that we know what is going on from press and television or radio. There are few people who can trace no piece of information or opinion to a source in the media and much money and effort is spent in directing media to achieve such effects" (op.cit., p.251).**

Addressing specifically the effects of children's television, **Ferguson** underlines the ramifications of media power as a constructor of social realities when he maintains that

> **"debate about the effects has to move beyond the moral panics... the terrain upon which to engage with programmes made for children will be intellectual, political and ideological" (in Lusted and Drummond 1985:47).**

In summary, then, it is the view of theorists that the mass media (in whatever particular form) are a nexus of power within society, and that this power has great influence on the shaping of that society and the individuals of which it is composed. Therefore, a curriculum which attempts to provide an education fully consonant with the nature of a modern society, and the personal and social development of the learner, should include provision of media education.

Media Power and Influence: Two Contexts - the 'Ideological' and the 'Informational'

Within this concept of the media as a powerful entity wielding enormous influence it is possible to distinguish two inter-related contexts of such power and influence, both of which have already surfaced in the discussions of chapter two. These could be termed **the ideological context**, ie., the media as a powerful influence on the 'definitions of the order of things' (Morley's phrase: see below) within which a society perceives itself in terms of its own fundamental moral and political values; and **the informational context**, ie., the media in its role as as a purveyor and manufacturer of knowledge and information.

Regarding the **ideological** context, **Morley** (1980:8), echoing Hartmann and Husband, held that an audience, even though they may retain little specific memory of their viewing, "may well retain general 'definitions of the order of things', ideological categories embedded in the structure of the specific content". **Neale** (1980:14), discussing the nature and function of 'genre'in film, maintained that it is necessary "...to link a number of the features of the economic structures and practices involved [in genre] to capitalist practices and structures in general". **Masterman** echoes this point: "questions of ideology cannot be confined to the analysis of media texts..." (1985:23). He asserts as one of the reasons for media education the "ideological importance

[of the mass media]... and their influence as consciousness industries" (ibid., p.2).

Important, too, in this context, are the views of **Louis Althusser** (in Gurevitch et al 1982:24), that

> **"...ideology expressed the themes and representations through which men relate to the real world. ... ideology always [has] a material existence. It is inscribed within an apparatus and its practices. Ideology operates... to interpellate individuals as subjects, 'hailing' individuals through the apparently obvious and normal rituals of everyday living... [it] is the medium through which all people experience the world" (op.cit.).**

If, as will be argued shortly, the mass media 'pervade' the 'everyday living' of people to the extent that they (the media) virtually constitute the reality of that 'everyday living', then the 'ideological' implications of that 'pervasiveness' should be clear. Consequently, the creation of an awareness, however limited, of this context of media power would seem desirable for the individual who is to be fully cognisant with the nature of his/her society and his/her role within it.

Regarding the **informational** context, it could be said that, for most people, the media appear to be transmission systems which may indeed have great power to provide information, and great influence in the presentation of that information, but that -'basically' - they are still 'merely' relay systems. The view that the media have the power to manufacture information is less common. **Masterman** observes that this manufacture of

information is a 'growth industry' (op.cit., p.2 and 8) and that it is

> **"between the providers and consumers of information that the greatest inequalities lie. Media represents perhaps one of the best hopes that society has of countering the most blatant duplicities of the public relations industry, of encouraging more demanding standards from journalists, of producing more discerning, sceptical and knowledgeable audiences... Media education, then, is one of the few instruments which teachers and students possess for beginning to challenge the great inequalities in knowledge and power which exist between those who manufacture information in their own interests and those who consume it innocently as news or entertainment " (ibid., p.11).**

Finally, the **ideological** and **informational** contexts of mass-media power here advanced as the primary rationale for media education find expression in the description by McQuail (1987:38) of mass-media activity as being of "cultural and informational production carried out by mass communicators of many kinds and directed to audiences within a framework of regulation and custom". A neat summation of the case for media education in this context is provided by **Alvarado, Gutch and Wollen** (1987:3) who maintain that media education could make explicit "the connections between what we know and how we come to know it".

Media Operation and Media Studies

As has been noted in the preceding chapter, **'media power and influence'** are regarded as fundamentally important to an understanding of mass communications. The context of

'media operations', on the other hand, derives its importance from this conception of the mass media as a powerful and influential entity. That is to say, there is little point in examining the way mass media operate unless it is conceded that these operations occur within an area which is 'important'. Thus, if it is conceded that media education is important, it follows that studies within that area. ie. 'media studies', are worthwhile. This relationship between 'media power' and 'media operation' will be raised again in chapter five, where particular core concepts closely related questions of media power (Realism, Representation, Ideology and Audience) are advanced as crucial to Media Education, without which the exploration of the concepts relating to 'media operation' and 'media artefact construction' (Narration, Genre, etc.) can become mere exercises in 'vocational skills formation'. Chapter five, in fact, will argue that concepts of 'media construction' or 'media technique' , although important and worthy of study, should not be pursued as ends in themselves but as aprelude to an understanding of the four core concepts listed above.

Given that the mass media are powerful and influential agents in society - as is demonstrably the view of the writers cited above, and in chapter one, it is argued here that this power and influence of mass media lends importance to media practices, and to the institutional

frameworks within which these practices occur. It is an examination of the structure of that power, and the mechanisms and practices through which it operates, that defines the nature of Media Studies.

Within this conception of 'media operation', it is possible to distinguish three distinct, though inter-related, contexts of media activity:

the context of **media pervasiveness**, ie., the conception of the media as an ubiquitous and inescapable presence in modern society;

the context of the **media as product**; ie., the conception of the media as manufactured items, the making of which involves specific production practices and construction mechanisms;

the context of **media consumption**; ie., the conception of the media as artefacts which have potentially a variety of decodings when consumed by audiences.

Media Pervasiveness

The context of **media pervasiveness**, ie., the conception of the media as an ubiquitous and inescapable presence in modern society is mentioned in passing by numerous writers as one of the salient features of mass communication activity (Thompson 1964:10; Sullivan 1967:VII; Lowery, DeFleur 1983:10-18).

More specifically, **Masterman** (1985) deals with it in some detail under the heading of 'media saturation', and lists it as an one of seven areas of media education which should be given 'the most urgent priority':

> **"We considerably underestimate the impact of the media if we consider only those occasions on which we give them our fullest attention" (op.cit., p.2).**

He maintains that there is audience engagement with the media on a number of levels as 'secondary' and even 'tertiary' activities (ibid., p.3). The real significance of these different uses of the media

> **"is that they are frequently integrated not simply with other activities but with one another..." (ibid., p.3). "This context of media activity, among others, demands a commensurate expansion in critical consciousness, and the coherent development of educational programmes which will encourage critical autonomy" (ibid., p.2).**

Alvarado, Gutch and Wollen (1987) also remark on the pervasiveness of the mass media.

> **"As pervasive sources of information, education and entertainment they <u>are</u>, to a large extent,our experience of 'everyday life'" (original emphasis, op.cit., p.117).**

It is the view of these writers that this 'pervasiveness' deserves study because "our understanding of the real world is almost equivalent to our understanding of how it has been and is re-presented to us" within this pervasiveness (loc.cit.).

These arguments will be readily seen to derive from the ideological context of media power and influence discussed above. It is in the nature of ideology to be 'pervasive'. Here it is argued that the mass media, by their own 'pervasiveness', are coextensive with the formulation and reinforcement of a modern society's ideology and, therefore, deserve study.

Media as Product

The context of **media as product**, ie., the conception of the media as manufactured items, the making of which involves producers, specific production practices and internal construction mechanisms, is advanced by **Masterman** (op.cit.) as central to the comprehension of the full import of media texts: "...media texts... need to be comprehended in their physical movement, as objects which are produced, distributed, exchanged and consumed..." (op. cit., p.22). He adds, though, that

> **"...even this is to misread the real processes of media production... What the media produce are not primarily texts, but audiences (and audience consciousnesses) which are segmented and sold to advertisers...[and that] this process of audience production is itself simply a small, though necessary, part of the larger cycle of capitalist production, distribution, exchange, and consumption" (loc.cit.).**

Regarding the 'producers' or 'manufacturers' of media items, **Alvarado et al** (1987) also underline the inadequacy of analyses which concentrate on media texts

alone, with little or no regard to the context of their manufacture, especially the 'institutional' context. Observing that "Pragmatically, teaching a narrative analysis of 'The Sweeney' is always going to be a more tempting proposition than teaching the BBC charter or ownership structures... ", they maintain that

> **"The pedagogic decision lies between consciously teaching media institutions as an intrinsic component of studying the media or unconsciously as nebulous shadowy presences lurking in the background of the text, the ghosts in the media machine." (op.cit. p.46).**

In this context of media as product, important questions are: "Who produces the text? For what audience? In whose interests? What is excluded?" (ibid., p.47). According to these authors,

> **"The consequences of an exclusively text-centred approach are that these questions are marginalised in our teaching... " (loc.cit.).**

The teaching of 'media institutions' is an intrinsically 'political' activity because it involves an analysis of the relation between the State, the cultural milieu, and the media.. Media organisations which produce texts "are essentially cultural institutions...". This "entails a need to introduce the concept of the state and the nature of a state's relationship to a culture and its cultural workers" (loc.cit.). These authors maintain, furthermore, that the introduction of this concept "forces... a distinction between film and television" (ibid., p.48). In their view, it is significant that there is a distinction

made by the state between the nature of the film/cinema ('essentially cultural' institutions), and that of television (essentially a 'political' institution). The role of the state in relation to these two institutions - and their products - is very different and this has important implications for the nature of the teaching of film and television under the umbrella term of 'media institutions'. One advantage it might confer on media teachers (and learners) is a clearer view of the nature and function of 'film products' as distinct from 'TV products', often an area of much classroom confusion.

There are, nevertheless, wide areas of study which encompass the same or similar potential study-matter, especially if film is seen, with **Neale** (1980), as being a social institution.

> **"...the practices that constitute mainstream commercial cinema are massively dominant and therefore have a social presence and a social impact far in excess of any other.." (op.cit., p.19).**

The conception of the media as **product**, therefore, necessarily broadens the area of study beyond analysis of a particular text and takes in the social and institutional influences on, and determinants of, that particular text, as well as what might be termed the 'industrial' aspect of media product manufacturing.

This latter aspect is termed by Masterman as the 'processes of media production' (op.cit. p.127) and he

lists several of these practices under the heading of 'Rhetoric', viz., selection;
exploiting the ambiguity of visual imagery; combining image and linguistic text; suppressing the existence or effect of camera; film and sound editing; interpretative frameworks, visual coding;
and narrative. While recognising that these practices are for the most part 'actively concealed from the public' (loc.cit.), Masterman maintains that there is nothing necessarily sinister in such concealment. Although they take place 'behind the backs of the audience', many are 'an inevitable part of making meaning in any form'. However, some difficulties arise

> **"when television professionals are less than honest and open about the techniques they are using and wish to claim rather more for their work than they are entitled to... the greatest problem lies in the extent to which many users of the media remain innocent of the influence of such techniques in their consumption of the media..." (ibid., p.128).**

Neale elaborates considerably on the importance of narrative (op.cit: see esp. chapter two). In fact, his treatment of 'genre' would encompass many Masterman's several listed headings (especially 'exploiting the ambiguity of visual evidence'). Indeed, the following remark on genres could be applied to any of the listed practices:

> **"... [They] are not systems; they are processes of systematisation. It is only as such that they can perform the role allotted to them by the cinematic institution. It is only as such that they can**

function to provide, simultaneously, both regulation and variety" (op.cit., p.51).

Thus, genre, in common with the other production practices merits study as as active 'intervener' in the creation/manufacture of meaning.

Media Consumption

The third important context within which may be found a rational for media studies is 'media consumption' ie.,the conception of the media as artefacts which have potentially a variety of decodings when consumed by audiences.

As has been demonstrated, the media are recognised to be a powerful and influential entity within society. Any analysis of this influence and its effects will naturally involve those who are influenced by the media and who show the results of such influence by readily observable and/or deducible effects. That is to say, the context of media consumption by 'audiences' must be understood if the full import of media power and influence is to be comprehended.

Indeed, so important is this context that it has already made itself felt, not alone within much of the writings discussed chapter two, but also within the two 'media operation' contexts already outlined in this present

chapter. Media consumption, then, - how audiences engage with the media, and how audiences themselves are products of the media - seems unarguably a context of the utmost importance for media studies and, therefore, one of its most cogent rationales.

The nature of media consumption received clear exposition in 1980 in the work of **Morley** (op.,cit.), whose investigations were a development of the 'uses and gratifications' research of investigators a decade earlier such as **Halloran** ("We must get away from the habit of thinking in terms of what the media do to people and substitute for it the idea of what people do with the media" in op.cit. p.12). In his analysis of the reaction of various types of audience to one particular episode of the TV programme 'Nationwide' he explored '...the extent to which decodings take place within the limits of the preferred (or dominant) manner in which the message has been initially encoded' (ibid., p.18). His analysis supported the contention set out in the beginning of this chapter that the media are powerful influences of their audiences. He showed, however, that this influence is not the 'manipulation' that it was often supposed to be, ie., a wholly dominant media entity at work upon a malleable audience.

As maintained by Masterman and others above, a study of the mechanisms and practices involved in the production of the artefact, should expose the complicated nature of

'artefact construction'. Morley's work shows that a focus on 'media consumption' would be concerned

> **"...with the ways in which decoding is determined by the socially governed distribution of cultural codes between and across different sections of the audience..." (op.cit. p18).**

In short, Morley's work exposes the complicated nature of the relationship between, on the one hand, the media artefact, within which there are 'preferred meanings' lodged among a host of other potential meanings; and, on the other hand, the media audience, within which there is a wide range of socio-economic groups viewing through differing ideological frameworks.

Following **Parkin** (1971), Morley designates these frameworks as 'dominant', 'negotiated', or 'oppositional'. Roughly speaking, these categories can be read, respectively, as 'those who agree with the preferred meaning of the artefact', 'those who partially agree with the preferred meaning, but locate other meanings within the artefact', and 'those who reject the preferred meaning and look other potential meanings to wholly replace the preferred'. Furthermore,

> **"...in the case of each of the major categories of decoding (dominant, negotiated, oppositional) we can discern different varieties and inflections of what... is termed the same 'code'" (op.cit. p.137).**

From the point of view of arguing the importance of such studies at formal schooling, these studies of how a media

audience actively constructs the meaning of the media artefact reveal how 'meaning' is not the prerogative of the media alone, and how an alert and critical attitude on the part of the student is necessary if the full range of that meaning is to be exploited. Thus, the audience-as-consumer will benefit from such studies.

Besides the act of consumption itself, the active role played by the audience within that act of consumption, and the range of decodings possible within the act of consuming, there is also what **Masterman** calls the 'relatively neglected phenomenon'(op. cit., p.215) of the way in which the audience itself is a 'media product'. It could be said that many 'oppositional readings' would not last for long under normal circumstances, given the increasingly wide large selection of channels and remote control systems, allowing an audience to chose among programmes more suited to its tastes. This raises the question of how it is that programmes are suited to audiences, or to put it another way, how audiences are 'created', and then 'held'.

On this point, Masterman cites **Dallas Smythe:**

"The central thesis of Smythe's major work, 'Dependency Road', is that the principal products of the commercial mass media in monopoly capitalism are not programmes, newspapers or magazines, but audiences or, more precisely, audience power. Historically, the mass media 'were beckoned into existence' by their ability to create the commodity of audience power, which advertisers were willing to buy" (op.cit. p.224, orig. emphasis).

Masterman comments that

"The mass media, then, are termed by Smythe, Consciousness Industries, and their main product is people **who are ready 'to buy consumer goods and to pay**

taxes and to work in their alienating jobs in order to continue buying tomorrow.' (ibid., original emphasis)

But the media also produce other forms of consciousness: "people who are ready to support a particular policy, rather than some other policy..." (ibid.).

This aspect of audiences - that they are commodities produced by the consciousness industries - shares something of the bold outline and bleak determinism of the Frankfurt School (see preceding chapter), most of all in its view that the subjection of the audience is total.

> **"The principal contradiction within their consciousness is that between their attachment to the total message of Consciousness Industry... and their desire to take a larger measure of control over their own lives..." (Smyth, ibid., p.227).**

Masterman comments that

> **"media teachers working at the interface of media text and audience response, cannot dismiss them both so summarily... Each needs to be recognised as a site for struggle within which teachers, broadcasters and students can play important roles..." (ibid.).**

He draws attention to the possibilities for disciplined study of media consumption opened by this theory:

> **"Smyth's analysis compels the media teacher to re-assess the significance within media processes not only of audience, but also of advertising and public relations... Advertisers have been increasingly putting their energies into promotional techniques which are disguised as something else... whilst advertisements now possess many of the qualities of nonavertising material..." (ibid., orig. emphasis).**

CONCLUSION and GENERAL AIMS

The purpose of this chapter was to provide cogent rationales for media education. These can be summarised by stating that, on the basis of the arguments outlined above, Media Education should form part of a second level curriculum because

- it includes within its studies aspects of curricular provision which curriculum specialists have, for over thirty years, agreed are a desirable part of formal schooling;

- it is a study of aspects of modern society which have an important influence on that society and the individuals of which it is comprised;

- it is uniquely a study of the complexities relationships that exist between the individual and the agents of that influence, ie., the mass media.

Chapter six will argue further that media education should be included within the Irish second-level curriculum, not alone on the grounds listed above, but because it has much to offer within the educational philosophy specific to that curriculum.

Finally, it is axiomatic that the rationale for any activity underpins its general aims. In the light of the second and third rationales listed above, it may be said

that the general aims of media education are that the learner is enabled

- to recognise the nature and extent of media power and influence on the formation of the individual and on society at large;

- to understand the ideological dimensions of media activity;

- to understand the informational dimensions of media activity;

- to analyse the nature and extent of media presence within society;

- to analyse media artefact production

- to analyse media artefact consumption.

The next chapter will review some of the approaches which have been taken in the past in pursuit of these general aims.

Chapter Four

CONCEPTUALISATIONS AND TEACHING APPROACHES

Chapter Three: CONCEPTUALISATIONS AND TEACHING APPROACHES

General Remarks

This chapter will outline four major conceptualisations of media education, the context of their development, and their implications for media studies in terms of teaching approaches and overall objectives.

Central to the enterprise of teaching Media Studies at second-level is the question of how past and present practitioners have conceptualised media education. The whole direction of studies, the nature of the activities which are undertaken in pursuit of those studies and their aims and goals will depend to a great extent on the initial conception by the teacher and learners as to precisely what it is they are about in the media studies classroom.

Any approach to the teaching of media studies is the logical outcome of this initial conceptualisation of what media studies should be about, or to put it another way, all approaches are the result of pedagogical decisions - taken consciously or unconsciously - to focus on some aspects of media education rather than others. Sometimes a selection is made from a variety of possible emphases. Sometimes a particular emphasis has been adopted because the teacher has been unaware or unsure of any others. Either way, the result has been a definable 'approach', most probably one of those discussed below.

Three of these approaches to media education have already received some treatment in the Introduction and in chapters one and two, both as to their theoretical bases and their influence on the development of media education in Ireland. These three approaches, the 'practical' embodiment of three quite distinct conceptualisations of media education, may be loosely termed the 'Sociological', the 'Cultural', and the 'Skills' approaches. This classification would accord with that of Alvarado, Gutch and Wollen (1987:9-38), who would add a fourth, namely the 'Political'.

It is the view of this dissertation that, whereas it could be said that each of these approaches have much to offer the teacher of media studies, they also have aspects that might best be avoided. An 'eclectic', non-absolutist approach is therefore recommended. Furthermore, it must be said that these 'approaches' are far from 'watertight' and that they will be found to 'leak' into one another continually, under pressure of the particular emphases of 'host' subjects and/or the tendency of media studies to chose its subject matter from contemporary sources and from within the milieu of its learners.

The 'Sociological' approach.

The 'sociological' approach to media studies is grounded in a conceptualisation of the mass media as 'message delivery systems' which 'effect' the behaviour of the receiver and, through him/her, the nature of society, in some observable

way. Consequently, the emphasis is on the study of **the process of communication** and its effects, with the the general objective of acquiring a greater understanding of that process, thereby enabling a more efficient usage.

This conceptualisation is of early date and enduring character, particularly, as chapter one has shown, in the United States where a preoccupation with media 'effects' on society at large and on the public good has generated massive communications research efforts. A point to note, though, is that these efforts were not wholly motivated by altruism but, in large measure, by a desire on the part of the media themselves to show to advertisers and politicians that they (the media) were an effective means of reaching commercial markets (op.cit., p.10). This concern with 'effects' has also been very influential in British conceptualisations of media studies and has produced much research in the area of 'TV violence' (for example) (ibid., p.11), which - like similar American research - has acquired an almost 'mythic' standing among the British (and Irish) general public, as was pointed out in chapter one.

These popular conceptions (or misconceptions) of the nature of the mass media, its 'effects', and the role of media education in either 'combatting' these effects, and or ensuring their greater efficiency, have often exerted a negative influence on the teaching of media studies, sometimes reducing it to a mere 'means of innoculation' similar to some in the 'cultural' approach, to be discussed next. Generally, though, the 'sociological' methodology is

derived from behavioural science and emphasises the accumulation of data by laboratory or biographical investigation (see chapter two). The underlying conception of 'communication as a process' - largely receptive to astute intervention - is illustrated by the wealth of 'communication models' which treat of the communication chain as a linear process, though with considerable variation and refinement (see Fiske 1982:6-39). These models are often used at second-level schooling to introduce students to the area of media study, especially in 'vocational' programmes, especially those which emphasise the provision of 'skills' rather than general 'educational' goals. They are indeed a useful introduction to some of the more important concepts in the area of media operation, but because the the focus is often on the more simplified models, (due to lack of time and/or learner inabilities), the overall impression sometimes given is of a rather 'straightforward' process.

The British research tradition, although sharing the American empirical tradition, could be said to be less bound by this 'linear' view of the communication chain. Thus, for example, British investigators have adopted, since the 1960s, a more critical attitude to the media than was the case in America at the same period, where - as was discussed in the course of chapter one - a concern with a 'hypodermic' model of communication led to grave public disquiet. The work of the Glasgow University Media Group - with its interrogation of the way the media 'handle' issues which

they are supposed to be reporting objectively - has initiated many investigations which may be more relevant to the future development of media education than much of the American theory. British-based empirical work in field of audience analysis (such as that of David Morley) also has important implications for a 'sociological' approach to media studies and, indeed, pointed the way towards what many would now regard as the inescapable 'political' dimension of such studies.

The growth of sociological knowledge about the media has had more impact at third-level than at second-level education in Britain, according to Alvarado et al (op.cit., p.14) although

> **"the production of empirical knowledge about the ownership and working practices of media institutions... has provided a welcome source of information for teacher in secondary schools.." (ibid.).**

In Ireland, too, the 'sociological' approach, with its demand for rigorous investigation and the rather 'abstract' nature of its view of the communication process, has not had much direct presence at second-level. Indeed it would be generally true to say that the 'sociological' conceptualisation of the media has been more a provider of ideas for other approaches than an approach adopted itself. Its indirect influences can be seen in those approaches which, through diaries, questionnaires, and various types of surveys, seek to examine media 'presence', 'pervasiveness', 'usage', etc., across age groups, etc. There is, too, the common Irish classroom practice of 'issue-based' teaching of

the media, especially within Religious Education, where particular research findings are used to elicit classroom discussion and debate.

The biggest disadvantage of the sociological approach is its over-simplification of the whole arena of media activity. The various 'communication models', for instance, no matter how complex they are, inevitably leave learners with a 'cause and effects' view which is counterproductive in the long run, especially if the media educator intends to examine something of the 'cultural' and 'political' functions of the media. That is to say, in the terms of chapter four, there is often a concentration on the concepts involving media operation (ie., those to do with media practices and mechanisms) and a relative neglect of the concepts which involve media representation (ideology, realism, audience).

On the other hand, the approach lends itself well to a media studies course which is organised as an adjunct to (say) 'Business Studies'. Here, the concept of 'audience creation', for example, could be fruitfully explored from a 'marketing' point of view. Again, the study of models of communication should fit easily into any kind of media course, as long as their 'oversimplifiction' is pointed out. Within a host subject like 'Economics' or ' Business Studies' there are distinct possibilities of treating areas such as 'media institutions', and 'media ownership', perhaps even 'idealogy'. However, in such an eventuality,

the process referred to above as 'leakage' becomes increasingly evident. That is to say, the 'sociological approach' has, in the course of the teaching, assumed something of the 'political' approach. As noted above, this is a welcome development, illustrating the cross-curricular and interdisciplinary nature of media education, and should be anything but a cause of concern to the teacher.

An inventory of objectives for this 'sociological approach' could centre around the inculcation of an appreciation of the complexity of the mass media communication process and its implications for the growth and development of the individual and society. There should be ample scope, too, for the inculcation of a very useful 'scientific' and 'empirical' approach to investigation.

The 'Cultural' approach

The 'cultural' approach to media studies is grounded in a conceptualisation of the mass media as an influence on the aesthetic sensibilities of a society. In this view, these 'aesthetic sensibilities' are seen to be embodied primarily in a society's artistic traditions, but also in its laws and customs, religious traditions and social norms; in short: in its 'culture'.

Very often, this conceptualisation has viewed media influence as wholly negative and this has led to the most pronounced attribute of the consequent teaching approach, ie., the attempt to innoculate learners from the

'undesireable' effects of media artefacts. As noted in chapter two, the writings of FR Leavis of fifty years ago (especially his 'Culture and Environment' in 1933), and the 'culturalist' tradition to which he gave rise (for example, Eliot 1948, Thompson 1965) have contributed greatly to this 'negative' view of the mass media. However, the desire to 'innoculate' learners has a wider base within than a purely 'aesthtic' concern. Suspicions of supposed 'propaganda' functions of mass media, stemming from the views of the Frankfurt School (see chapter one) have also led to 'innoculative' approaches of one kind or another.

Nor is the approach in any way the child of the relatively recent emergence of media education. In Ireland, for example, the teaching of Irish could be said to have been in recent years more an innoculation against loss of cultural identity than a serious attempt to teach a language. This would be especially so in view of the decline in the notion of replacing English as the language of the people (see chapter six). In fact, a 'negative' 'cultural' approach fits easily into a curriculum such as the Irish second-level curriculum which is could be said to be more concerned with the transmission of values than with their interrogation. That is to say, a curriculum which

"... is required to transmit and perpetuate the capital of consecrated cultural signs, that is, the culture handed down to it by the intellectual creators of the past, and to mould to a practice in accordance with the models of that culture a public assailed by conflicting, schismatic or heretical messages - for example, in our society, modern communication media..." (Bourdieu, in Alvarado et al, p.14).

Hence, this 'cultural' approach to media studies has been popular at Irish second level, most often occupying space within English and Religious Education. Considering the highly 'prescriptive' nature of these subjects within the Irish system, the result has been a highly innoculative form of media education. With regard to RE, many so-called 'media studies' activities might be seen on closer analysis to be not so much a study of the media as recruitment of the media to 'reinforce' RE subject matter. Religious educationalists are quite candid about this approach:

"the primary requisite of an audio-visual cathechesis is that it originate from someone who believes... who feels deeply within himself an urge to proclaim the hidden treasure of the Gospel...[The question is] how can this message, this 'point of view' that comes from faith be translated into audio-visual language... " (Babin, ed. 1970:204).

The Catholic Communications Institute (CCII) Information booklet (August 1985) advises that

"Ever since Jesus Christ pulled out from the shore of the lake in order to be better seen and heard by more people, there has been an onus on the church to explore the language, culture and modes of communication of the people in order to speak more clearly to them about God" (ibid.).

The 'cultural' approach has in the past assumed a variety of 'innocultive' formulations. These have been variously termed as the 'development of a critical appreciation', 'the fostering of discrimination', or the teaching of 'intelligent viewing'. It would be a mistake to assume that everything about these formulations is uniformly 'negative' and to be avoided. There is for instance the distinction between an 'appreciation' based on the "dogmatically held

prejudices" of "a few educated amateurs" (Willemen, in Neale 1980:1), and an 'appreciation' learned within "an agreed field of study or enquiry.. further defined by an intellectual framework which delimits the questions to be asked" (Masterman 1980:8). In other words, 'appreciation' taught within the confines of a disciplined approach founded on an agreed method of investigation could be a bona fide activity within media studies and would be an altogether different proposition to one which had the shortcomings of an approach founded on the idea of a 'unique' individual responding to a 'unique' work of art, or which assumed that 'it is an essential condition of the quality of culture that it should be a minority culture' (Eliot 1948:48). As one media specialist, writing in the context of film studies, maintains:

"the dogma [of the 'cultural' approach] not only fails to provide a coherent basis for discussion of particular films but actively obstructs understanding of the cinema" (Perkins, quoted in Neale, p.1).

The biggest danger in these approaches, for media teachers, is that they almost always place 'the media' in an inferior role to some other cultural activity. In Ireland this other activity is often that of the very strong religious and literary tradition. These two are, however, seldom regarded as just 'another activity'. They are regarded as 'the' (ie., most important and worthwhile) activities, whereas 'the media' is often cast in the role of an 'intruder' intent on the 'general brutalisation of taste' (Farrell, ed.

1984:112), if not the wholesale destruction social values. A teaching emphasis on 'discrimination' means, inevitably, that the whole enterprise of media education becomes just another innoculative aspect of a curriculum which, it could be argued, is already heavily innoculative by virtue of its Christian Humanist educational philosophy (see chapter five).

At the same, it has to be said that 'discrimination' and 'appreciation' are skills which are as much needed in media studies as they are in other study areas. The essential point is put by Hall and Whannel in 1964:

"In terms of actual quality,... the struggle between what is good and worthwhile and what is shoddy and debased is not a struggle against the modern forms of communication, but a conflict within these media..." (ibid. p.23, orig. emphasis).

Discriminatory teaching, Masterman points out, is "premised by the assumption that genuine differences are likely to exist between the teacher's view... and the pupil's". These differences carry unequal weight in the classroom, thereby leading inevitably to the teacher's views becoming 'discriminatory judgements' while pupil preferences, "lacking either authority or an acceptable language code, remain at the low-level status of preferences (Masterman 1980:18). Ultimately, it can be said, this is NOT an approach which encourages pupil participation and is hardly a one to be favoured by the teacher who wishes to impart 'critical skills' of independent thinking.

Paradoxically, the strongly 'literary' context, while producing much of the negative aspect of this approach, has also furnished it with one of its most popular and useful methodologies, ie., text analysis. This method combines something of the rigour of sociological investigation, and the principles of literary and semiological analysis:

"... the emphasis placed... on the key areas of investigation which arise out of a media text are intended to make the processes of textual investigation within the classroom more systematic and rigorous, and to lead students and teachers alike to an examination of the wider range of extra-textual influences." (Masterman 1985: 23).

This close examination of media artefacts was, and remains, a key influence in the development of the area of study, although two dangers suggest themselves immediately. Concentration on the text may postpone treatment of 'extra-textual influences' to a later stage, which in turn leads to a danger that those other influences will not be grasped in all their immediacy. There is also the danger that, given the vagaries of school timetabling, unexpected holidays, etc., relegation to a 'later stage' in the media education programme may result in their not being investigated at all. Consequently, Masterman advises that

"...media texts themselves need to be comprehended in their PHYSICAL movement, as objects which are produced, distributed, exchanged and consumed... [they] are audiences (and audience consciousnesses) which are segmented and sold to advertisers..." (ibid.).

Again, given this movement in the focus of analysis, there would seem to be a natural overlapping into the areas of 'socilogical', and 'political' investigation, evidence again

of the artificiality of the boundaries often drawn between teaching approaches.

An inventory of objectives for this 'cultural approach' could centre around the exploration of the media's role in the formation of a society's culture, in terms of the creation of social norm and tastes. Text analysis, and the interrogation of media practices should encourage the acquisition of analytical skills, while attention to the influence of media institutions on the nature and function of the media artefact should lead the learner to an appreciation of the wider contexts of media study.

The 'Skills' approach.

The 'skills' approach to media study is grounded in a conceptualisation of media education as a means of providing a range of 'skills' immediately useful to the learner, particularly the slow -learner and/or early school-leaver. The emergence of this approach within the context of 'vocational' and 'continuation' education in Ireland has been discussed in the Introduction. Similar developments are to be found within British Education, such as the Technical, Vocational and Educational Initiative (TVEI, 1984) and the Certificate of Pre-Vocational Education (CPVE, 1985) (see Blanchard 1985:2-4).

The notion of providing learners with 'useful skills' will find favour with many educationalists. The problem is with the precise definition of 'useful'. Are they useful skills in the context of the learner's whole educational development, or 'useful' in the immediate context of his/her looking for a job next week? It is true that the latter type of 'useful skill' could (and should) be incorporated within the provision of broad educational objectives. However, it is also true that broad educational objectives cannot be achieved by the provision of a training in 'skills'.

Courses which are built along a 'narrow' skills provision ('the ability to write clear reports', and 'the ability to using the telephone effectively') with the aim of 'helping you to achieve your potential in a job in industry, commerce or public employment now or in the near future' (Udall and Udall 1979:9) may provide excellent 'training', but are often of questionable 'educational' value, in the broad sense of personal development. And, although 'Communications' or 'Communication Studies' is an acceptable title for such courses, there is an analytic dimension to the study of communications (see chapter five) which is rarely explored in this type of course. Indeed, it could be said that 'Communications' is a misleading title for some courses which focus on the performance of relatively low-level skills in a 'workplace' environment.

However, it it could be argued that average-to-weak learners require more than a cursory introduction to an area of study

(Lynskey, in 'The Language Teacher' Spring 1988: 7-13). The mastering of elementary 'skills', it might be said, increases their confidence and classroom motivation, thereby giving them a toe-hold on subject matter which might otherwise have seemed (to them) outside their intellectual reach. Favoured areas for this 'enhancement' activity for many years has been 'film appreciation' and 'film making' (Newsom Report 1963; Sullivan 1967: XII-XIII). There is also, the argument runs, a corresponding 'personal' development which accompanies engagement in these activities. Finally, it is maintained, the participants acquire something 'marketable' when looking for a job.

There something to these arguments, as every teacher who wishes to encourage poorly-motivated learners will agree. However, there is also much that can be said against them. First, it may be the case that the very learners who most need a broad education are being siphoned out of the way with the provision of 'training', simply because the task of 'educating' them would interfere with the school's main business of providing candidates for public examinations. Evidence suggests that this has sometimes been the case in Ireland, where, it could be said, 'skills provision' has been at the cost of 'educational denial' (ERSI 1987: 161).

Second, there are problems with this approach when the element of 'production-skills' is heavily emphasised in order to 'produce' films or videos. The advent of the video camcorder in the 1980s, which promised to give learners undreampt-of opportunities in DIY film making (and, on the

above argument, therefore undreampt-of opportunities to enhance their own 'personal development') uncovered a major problem previously to the fore with the miniature and 8mm cine cameras of the early seventies, viz., it very often turned out to be an opportunity for pupils to learn the extent of their own inferiority when they have compared their own poor efforts with the seemingly effortless productions of the professionals.

This problem has been fully delineated by Masterman, Enzensberger and others (see Alvarado et al., p.30), and a good example of its ramifications for media studies may be seen in the history of the 'All Ireland Schools Video Competition', a venture first organised on the mid 1970s by the Senior Cycle College, Ballyfermot, Dublin and annually since then. Each year has seen an increase in 'professionalism' but, while this has been welcomed by the organisers, it is a development which has had less welcome from media teachers. Not only has such 'professionalism' put the competition out of range of most second-level learners (and most especially out of range of those deemed in need of 'personal development'), it has also led to a development which seems for one reason or another endemic to the the Irish second-level system as at present organised. That is to say, an activity originally introduced as an extra-curricular activity often soon becomes an activity practised by a few dedicated - often very talented - group of learners who pursue it in their own time during lunch-hours, evenings after school and weekends, usually under the direction of an

enthusiastic teacher. The result is that the activity makes little impact as a curriculum activity. Although it could be said to be very educational for a few, it is only a few, and probably those few who least need extracurricular stimulation.

In the context of making second-level education more relevant to the needs of emergent workers and to the practical needs of a modern industrial society, there is every reason to see the 'skills' approach as justified, providing that it is education and not simply 'training' which is provided. This means that the cultural and political and sociological dimensions of 'communication' must also be explored. Ideally, the learning of 'skills' should be the pedagogic device through which those skills, and the media practices they exemplify, are interrogated and through which learner participation in the learning process becomes a reality in the classroom. Other subject areas have their methods of encouraging such learner participation in creative ways, for example History's 'local studies' project option. In the case of Media Studies, the area of 'skills provision' offers ideal ground for simulated production activity in which

"students themselves become mediators and the acts of selection which make the television image a 'preferred one' can be replicated in the classroom" (Masterman 1980:11).

In short, provided that the learning activities do not become largely a matter of sharpening performance at certain tasks using various media, rather than a critical

examination of those media, the 'skills' approach offers interesting and potentially fruitful opportunities to media education.

There is, therefore, no need to see 'skills acquisition' as foreign to any programme of media education, given what one theorist has called the 'dual nature' of such an education, ie., its combination of 'deliberative thought and technical dexterity' (Tana Wollen, quoted in Alvarado et al, p.35). It will be the combination of these aspects, and they way they are interwoven within the media studies syllabus and within the pedagogic practice of that syllabus that will span 'the mental labour of the individual which is given such high esteem in our society and the manual labour of many which is so poorly rewarded' (ibid.).

An inventory of objectives for the 'skills approach' could centre around the acquisition of skills useful to the learner within his immediate school curriculum and, by extension, useful also in areas of employment. There is ample scope for 'production activity', and the course will gain immensely from the 'practical activities associated with production. Care must be taken, however, that the 'production' (ie., the resulting artefact) does not become an end in itself. Ideally, the production of the artefact should be simply a means of acquiring 'vocational' skills in the course of production, and analytical skills in its interrogation when production is complete. It is in this final stage that studies may be broadened to include the concepts of media representation described in chapter five.

The 'Political' approach

The 'political' approach is grounded in a conceptualisation of the media as an important source of the social and political norms which are the bases of society, and which are usually accepted unquestioningly by individuals and by society at large. That is to say, this approach is most concerned with the ideological functions of the media (cf. the Concise Oxford Dictionary definition of 'ideology' as '...ideas at the basis of some economic or political theory or system').

This conceptualisation of the media as highly 'political' in their social import has been seen in the 1930s formulations of the Frankfurt School. American concern over media 'effects' has also shown a consciousness of this 'political' dimension, with pressure on governments to 'do something' about these effects, usually resulting in the commissioning of mass communication research specialists to investigate and come up with a report (see chapter one: The Payne Fund Reports, etc.). In Britain, Richard Hoggart showed in 'The Uses of Literacy' (1957) how the mass media had been influential in the destruction of Northern English working class culture by its erosion of the ideas which had formed the bases of that culture and its transmission from generation to generation.

However, it could be said that the full implications and complexity of media 'ideological' functions have not come

home to media educationalists until the last 10-15 years or so. This could be seen to be the result of investigations such as those of the British researcher Morley, whose work demonstrated the complexity relationship between the media and its audience, the construction of meaning and the implications of this for the formation of a society's ideology. Morley, as he indicates (Morley 1980:3-4), drew on the work of Merton and others, thus demonstrating the lengthy theoretical lineage of the 'political' dimension of media education.

This political dimension did not come to the fore in British classrooms until after what Alvarado et al call

'the exhaustion of consensus politics in the 1970s... [which caused the Labour movement] to become ever more preoccupied with the media as a possible explanation for some of its growing difficulties' (op.cit., p.37).

These were questions about media representation which the Glasgow Media Group (1976,1980,'82,'85) subsequently did much to explore.

Masterman, in 1980, was unequivocal about the 'political' dimension of media education, going as far as pronouncing it a form of 'political education'. The field of investigation was constituted

"by the flow of information communicated to us by the medium", and, in his view, "mediation is an ideological process" (1980:10).

His choice of four constituent 'core concepts' included (among 'total communication', 'connotation' and 'mediation') 'ideology'.

It was not, however, an approach to media education that met with wide approval in the Britain of the early eighties. He outlined those difficulties:

"A conflict exists between those who see political education as a kind of updated 'civics' and others who would argue for models which would encourage participation and action. In the former, the teacher is seen as passing on to his pupils 'political' information, concepts, skills and attitudes which are themselves value free, a kind of 'banking' concept of political education, designed to produce aware spectators, capable of critical consumption of their political system. On the other hand, those who posit a participatory/ action model of political education with a methodological emphasis upon simulations, decision-making skills, and school and community action are not slow to recognise that this version of political education will be anathema to many teachers and schools, conflicting as it does with the traditional role of both as purveyors of received wisdom" (1980:179).

By 1985, however, he had incorporated the political dimension (difficulties notwithstanding) as an essential part of media education in his 'theoretical framework' (ibid., pp.24-25). One of four general areas of investigation should be "the nature of the 'reality' constructed by the media: the values implicit in media representations" (ibid., p.21). By 1987, in the words of other commentators, the agenda of this approach was clear:

"The media's representations of the crucial political and social issues of the day require serious and detailed analysis as far as all members of our society are concerned." (Alvarado et al., p.35).

An important point to note here is that this treatment of the 'representations' of issues is not at all the same thing as a treatment of issues themselves, long the practice of many RE and English classrooms in Britain and Ireland, where the aim is to elicit discussion and/or written composition on a 'topic'. This is not to say that this type of activity cannot form part of the media studies classroom, but it is to say that it is not a primary part of the 'political' approach. The latter is one which goes beyond the concerns of specific 'issues' and attempts a wider, more comprehensive and 'political' analysis of the media text and its representations. Masterman writes that

"questions of ideology cannot be confined to the analysis of the content of media texts. Owners, media professionals, advertisers, audiences and even media forms and conventions, all perform their own ideological operations upon and within texts" (ibid., p.23).

In short, the political approach attempts, more than the others outlined (the 'sociological', the 'cultural', the 'skills' approaches), to practice the 'interrogation of the obvious' that media specialists increasingly speak of as being at the heart of media education. . For example, Alvarado et al warn that there is no sense in which media studies should strive to uncover a 'greater realism' than that commonly presented by the media, ie., they caution that media studies should not be seen as an exercise in mere bias detection in the interests of revealing 'the truth'. It is the selection and representation of ONE version of reality, and the exclusion of others, which needs to be addressed.

The 'realism' which is seen as a type of 'fidelity to life' is based, like other 'realisms' on a particular set of aesthetic criteria which are determined by historical and technological contexts (op.cit., p.95). There is in fact no 'fidelity to life' realism, or 'greater realism' and it is in the continual striving towards and arguments for these 'realisms' that Alvarado et al find a popular conception which it is the business of media studies to explore, viz.,

"...the notion that it is somehow both aesthetically and technologically possible to open a window onto the world... that the real can be perceived through the transparency of the medium which readily presents it." (op.cit., p.96).

The difficulties outlined by Masterman as existing for political education in Britain in 1980 have hardly diminished much in ten years. It is a reasonable guess to say that they are well and truly alive in Ireland now and will be for much of the 1990s. As has been noted, and will be outlined in some detail in chapter six, the Irish second-level curriculum is very much the creation of previous generations, within which the most dominant forces were a range of conservative political, social and religious positions. This general philosophy, combined with the lack of curriculum development at second level over the last thirty years has resulted in the sorry position of political education at second-level today where even the first - and, it would be thought uncontroversial - of Masterman's two outlined approaches is not on offer in any serious or systematic way.

This poses problems for the development of Media Studies in Ireland. If it is difficult to establish media education within Irish second-level, it may be doubly difficult to establish it if it is a form of political education, which as outlined above, it undoubtedly is. Yet there is some encouragement in the fact that the Irish Department of Education have, since the late 1970s, recognised the need for 'Civic' education. Every second-level school is now required to provide this study area.

Finally, it could be said that the cumulative logic of media education must always have been that an examination of media institutions, texts and practices would eventually lead to enquiry into the circumstances surrounding those institutions, texts and practices. In short, there is a pedagogic decision which must be taken at the outset of any media studies course, and this decision, according to Alvarado et al,

'lies between consciously teaching media institutions as an intrinsic component of studying the media or unconsciously as nebulous shadowy presences lurking in the background of the text, the ghosts in the media machine' (op.cit., p.46).

It is surely untenable to maintain that such a hit or miss approach should be adopted in the classroom to such an important aspect of media study?

An inventory of objectives for the 'political approach' could centre around the study of the media as institutions, with all that this implies in terms of 'ownership' and 'production practices', for the maintenance and creation of

the ideology that pervades a society. The insights acquired might be usefully applied within the learner's immediate school curriculum and, by extension, within places of employment.

Summary: Towards a Mode of Enquiry

As has been maintained continually in this dissertation, Media Education might best be served by an eclectic 'non-absolutist' approach. This view is not inconsistent with a desire to see such an education bear all the hallmarks of a disciplined field of enquiry, grounded in the best of past theory and practice and capable of developing along lines indicated by present research and the technological developments of the media themselves.

Only a comprehensive approach, embracing the strengths of the four approaches outlined in this present chapyer, while guarding against their weaknesses, seems capable of providing a framework which will satisfy the conceptualisations of most teachers, while at the same time ensuring that those media contexts outlined in chapter three are adequately explored in the classroom. These contexts are:

- media as a powerful ideological and informational influence within society;
- media pervasiveness;
- media as products;

- media consumption.

It would be the work of the individual teacher to fashion from the approaches outlined a mode of enquiry to suit his/her circumstances, the brief he is given by his employers, and the human material he finds before him in the classroom. This mode of enquiry (see Masterman 85: 24-26) would serve to explore those concepts considered central to media studies and which are described in the next chapter.

CHAPTER FIVE

CORE CONCEPTS

Chapter Five: CORE CONCEPTS

General Remarks

Len Masterman, writing in 1985, (op.cit., p.18) asked how it was possible to make conceptual sense out of a field which covers such a wide range and diversity of forms, practices and products. The description of the four teaching approaches given chapter four is an indication of this diversity, and it is only a tight grasp of the essential concepts within that field will ensure that studies do not become disorganised and diffuse, thereby spilling into other subject areas and neglecting the emphases appropriate to Media Education. In pursuit of these 'emphases appropriate to Media Education', this chapter will select, from among the 'wide range of forms, practices and products', a number of concepts which could be considered central to media education, and advance reasons why these concepts are considered to be 'core' concepts within the field.

First, however, it will be necessary to clarify what is meant by a 'concept', since this is a word which has a number of popular and inexact meanings. In fact, one philosopher, noting this difficulty, dismisses the popular usage as almost meaningless:

> **"the central and typical applications of the term 'having a concept' are those in which a man is master of a bit of linguistic usage..." (Norreklit 1973:41).**

Clearly, in the light of the problems outlined by Masterman above, a more exact understanding of the mental act of 'having concepts' is necessary.

Masterman provides a list of concepts under the heading of 'core concepts' ("... principal concepts which [media teachers] wish their students to understand... [and] which can provide the subject with its continuity and coherence across a wide range of media texts and issues..." Masterman 1987:23):

ideology	non-verbal communication
genre	anchorage
rhetoric	preferred meaning
realism	denotation and connotation
naturalism	discourse
construction	deconstruction
selection	audience positioning
myth	audience segmentation
distribution	narrative structure
mediation	pleasure
representation	sign/signification
coding	signifier/signified
encoding	sources
decoding	participation/access/control

Masterman, however, subsequently refers to this list of core (or 'principal') concepts as 'key' concepts and admits that 'they vary enormously in complexity'. Furthermore, it will be noted that the list extends, rather unhelpfully, to a total of thirty-three.

Clearly all the 'concepts' listed have a rightful place in the media studies classroom. But clearly, too, there must be some distinctions made between them on the basis of their complexity. 'Complex' concepts are more difficult to teach than 'less' complex ones. But how are such distinctions to be made? Also, how

are distinctions to be made between 'core' and 'key' and 'principal' concepts? These words, rather loosely used by Masterman, are not synonomous ('core': 'central part'; 'key': 'solution/ explanation'; 'principal': 'first in rank or importance' - Oxford Dictionary definitions). In short, is it possible to reduce Masterman's list of concepts essential to 'the continuity and coherence' of the area into a more manageable number? Furthermore, is it possible - in the interests of coherent pedagogy - to establish a hierarchy of concept importance? Unless these questions are addressed, there is a danger that diffusion and disorganisation will be much in evidence within media studies.

Concepts, Core Concepts, and Subsidiary Concepts: Definitions

One philosopher, Hamlyn (in Norreklit, op.cit., p.39), maintains that people have concepts when 'prepared to think coherently about instances of the concept concerned'. This 'coherent thinking' is, according to Hamlyn, a criterion for having a concept (ibid., p.40). He also presupposes language, because the criterion for a person 'having the beginning of a concept is already to be found in [language] usage' (ibid., p.39). Thus Hamlyn connects a person's use of language with concept formation, and lists stages in the development of a concept, culminating at the point when the person 'has both the concept and the word and is perfectly aware of the implications' (loc.cit.). Therefore, it can be

said that constant discussion of a particular topic, and constant usage of the vocabulary associated with that topic gradually lead to the development of a 'concept'. On this basis, a concept may be defined as the mental act which follows discussion and coherent thinking on a particular topic, by which act individuals gather together into a coherent whole all their ideas on a particular topic or subject. Masterman's thirty three concepts, the outcome of much discussion and 'coherent thinking' (taken here to mean thinking that is easily understood and which proceeds in a logical manner) in two seminal works (1980, 1985), can therefore be taken as gathering together most, if not all, ideas germane to the field of media studies.

'Ideas', however, can range from those which are very general, concrete, and of immediate practical use such as 'things which one can eat off (tables, plates, etc.)' (see Wilson 1966: 55), to others which are less general, abstract and of more fundamental importance, such as 'justice'. Thus it can be said that there is a 'hierarchy' of concepts in terms of fundamental importance. Accordingly, it must be possible to isolate those of more fundamental importance within that hierarchy, from those which are of lesser importance. These could be called, respectively, the 'core' and the 'subsidiary' (Masterman 1980: 12) concepts of fundamental importance. But what is meant by 'fundamental importance'?

Wilson (op.cit.) maintains that this 'hierarchy of concepts' has its beginnings in the differentiation we all make

between having 'a' concept of something, which we recognise as being a mental act which is peculiar to ourselves; and 'the' concept of something, which we recognise to be outside ourselves, but having some links with 'our' concept.

> **"...when we talk of 'the' concept of a thing, we are often referring in an abbreviated way to all the different concepts of that thing which individual people have, and to the extent to which these concepts coincide. Thus we can talk about 'the' concept of justice entertained by the ancient Romans; but also we can talk about your concept of justice, or my concept, or Cicero's concept, just as we often say 'His' idea of justice is so-and-so' " (Wilson 1966:54, original emphasis).**

On this basis, it can be said that, whereas there can be as many concepts to be found within any subject area as there are individuals expressing their views on that area, all these concepts may be included within a lesser number which act as abbreviations and which generally reflect the salient features of those concepts. This lesser number of 'abbreviating concepts', inclusive of many others, may be termed the 'core concepts' of the topic.

Thus, in the case of Masterman's list of thirty three 'principal' concepts, it must be possible to extract from that field a number of concepts which we may term 'core' concepts and which will act as 'abbreviations' for the others, generally reflecting their salient features. How, though, is such an 'extraction' to be made?

It has been noted above that Hamlyn links 'use of language' with 'having a concept'. Wilson, too, assumes that the 'use and understanding of language act both as guides to forming

concepts, and as tests of concepts when formed.' (ibid. p.58). This link between word usage and concept formation is a useful tool of analysis.

> **"...the logical limits of a concept may be the same as the limits to the range of meaning of a particular word: for instance, the limits of a man's concept of justice are the same as the limits within which he uses and understands the word 'justice'. This is not to say that the concept and the meaning are identical: but it is to say that they are, as it were, parallel to each other, or that they cover the same logical area. So long as we are concerned with the logical range of a concept, then the best possible guide is the logical range of the word with which the concept is normally associated". (ibid., p.58).**

Thus it may be said that the range covered by a concept will be signalled by the range of the word used to name that concept. That is to say, the range of the concept's name will be a useful indicator of the relative importance of that concept and therefore a useful way of distinguishing fundamental, or 'core' concepts from within a list of important, or 'subsidiary' concepts. This leads to definitions of a 'subsidiary' concept as one which has an extensive range of meaning within the area, and a 'core' concept as one which has an even more extensive range of meaning AND which includes the range of the 'subsidiary' concept. That is to say, a 'core' concept functions as an abbreviation which accurately reflects and links the salient features of several 'subsidiary' concepts.

On the basis of this definition, a number of core concepts may be extracted from Masterman's list. It is not proposed here to go into detailed and exact analysis, but merely to

section off from Masterman's list a number of concepts which would seem to be complex in themselves and to include several others. 'Ideology', for instance - and quite apart from the importance it has assumed in discussions in this dissertation so far - may be extracted because of its 'inclusion' of a number of other listed concepts in the range of discussion associated with it, the latter thereby being shown to be 'subsidiary' concepts. That is to say, 'Ideology', may be said to include 'preferred meaning', 'discourse', 'myth', and 'participation/access/control'. This process of extraction, which might be usefully termed the principle of exclusion, may be continued until a list of 'core' concepts is formed. As would be expected, a number of 'subsidiary' concepts are 'included' within more than one 'core' concept:

ideology (inclusive of: source; preferred meaning; discourse; myth; participation/access/control; realism; naturalism; mediation; selection);

representation (inclusive of: selection; narrative structure; discourse; realism; construction; naturalism);

audience (inclusive of: distribution; audience positioning; audience segmentation; subjectivity; pleasure; participation / access / control);

construction/deconstruction (inclusive of: rhetoric; selection; non-verbal communication; anchorage; genre; preferred meaning; anchorage; mediation;

coding/encoding/decoding; denotation and connotation; sign-signification; signifier-signified).

It might be objected that, despite the philosophical basis advanced in this chapter, this 'principle of inclusion' leads only to an arbitrary classification which categorises some concepts as 'subsidiary' which - given a more detailed analysis - might well be classified as 'core' concepts. For example, 'realism' is a concept which may be said to be continually at the centre of discussions about mass media, yet it appears only as a 'subsidiary' concept among many others. Again, it might be said 'ideology' seem to cover far too many 'subsidiary' concepts to have much meaning, especially for the second-level learner whose powers of conceptualisation are, after all, only in the making. Others listed as 'subsidiary', such as 'narrative' and 'genre' have received much attention in the writing of Barthes (1977), Neale (1980), Hill (1986), and others, who have discovered in them a greater importance than the 'principle of inclusion' used here would show.

This 'principle of inclusion', however, is not proposed as a detailed and exact method of analysis, but as a method of sectioning off the more complex concepts on the list, these latter being regarded as 'core' concepts, on the strength of this complexity, on the range of subsidiary concepts that they 'include' and in the way they act as abbreviations for these 'subsidiary' concepts in discussion. It is easy to imagine, for instance, that a person who has a good grasp of

the ideological dimension of the mass media will also understand what is meant by the term 'preferred meaning'. It is not the case, though that a person who understands the term 'preferred meaning' would be regarded as almost certainly familiar with the ideological function of the media. The same could be said of 'selection' vis-a-vis the core concept of 'representation'.

The truth is that concepts, no matter what the basis of analysis, will not break evenly into 'simple' and 'complex' types. Some concepts, like Ideology, have become so 'stretched' as to be nebulous and, therefore, difficult categories. The method of concept analysis recommended by Wilson (above: "..So long as we are concerned with the logical range of a concept, then the best possible guide is the logical range of the word with which the concept is normally associated"), which depended on the word's parallel linguistic usage, is no help, because the concept word itself has shared the same fate as the concept it describes. That is to say, it, too, is now overstretched and has therefore become almost meaningless.

Nevertheless, and with this admission of its inadequacies, this 'principle of inclusion' is offered as a guide to concepts lists such as Masterman's. At least, it may be said, this principle reduces the field to a more 'handleable' core. If to those extracted above is added 'Realism', it may be said that treatment of Ideology, Realism, Representation, and Audience within media studies could well constitute a comprehensive course and go far

towards achieving the general aims of media education outlined at the end of chapter three.

As pointed out in chapter three, the four concepts listed above could be said to be very closely related to the question of 'media power'. In that chapter too, a distinction was drawn between 'media power' and 'media operation', and it was argued that it is the power and influence of mass media which lends importance to the study of media practices. Thus, the core concept of 'construction/deconstruction', which includes many subsidiary concepts relating to the codes, techniques and practices (which could be said to be 'the nuts and bolts' of meaning construction), although certainly a concept central to media studies, is nevertheless more important for what it lends to an understanding of the four core conceptas listed above.

'Construction/ deconstruction' covers a multitude of subsidiary concepts (and a great deal more, it could be argued, than the twelve listed above). Investigations into any of these concepts could prove a fruitful starting point for analysis of media aertefact construction. The problem for the media teacher is that there are so many of them. Which would prove the most fruitful for classroom exploration?

Here, McArthur's remarks on 'genre' are useful:

" ...genre, with its obvious analogy with a sign system, <u>an agreed code</u> between film maker and audience, would seem on the face of it a fruitful starting point for

investigating the semiology of the cinema' (in Neale 1980: 7).

Thus, 'genre', with its focus on concepts such as 'coding' and 'anchorage' (to mention only two) would provide the basis for the practical classwork necessary to reach an understanding of the four 'core' concepts listed above. Furthermore, since the writings of the media specialists already cited (Barthes, Neale, Masterman, Alvarado et al, Hill, etc.) maintain that both 'narrative' and 'genre' include many 'concepts of technique', it is proposed here that these two be listed as core concepts, replacing the very nebulously-termed 'construction/ deconstruction'.

These six concepts (delineated in some detail below) - **Realism, Representation, Ideology, Audience, Narrative, Genre** - are therefore, in this dissertation, held to be core concepts within media studies. Any course of studies which imparts an understanding of these concepts may be said to have imparted an understanding of the contexts of media activity discussed in chapter two, thereby going a long way towards achievement of the aims of media education set out in that chapter.

Core Concepts within Media Studies: Delineations of Realism, Representation, Ideology, Audience, Narrative, and Genre

Realism

Media theorists would caution that "there is probably no critical term with a more unruly and confusing lineage than that of realism" (Hill 1986; 57). Nevertheless, they place it at the heart of the debate on concepts essential to media education:

> **"If we aim to enable students to assess critically the workings of the real world by our teaching about the media, then the concept of realism needs to be addressed... it is inaccurate to write or think about THE concept of realism, for there are and have been many different ways of conceptualising how the 'real' might be constituted" (Alvarado et al, p. 94).**

These writers warn that there is no sense in which media studies should strive to uncover a 'greater realism' than that commonly presented by the media, ie., they caution that media studies should not be seen as an exercise in mere bias detection in the interests of revealing 'the truth'. It is the selection and representation of ONE version of events, or viewpoint, (or whatever), - <u>rather than others</u> - which needs to be addressed.

They warn also that the 'realism' which is seen as a type of 'fidelity to life' is based, like other 'realisms' on a particular set of aesthetic criteria which are determined by historical and technological contexts (op.cit., p.95). There is in fact no 'fidelity to life' realism, or 'greater realism' and it is in the continual striving towards and arguments for these 'realisms' that Alvarado et al find a popular conception which it is the business of media studies to explore, viz.,

> **"...the notion that it is somehow both aesthetically and technologically possible to open a window onto the world... that the real can be perceived through the transparency of the medium which readily presents it." (loc.cit.).**

It is not within the scope of this dissertation to pursue in detail various theoretical formulations of the problem posed within media studies by 'realism'. However, two influences on the general notion of 'realism' among second-level learners may be pointed out. One is the influence of the nineteenth-century realist novel (Hill, op.cit., p.58-59), an 'artefact' which plays an important part in the development of Irish learners analytical skills at second-level through its presentation of a 'hierarchy of discourses'. Another is the general and popular equation of 'seeing' with 'believing', or as explained by MacCabe:

> **"The knowledge which the 'classic realist' film delivers is founded, fundamentally, on sight: the unquestioned nature of the narrative discourse entails that the only problem that reality poses is to go and look and see what Things there are...'" (in Hill, loc.cit.).**

This 'seeing is believing' notion of realism is closely allied with the popular notion that the media are a 'mirror to reality' and that they 'hold a mirror up to nature' because they are mere 'passive transmitters'. This notion has two sources:

> **"On the one hand it is a reflection of the neutral stance implied in the concepts of objectivity and impartiality embedded in the dominant professional ideology in the media. At the same time it is rooted in a pluralist view of society, in which the media are seen to provide a forum for contending social and political positions to parade their wares and vie for public support. The media are**

thus expected to reflect a multifaceted reality, as truthfully and objectively as possible, free from any bias, especially the biases of the professionals engaged in recording and reporting events in the outside world. This view is based on the notion that facts may be separated from opinions and hence, that while comment is free, facts are sacred" (Curran et al, in Gurevitch et al, op.cit., p.21. Original emphasis).

This popular conception of the nature of the reality presented by media arises because

> **"realist practices apparently reveal the real to us while making invisible the processes whereby that revelation is made possible. In teaching about the media, we have to understand the implications and presumptions of such practices and perceptions." (Alvarado et al, p.97).**

Apposite here is Masterman's delineation of these 'practices and perceptions', and their 'implications and presumptions', under the heading of 'Rhetoric', ie., (in paraphrase) selection, visual ambiguity, image-text combination, suppression of the existence of camera (etc.), set-ups, film and sound editing, interpretative frameworks, visual coding, and narrative (Masterman 1985:127-186).

Masterman, furthermore, draws a distinction between 'realism' and 'illusionism'. According to him, a critical understanding of media will involve

> **"a reversal of the process through which a medium selects and edits material into a polished, continuous and seamless flow. It will involve, that is, the deconstruction of texts by breaking through their surface to reveal the rhetorical techniques through which meanings are produced."(ibid.127).**

These rhetorical techniques are "the dominant conventions of illusionism and realism employed by the media"(ibid., pp.127-8).

In making this distinction between 'realism' and 'illusionism', Masterman follows the thinking of Brecht, whose views on the theatre he outlines (quoting Terry Eagleton):

> **'...'illusionism'... takes for granted the assumption that the dramatic performance should directly reproduce the world. Its aim is to draw an audience, by the power of this illusion of reality, into an empathy with the performance, to take it as real and feel enthralled by it... Against this [Brecht] posits the view that reality is a changing, discontinuous process produced by men and so transformable by men.'(ibid.).**

In Masterman's view, it is fundamental to media study that it penetrate this 'illusionism' and engage with the artefact as a product of the 'dominant conventions of illusionism and realism supplied by the media' (ie. the 'Rhetoric' of the media, paraphrased above).

Each one of these techniques is concerned to present a version of reality which will be taken for reality itself, in other words as unarguable evidence of the way things are, were and - on occasion - will be. In other words, they aim to create an illusion of reality. A knowledge of these techniques might help students of all ages to become much more critically aware of how the media make meaning, and how this version of events, whether purporting to be fact or fiction, is ONE version of reality selected from the many possible.

This issue of selection and re-presentation of reality is fundamental to any discussion of what it is should constitute the core concepts of media studies. It is fundamental because it focuses on that point in the communication 'chain of events' which is unarguably the raison d'etre for communication in the first place: that point where the audience experience the impact of the artefact. Thus it may be said that the related concepts of 'realism', and 'illusionism' are central to media studies, though as will be shown later, this is not a concern with philosophic reflection on the nature of these concepts per se, but with the issue of how it is they are constructed by the media, and how it is that these constructions are, in Masterman's words, "actively concealed from the public" (ibid.).

To conclude, treatment of this core concept of Realism will cover a wide range of other core and subsidiary concepts. For example, in the course of this short delineation, the following concepts were touched on:

selection
representation
transparency
professional ideology
bias
rhetoric
illusionism
convention
artefact
narrative
audience
discourse

(NB: Brief delineations of those concepts considered as 'subsidiary' are given in the 'General Syllabus' suggested in appendix V)

Representation

It is clear from the foregoing discussion that the investigation of 'realism' is an area of study fundamental to media studies. It is clear also that the focus of investigation will not be on a philosophic analysis of 'the concept of reality' per se, but on the way in which one particular 'reality' out of several possible 'realities' can come to be presented by media to an audience, and in such a way as to exclude other realities and give the impression that there are no other realities. In other words, it is to be an investigation of the re-presentation and construction of the world by the media:

> **"The media construct and re-present the world for us, and so our understanding of the real world is almost equivalent to our understanding of how it has been and is re-presented to us, whether by the languages of our schooling, of our everyday experience, or of the media. In studying the media, then, we are learning about the ways in which the real world has been mediated, about how our understanding and knowledge have been constructed." (Alvarado et al, op.cit., p.117).**

This focus in media studies on 'the re-presentation of particular versions of reality' we may call 'representation' and by this term will mean the act of presenting a reality within a set of images, the construction of these sets of images and the way these sets of images themselves act as constructing agents. With regard to the actual text (ie., the set of images), this will entail analysis of what

Masterman terms the 'rhetorical techniques' (listed in 'Realism' above) inherent in its construction and which enable it to act also as a constructing agent.

At this point, discussion of 'Representation' as a core concept begins to move into terrain already covered in the discussion of 'Realism' above. This is a natural result of the affinity of the two concepts and, because this chapter not an exercise in hairsplitting but an attempt to delineate these core concepts as a guide to teaching media studies, the matter will not be pursued further. It will be sufficient to observe is how this concept of 'Representation' includes many others. The broader context of the media artefact as 'product', for example, would inevitably entail an analysis of the context of its production, its exhibition, and circulation, and the ramifications of this for 'repesentation'. Here again, it becomes impossible to go further without touching on another core concept: 'ideology'.

The concept of 'Representation' could be said therefore to cover much of the terrain of 'Realism', but with a sharper focus on particular media techniques which provide concrete examples of the process of 're-presentation' and which come under close scrutiny within the concepts of 'Narrative' and 'Genre'.

To conclude, treatment of this core concept of Representation will cover a wide range of other core and

subsidiary concepts. For example, in the course of this short delineation, the following concepts were touched on:

reality/realities
construction
rhetorical techniques
ideology
narrative
genre

Ideology

The concept of 'ideology' assumes a primary importance in any 'political' approach to media education, as was outlined in chapter four. However, it is difficult to see how ANY approach could avoid treating the media as 'providers of ideas', and it could be said that from this it is only a short step into the dimensions of 'ideology'.

Alvarado et al, for instance, are quite clear that this provision of ideas is central to media activity:

> **'There is no single social group possessing true consciousness or knowledge, rather there is a constant struggle for the dominance of some meanings over others. Dominant meanings will certainly seem most natural to those for whom maintenance of the status quo is a top priority, but that very maintenance will also depend, in our view, on the relations of dominance being accepted as apparently natural by those socially and economically subordinated." (op.cit., p.5).**

Not everyone would agree completely with this analysis of the naturalism or otherwise of certain social practices, but the central point would be conceded by most media teachers: the media are not 'mirrors'. They are not 'transparent' or 'neutral' in their representations of society. Rather are

they the purveyers of 'dominant' or 'preferred' meanings which tend to exclude other viewponts.

For Alvarado the teaching of 'institutions' is a fruitful way into this notoriously nebulous concept. 'Institution' as a term (they write)

> **'has come to be understood as ...an embracing term... which indicates [how] a text, or set of texts, can be contextualised, whether that is (a) how it generates or partially composes an ideological currency; (b) how it comes to construct an audience; (c) how it operates its own terms of address, [and] its own terms of reference" (ibid., p.50-51).**

Furthermore, they offer to the media teacher a number of headings useful for particular case studies: 'Production practices', 'Finance', 'Technology', 'Legislative/Social factors', 'Circulation', 'Audience construction', 'Audience use' (ibid.).

The mention of 'institutions' immediately raises the question of who it is OWNS these institutions. The connection between ownership and the ideological 'functions' of the media should need no elaboration. The increasingly 'controlled' nature of their activities (for instance, the recent accumulations of power in the hands of, among others, Rupert Murdoch and Robert Maxwell) is seen by media writers as a development of the first importance and one that is worthy of study. It is

> **"of prime importance for students and teachers to know and learn about the complex of elements - economic, technological, institutional, legal, political, cultural, aesthetic - which constitute the production processes of films and television programmes... <u>how</u> such artefacts produce meaning, <u>how</u> people and issues**

> **are represented, and <u>how</u> audiences are constructed and constituted" (ibid., p.2, original emphasis).**

As far as Masterman is concerned, the concept of ideology 'stands like a Colossus over the field of media education'. His extensive treatment (Masterman 1985: 187-214) of this concept contains much that will be invaluable to the media teacher, particularly his analysis of the

> **"two dominant, yet apparently contradictory uses of ideology, (a) as the explicitly political, and (b) the common-sensed, unconscious, and unrecognised" (ibid., p.189).**

These two 'uses' should be familiar to the Irish Media Studies teacher, in the widespread identification in the Republic of 'ideology' with 'politics' and 'political parties' (ie., the 'explicitly political'), to the exclusion of other applications of the term.

To conclude, treatment of this core concept of Ideology will cover a wide range of other core and subsidiary concepts. In the course of this short delineation, the following were touched on:
dominant/preferred meaning
representation
audience construction
naturalism
media ownership
meaning construction

<u>Audience</u>

There has been so much discussion in this dissertation so far on the concept of 'audience' that there remain little

doubt that it is concept quite central to the study of the media.

At the risk of wild over-simplification, it could be said that it is at the point where the media artefact is received by the audience that every other concept considered in this chapter 'comes into play'. What, after all, is the purpose of an ideologically charged 'preferred meaning' unless there is someone, or a group of someones, to prefer it? That is to say, whereas the media may be regarded as constructing agents for various 'realisms', once an audience begins its work of reading the artefact (in however 'illiterate' a way) these 'realisms' undergo interpretive change. The nature and extent of this change depends on a number of important social, human and environmental factors, such as gender, age, race, class (Alvarado et al 1987), but it is, nevertheless 'change'. The audience is, therefore, certainly a significant (albeit not the final) arbiter of meaning.

It has been argued above that 'representation' is a core concept of media studies, involving the analysis of several key concepts grouped around the 'rhetorical techniques' employed in the construction of a reality. Here, it is argued that 'audience' is a core concept for media studies, involving the analysis of several key concepts grouped around the potential of that audience to 'deconstruct' a media artefact. This conception of audience potential is radically different from some of the 'hypodermic' theories discussed in chapter two, and - it might be said - from some

contemporary Irish views of media influence as evidenced in the Republic's legal curbs on broadcasting.

The concept of the audience as an active participant in the creation of meaning is explained clearly in the work of Morley (1980), who maintained (1) that certain production practices tend to produce certain messages; (2) that messages propose and prefer certain readings over others, but can never become wholly closed around one reading; (3) that the activity of 'getting meaning' from the message is a problematic practice, however transparent and 'natural' it may seem (ibid., p.10).

In short,

> **"messages encoded one way can always be read in a different way... ...the message is treated neither as a unilateral sign... nor, as in 'uses and gratifications', as a disparate sign which can be read any way... [but] as a complex sign, in which a preferred meaning has been inscribed, but which retains the potential... of communicating a different meaning" (ibid.).**

And, in a passage which has direct relevance to the methodology of the media studies classroom, Morley writes that

> **"when analysis shifts to the 'moment' of the encoded message itself, the communicative form and structure can be analysed in terms of what is the preferred reading; what are the mechanisms which prefer one, dominant reading over other readings; what are the means which the encoder uses to try to 'win the assent of the audience' to his/her preferred reading of the message? Special attention can be given here to the control exercised over meaning and to the 'points of identification' within the message which transmit the preferred reading to the audience" (ibid.).**

These 'mechanisms', therefore, require analysis as much as do the 'practices' within which they operate (see Neale below on 'Genre') if their construction and operation are to be understood. Analysis is also required if their deconstruction by an audience is to be understood. Morley's investigations explored how a complex of meanings clustered together as one received signal (that 'moment of the encoded message') was deconstructed by its audience.

To conclude, treatment of this core concept of Audience will cover a wide range of other core and subsidiary concepts. In the course of this short delineation, the following were touched on:

media artefact
ideology
preferred meaning
realism
representation
deconstruction
rhetorical technique
encoding

Narrative

Media re-presentation of events has already been discussed under the headings of 'Realism' and 'Representation'. For Masterman, this was a matter of the operation of 'rhetorical techniques' employed by the media, one of which was 'narrative'. What he meant by 'narrative' would not coincide exactly with what an English teacher might mean. For the latter, 'narrative' is often more or less synonomous with 'the telling of a story',in the sense intended, for example, by Somerset Maugham in introducing one of his short stories:

"...It was for this reason that on the occasion with which this narrative deals..." (Maugham 1948: 4 - 'Three Fat Women of Antibes').

In this sense, 'narrative' has only the neutral function of acting as a carrier or container for 'the story'. For media theorists, narrative has a much wider meaning. Barthes wrote that

> **"...narrative is international, transhistorical, transcultural: it is simply there, like life itself" (quoted in Alvarado et al, op.cit., p. 119)**

thus underlining the difficulties of its analysis. Then, too, a narrative may last

> **"from a few seconds (a news story or advertisement) to perhaps 25 years (Coronation Street began in 1960) or even several lifetimes (the story of the Royal Family)" (Masterman 1985:175).**

Furthermore, narrative, because of its ubiquity,

"...seems quite natural, 'given'" (Alvarado et al, p.122).

Notwithstanding these difficulties, narrative is a concept that must be explored within media studies because, besides being ubiquitous and 'natural', it also

> **"orders and constructs our knowledge of the world while at the same time suppressing the possible knowledge of how that knowledge is produced" (loc.cit.).**

Masterman considers it one of the media's 'dominant techniques' and gave reasons (ibid.) why media texts should be considered as narratives, the most important of which, he maintained, was the way

> **"narrative study raises in an unenforced way, the central concern of media education: the 'constructedness' of what are frequently portrayed as natural ways of representing experience" (ibid.).**

In short, narrative is crucial to any definition of

> **"those processes whereby those meanings are produced and whereby our understanding of those meanings is made possible." (Alvarado et al, p.120).**

These writers maintain that narrative provides the context for re-presentation, and that, far from being a subsidiary concept in a list of 'rhetorical techniques', it is in fact important as the organiser of these techniques.

It is a short step from raising the 'constructedness' of the media artefact to the interrogation of it practices, mechanisms and techniques. So it is that it may be said that 'narrative' is a core concept, not so much because of the principle that it includes a number of other significant concepts but because, like genre, it acts as an introduction to those concepts considered by Masterman in an earlier work (1980:12) to be 'subsidiary': "such as genre, iconography and coding".

This 'constructing' function of narration is compared to the power of the camera over viewers:

> **"We can only see what the camera allows us to see. Not only does the sealing edit prevent our look from venturing between the cuts, but our conference of vision with the camera ensures our blindness as to possible narratives taking place off screen, beyond the frame. As spectators, then, we are subjects of the camera's authoritative gaze".(ibid., p.130).**

The implication of this view seems to be that whereas camera codes, camera positions, set-ups, and other activities associated with camerawork all deserve study, yet it is the camera lens which is the deciding factor for any viewer. In the same way, narrative could be considered the deciding factor in the way reality is presented to and received by an audience:

> **"Narration marks processes of selection and organisation which structure and order the material narrated so that it can become invested with significance and meaning" (Alvarado et al, p.120).**

Inevitably, too, these processes have effects for the way the narrative is able to deal with subject matter of the film the documentary, the newscast, or whatever. Hill supplies a detailed analysis of this problem (Hill 1986: 55) concluding that "the need for some sort of narrative resolution" often leads to the adoption of "socially conservative endings". Exploration of this aspect of Narration should raise issues relating to Narrative's 'ideological' dimensions.

Narrative, therefore, may be considered a core concept of media studies because it is a complex area of study in itself, and is a 'gateway' to other core and subsidiary concepts, particularly those relating to technique. Some which have been raised in the course of this brief delineation are:
construction
meaning construction
representation

genre
iconography
coding
selection
ideology

Genre

Although it could be said that 'genre' is just one more construction mechanism - one more formula through which the artefact is constructed - writers such as Stephen Neale have shown how superficial such a view can be. The arguments advanced by Morley and Masterman for the necessity of a detailed analysis of the various mechanisms and practices employed by media artefacts in the conveyance of meaning are brought to their logical, and very revealing, conclusion by Neale with respect to 'genre'. So much so, that this concept now assumes great importance in media studies, not alone for its overt function as a 'construction mechanism' which facilitates communication, but also for its complex social, aesthetic and economic aspects.

Analysis of genre simply at the level of its being a 'construction mechanism' is important because the genre style (ie., the choice of mechanisms and practices) influences the operation of the 'communication chain' (Morley's phrase) and the nature of the artefact.

> **'All genres operate a conjunction of... drives and structures ...[and] a number of genre do involve quite specific structural combinations...' (Neale, op.cit., p.42).**

A study of 'genre', therefore, raises the 'constructedness' of the media artefact, and so prepares the way for its

interrogation. For this function alone, 'genre' - like 'Narrative' deserves to be considered a 'core concept' within media studies.

There is also the social aspect of film:

> **"The cinema is not simply an industry or a set of individual texts. Above all, it is a social institution" (op.cit., p.19).**

This 'social aspect' is not, of course, confined to film, and there is little difficulty in the wholesale transference of Neale's views to media studies generally. Given this dimension, it is not enough to recognise and teach genre mechanism and practices and their effects on the structure of the artefact. It is also necessary to locate them within the social formation as a whole, ie.,

> **"...to link a number of the features of the economic structures and practices involved to capitalist economic practices and structures in general" (ibid., p.14).**

This is an important formulation of the 'ideological' dimension of film, echoing Morley's observations on the political aspect of media practices, and is relevant to the whole area of media education generally, and for the same reasons., viz., the subtle functioning of the mass-media as conveyers of 'definitions of the order of things'. According to Neale,

> **'Genre are not the product of economic factors as such... however, genre itself, as a framework for production, and as a form of organisation of the product, clearly has a relationship to such factors and is clearly, in part at least, determined by them. The effects of that relationship can be traced especially in the functioning of genre vis-a-vis the exigencies of**

> **the necessity for profit, on the one hand, and vis-a-vis the contradictions engendered at the level of production by the fact that films are artistic commodities...on the other'. (ibid., p.52).**

In short, although it is true that

> **'All genres operate a conjunction of... drives and structures ... [and] a number of genre do involve quite specific structural combinations...' (ibid., p.42),**

it is not enough to recognise and teach genre mechanisms and practices and their effects on the structure the artefact. Also not enough are 'genre identification' exercises (Alvarado et al 1987:57) recommended as a means of 'introducing' the pupil to this or that aspect of media study. Thus, although as maintained in chapter three, 'genre' (and 'narrative') is most certainly a concepts of 'media operation' and can therefore lead towards a fuller understanding of media power, yet it is also a discrete areas of study in itself especially - as indicated above - with regard to it ideological dimension, and therefore merits full scale enquiry as a 'core' concept.

Core and Subsidiary Concepts: Tabulation

As a result of the discussions of this chapter, it is now possible to offer the media studies teacher a tabulation of the concepts considered by media theorists as central to media education.

This dissertation argues that there are a number of concepts which, when discussed, tend to touch on or include discussion of a number of others. Furthermore, these 'inclusive' concepts tend to relate to questions of media power and influence. Chapter three has argued that it is this power and influence of the media which is the principal justification for media study and it this argument, together with their wide 'inclusive' range that qualifies certain concepts as concepts central to the study of the media. These 'core' concepts are those listed, and delineated in this chapter, viz., **Realism, Representation, Ideology, and Audience.**

There are also a range of other concepts which are less important than those listed above only in the sense that the justification for their study is dependent upon the ramifications of those above. That is to say, it could be argued that there is little point in studying them unless the study is carried on within the context set by the four listed above, ie., within the context of the 'power and influnce' of the media and the questions it raises for individuals and societies. This range of 'subsidiary concepts' tends to relate to methods/ processes of media operations and techniques, described previously in this chapter as 'the nuts and bolts' of meaning construction.

It is argued here, then, that there are 'core concepts' and 'subsidiary concepts' for study within media education. It is **NOT** argued that there is a

sharp dividing line between each 'core' concept or between 'core' and 'subsidiary' concepts. In fact, as pointed out previously in this chapter, two of the so-called 'subsidiary' concepts ('Narrative' and 'Genre') are so inclusive in their range of discussion that theorists would see them as cetral to media education, even though they are - almost by definition - concepts which relate to media operation and technique. It is for this reason that they are tabulated here as 'core' concepts.

Finally, because of its nature as a 'core' of study - and therefore by definition central to media education - the list of 'core' concepts given here should underpin any course which would pursue the aims of 'media studies'. The list of 'subsidiary' concepts, on the other hand, merely reflects one practitioner's view (ie., Masterman's) and his methodology. It is likely that his nomenclature and emphasis would be mirrored in many other approaches, but this need not not be necessarily so. Whether or not a teacher sees 'participation/ access/ control' as one concept or three concepts, or whether he or she teaches it/ them under a different name, or considers it part of the teaching of 'audience', is not important. There will be little confusion or difference among media teachers and learners if the core concepts - the 'sine qua non' - are kept firmly in mind.

Core Concepts	Subsidiary Concepts
	(Delineations and descriptive of each of these core and subsidiary concepts are given in appendix V)
Realism	selection
Representation	illusionism
Ideology	convention
Audience	transparency
Narrative	artefact
Genre	professional ideology
	bias/predudice
	discourse
	dominant/preferred meaning
	audience construction
	audience positioning
	audience segmentation
	media ownership
	meaning construction
	construction
	non-verbal communication
	denotation and connotation
	myth
	distribution
	mediation
	pleasure
	sign/signification
	signifier/signified
	participation/access/control
	rhetoric
	naturalism
	coding/encoding
	iconography
	anchorage

Chapter Six

THE IRISH SECOND-LEVEL CURRICULUM

Chapter Six: THE IRISH SECOND-LEVEL CURRICULUM

General Remarks

What should or should not be included in a school curriculum is a perennial question. Every so often arguments are advanced for the addition of new content, while some content already prescribed is condemned as being out of keeping with the sort of education which a society of the late twentieth century should provide for its citizens.

In the Republic of Ireland, the setting up of the Curriculum and Examinations Board in 1984 signalled the start of a new phase in the public debate on what should and should not constitute the curriculum at second-level. Arguments were advanced immediately for the inclusion of a wide range of 'new' areas which had in the past received scant treatment at the margin of the school timetable, or indeed no treatment at all. Prominent among the candidates for inclusion within a broader and more up-to-date curriculum was media studies, and there were no shortage of cogent arguments made on its behalf. These ranged from the detailed submissions to the Board from the Irish Film Institute regarding media education in general:

> **"Media Education helps to develop skills and knowledge necessary to understand the ways in which the media influence our perception of the world about us..." (see Appendix IV),**

to the more informal, but equally valid observations of the RTE Director General on the teaching of Television Studies:

> **"Media Studies can provide an opportunity for dialogue with television output which is necessary if we are to provide a public service through an exploration of background detail and cultural reference points. Moreover, through media studies young people can begin to examine to what degree TV <u>does</u> inform, or educate, or entertain" (TV Finn, CDVEC News No. 6).**

An elaboration of these, and other, positions will be found in chapter three. There, the case for including 'Media Studies' within a formal curriculum at second-level was made on grounds provided by Curriculum Theory, and the intrinsic educational merits of the area itself. However, as was pointed out in that chapter, 'real-world' curriculum development rarely presents a scenario for 'tidy' argument. In other words, convincing arguments on theoretical grounds, and on the grounds that the area itself is indeed a study area valuable at second-level, leave still a number of important questions which must be answered before the case for media education may be considered well and truly made.

For instance, how will the inclusion of new content affect the existing curriculum? Will there be contradictions, or overlap, or a lack of continuity and cohesiveness between 'new' and 'old' content? In other words, is there any way of including new content

while preserving the integrity and consistency of the existing curriculum? Is it possible to avoid the dangers of a curriculum development by accretion, which could lead to a haphazard and ill-defined course of studies lacking an overall design and direction? And, whereas the criteria established by curriculum theory, and the detailed analysis of the area itself undertaken in chapter three have established Media Studies as a candidate for inclusion, only an analysis of the Irish second-level curriculum itself can establish whether that curriculum can facilitate such inclusion, and indicate areas which might best absorb and be enriched by such an inclusion.

The purpose of this chapter is, therefore, to carry out a brief analysis of the Irish second-level curriculum in order to clarify the educational philosophy that informs it and gives it its 'general thrust'. This analysis should make it easier to advance a rationale for Media Education as a valuable area of study, firstly as an area which is consistent with the aims and objectives of the existing Irish second level curriculum; and which, secondly possesses some attributes not at present strongly represented within that curriculum, attributes which - furthermore - would be of benefit to the learner.

The underlying educational philosophy and general thrust of the second-Level curriculum of the Irish Republic

The term 'educational philosophy' is here taken to mean any particular standpoint which arises from an analysis of education and its aims. Such philosophical reflection is necessary "so that we have an adequate and consciously-held view about what we are trying to do, about the nature of the enterprise in which we are engaging" (Wilson 1977:6). By 'general thrust' is meant the direction and purpose which a curriculum derives from its underlying 'educational philosophy', and from the assumptions and postulates which lend it its general tenor and delineate its general goals.

The close relationship between a curriculum's underlying educational philosophy, assumptions and postulates, and its general thrust has been outlined by Saunders and Beauchamp (Neagley and Evans 1967:16-17). These writers provide a theoretical basis for what seems in itself an obvious proposition, viz., that the philosophical assumptions and postulates which underlie the existing curriculum are of primary importance in assessing the general thrust and goals of that curriculum.

The practical implications of this for curriculum decision-making are that this underlying philosophy provides the context within which arguments for new content must be judged in the first instance. That is to say, - quite apart from argument on grounds of curriculum theory and on grounds supplied by the area itself (ie., the ground covered by chapter three) - any content out of keeping with the initial philosophical standpoint and aims of the existing curriculum is unlikely to be included. In fact, in the interests of

curriculum consistency and continuity, that is to say in the interests of the learner's 'whole' development, it could be said that it ought not be included.

This problem of curriculum content inclusion is no mere 'academic question' in the Irish Republic. Controversy over the general thrust of the second-level curriculum is a weekly occurrence, as representatives of particular interest groups make their views known. Two of these - representative of two curriculum bases which will, in the course of this chapter be termed 'Christian Humanism' and 'Economic Pragmatism' - are perhaps the most frequent voices to be heard. In the week commencing May 1st 1989, for instance, and following the announcement by the Department of Education of new courses in science and technology, the Archbishop of Dublin warned

> **"...that children must not be educated merely to meet the demands of a technological society or just as contributors to the Gross National Product...Increased attention to science and technology must not lead to a neglect of philosophy, history, literature and art" (Irish Times, 1/5/1989).**

In the same news report, the chairman of the Secretariat of Secondary Schools maintained that

> **"... the fact that no educational philosophy has been offered to the schools as a basis for the new courses is most disappointing...",** and he added that the new courses were worked out **"without any serious attempt being made to design an integrated curriculum" (ibid.).**

Within the week, the country's educational system was denounced "as a barrier to enterprise" by the Director of

the Plessey Student Enterprise Centre, NIHE Limerick, who maintained that

> **"enterprise cannot flourish in a culture that views business with suspicion... Equally, the concept of profit is uncomfortable, as we wish to defer reward to the next..." (Sunday Press, 7/5/1989).** Declaring that this attitude must change, the Director maintained that **"the agents of that change are government, business itself, educators, and the media working together to create a favourable environment which would be seen as desirable by potential entrepeneurs" (ibid.).**

While it may be said that areas of common ground could be found within the positions illustrated above, it could equally be said that they represent widely differing philosophical perspectives on the nature of society and education.

The bases of the Irish second-level curriculum and the potential contribution of media education

Although there exists no comprehensive single statement of the educational philosophy which underlies the present second-level curriculum in the Irish Republic, the general thrust, assumptions and postulates of that curriculum are apparent in the statements of the many commissions, boards and committees which have been set up by, and have reported back to, the Minister for Education on curriculum matters since the foundation of the state.

These reports show that the curriculum at second-level derives much of its general thrust from two bases rooted in historical developments stretching back to, and beyond, the

foundation of the state, and from one of more recent historical origin. These three bases - termed here respectively as Christian Humanism, Nationalism and Economic Pragmatism - will now be considered in turn and their general implications for the process of new-content inclusion, most particularly the inclusion of Media Education, should become apparent.

Christian Humanism

Any underestimation of the influence of Roman Catholicism on the Irish second-level curriculum would be tantamount to misunderstanding almost the entire enterprise of second-level education in the Republic. Most second-level schools are owned and administered by religious orders. Figures for 1980-81 show Religious-owned second-level schools numbered 524, with 200,872 pupils, while other types of schools numbered 294, with 96,061 pupils (Dunleavy:1982).

There has been little change since. Furthermore, in those schools not directly administered by the Religious Orders, Religious interests are often represented at the highest managerial level. In the case of the 'Community' Schools (first established in 1974) this representation is a legal requirement written into their Deeds of Trust (ie., 'articles of management'). It is also the case that, in this type of school - the various teaching religious orders have a number of 'reserved posts' which they may fill at their discretion. These factors, and the many more that could be

adduced, demonstrate clearly the power and influence of one particular sect of Christianity on the the management of the second-level schooling in the Republic. There are of course a number of other sects - mainly what is termed 'Protestant', which also own schools and exert their influence, but it can be said that it is Roman Catholicism which is by far the dominant version of Christianity within the system.

It is often maintained that the various Religious Orders render the State the incalculable advantage of a dedicated, well-qualified workforce of teachers who are prepared to work far above and beyond considerations of salary and/or conditions of service. This has often been the case, but in return these Orders have received enormous powers within the system. It should be observed too that these powers pertaining to administration, the creation of a particular 'ethos', and decisions as to the programme of studies, could be said to be 'safeguarded' for the foreseeable future. In the words of one commentator,

> **'The private ownership of all secondary-schools [ie., excluding 'Vocational', 'Community', & etc.] is also a limiting factor in the choice of curriculum, partly because the State is unwilling to enforce the inclusion of any subject...' (McElligot 1966:76).**

In the context of arguing for the inclusion of 'new subject matter' in the second-level curriculum, therefore, it could be said that this dominance of a 'christian ethos' is one of the most important factors of all to bear in mind.

This 'institutional presence' of Roman Catholic Christianity within the system, and its influence on the 'ethos' of that system, dates from the foundation of the State. Coolahan (1981:73) points out that the constitution of 1937 formally recognised the role of the state as subsidiary to 'private and corporate initiative'. The Stat had then, in 1937 - and, according to Coolahan had in 1981 - apparently 'no ideological objection to greater public funding of privately-run denominational Secondary Schools' (loc.cit.). This position continues largely unchanged now in 1990. Furthermore, statements made by Department officials and spokespersons over the years demonstrate how much a 'religious' ethos accords with the State's conception of curriculum. Thus for example, the Minister for Education setting the terms of reference of the 1950 Council on Education:

> **"...in its relation with the individual, the family and religion, the state approach to education in the Irish Republic is one which unreservedly accepts the supernatural conception of man's nature and destiny. It accepts that the proper subject of education is man whole and entire, soul united to body in unity of nature, with all his faculties, natural and supernatural, such as right reason and revelation show him to be. It accepts that the foundation and crown of Youth's entire training is religion" (ibid.).**

The fact that 'religious education' is not a subject prescribed for study and examination by the Department of Education is often taken as an indication that Irish second-level education is aloof from denominational influences.

With regard to public examination and certification this is the case. However, the setting and marking of examination papers, and the awarding of grades is, despite all the yearly commotion, only a small part of the educational endeavour. Again, in countering suggestions that RE is, after all, just another subject among many, some regard must be had to the 'permeation' of the system by a Christian ethos. Some writers (eg. Barnes 1985:169) would hold that a 'hidden curriculum' (ie., learning which takes place outside and alonside the 'official' curriculum) is much more influential than one which appears printed on a learner's timetable. That this 'hidden curriculum is permeated by the Christian ethos within the Irish second-level system seems unarguable. Furthermore, while it is true that Religious Education is not a Public Examination subject, it must be remembered that it is virtually compulsory in most schools, given that the onus is on parents to request their child's exemption from Religious instruction. It is not hard to imagine the reluctance of the average parent to take such a course of action.

The recommendations of the Council referred to above did not appear until 1962 and were summarised by the educational historian Coolahan as follows:

> **"...[the Council] identified the dominant purpose of the schools as the inculcation of religious ideals and values. The report identified the prevailing curriculum as 'the grammar-school type, synonomous with general and humanist education' and it endorsed this type of curriculum; science was not made an essential subject for school recognition" (op.cit., p.81).**

Given that in the Republic of Ireland 'religion' rarely means anything other than Christianity, and then almost always Roman Catholicism, it seems clear that far as the Council was concerned, the most important basis of the second-level curriculum is the Roman Catholic version of Christianity, and that, furthermore, this is an educational philosophy which meets with the approval of the State.

There is, however, another influential philosophy present as an force behind the general thrust of the second-level curriculum and which, although sharing much of the Christian ethos, is yet quite a distinct influence. This will be termed here as the 'Humanist' base.

This Humanism may be seen to exist side-by-side with the Christian in the 1950 Council's terms of reference, which were being set out at a time when there were deep suspicions engendered by the events of the recent World War and its widespread destruction of human life and civilisation. These suspicions were voiced in the Minister's speech already quoted:

> **"In the world of today, advance in knowledge has led to endless destruction and misery... with the prospect that greater physical power shall be evoked from nature and may be used for still greater destruction and lead to still greater strife..." (Minister's address to the Council of Education 1950, op.cit.).**

This Humanist basis, which shares much of the Christian conception of the dignity of man, may also be seen in the Irish Republic's espousal of neutrality since its foundation, and its continuing absence from participation in

the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation. There is no doubt that this stance has not had universal approval from its citizens, especially during the second world war. There is no doubt too that it is a stance which is something of an anomaly in terms of the European Community's avowed aim of a united European defence policy. Nevertheless, it seems to be a political stance most favoured by most people and would seem to be, in part at least, attributable to the 'humanist' philosophy which exists at the base of Irish life and which forms an important influence on the educational philosophy which underlies its formal schooling curriculum.

Thus it may be said that two formative influences on the educational philosophy of the Irish second-level curriculum are Christianity and Humanism, the one stressing Man's spiritual needs and his ultimate eternal fate, and the other - sharing much with this - stressing what might be termed a secular altruism which places the value of human life above other considerations. Together, as Christian Humanism, they may be said to be united in a concern for the dignity of Man and the moral dimension of his being. Certainly, they together form a base from which the curriculum derives much of its general thrust.

Christian Humanism and media education

It should be clear from the discussion above that the curriculum base described as Christian Humanism must be addressed by advocates of 'new' content in any submission

which hopes for serious consideration by the Irish educational authorities. It is a viewpoint which may be said to be deeply conservative of values long-held by Irish society and actively nurtured by successive governments since the foundation of the state. It is also a viewpoint somewhat hostile to 'new developments' in science and technology, both because these developments may 'de-emphasise' those studies long associated with broad educational goals ('philosophy, literature, history and art'), and because of a suspicion that these developments may be used for purposes far removed from human advancement. Arguments will - on the evidence presented above - be measured against a curriculum philosophy that views the learner as a spiritual being who strives to realise his/her potential in a world fraught with material dangers to his/her spirituality and humanity.

Therefore, allowing for the fact that all three bases may be said to be concerned in some way with the personal development of the learner, it may be said that this particular base is pre-eminently concerned with such development as an end in itself and not as a by-product of the acquisition of a particular and identifiable 'skill'. Furthermore, it may be said that this base is concerned with the moral development of the learner rather more than the other bases. As such, <u>this curriculum base poses, at one and the same time, possibilities and problems for media education as a contributor to the personal and moral development of the learner</u>.

'Personal Development' is described by a 1980 DES/HMI report ('A View of the Curriculum') as

> **'the process of enabling a person to meet the basic intellectual and social demands of adult life and helping him/her to form an acceptable set of personal values'.**

This is, in other words, the process whereby the learner develops into 'a particular type of person' (Pring 1984:20) and acquires personal values, ie., "that particular 'mix' which makes a person unique" (loc.cit.). Qualities which should be fostered and/or influenced in the process of this development are held to include:

- Intellectual virtues (eg., 'a concern for getting at the truth');
- Moral virtues ('modesty', 'kindness', 'patience', 'generosity');
- Character traits (those of the 'will', eg., perseverance, courage);
- Social competence (coping within social situations, milieux)...
(For complete list, see Pring, loc.cit.).

As will be noted, the 'moral virtues' are here included among qualities important in personal development. This inclusion supports what would appear to be a self-evident proposition; that personal development is inclusive of moral development. Any area of study, therefore, which could be said to be conducive of personal development may also be regarded as conducive of moral development - a concern

central to the Christian Humanism base within the Irish second-level curriculum as outlined above.

It could be argued that there is, necessarily, no 'moral dimension' to media education, and indeed many teachers would reject the claim that such teaching could - or should - occur outside RE. It is certainly true that a conception of media studies as a vehicle for moral development is not one which is usual at present within the second-level system, with the exception RE, where, as has been pointed out in chapter one, such studies have been apart of classroom activity for many years, though 'framed' within the norms of a particular christian ideology. However, there are cogent arguments (see for example Barnes 1985: 170) to the effect that learners acquire much of their social learning and socio-moral habits from their experiences of school life in all areas of the curriculum, irrespective of 'subject' divisions. That is to say, as mentioned above, it is maintained there is always an omnipresent and ubiquitous 'hidden curriculum' where children learn

> **"...over and above the official curriculum about how to cope with school, how to avoid a question when you do not know the answer, what constitutes being a good pupil, how far you can risk giving your real opinion, how you get round rules without being caught..." (ibid., p.169).**

This is to argue that there are aspects of moral learning to all subjects, whether the teacher intends them or not. Indeed it could be argued further that a denial of such

aspects is an abdication of responsibility on the part of the teacher.

> **"All parts of the curriculum, particularly humanities and social studies, are likely to contribute to our understanding of the social world in which our actions take effect. Some subjects, such as literature, would lay claim to throw particular light upon other people's viewpoints. These aspects of moral education are unlikely to create controversy" (ibid., p.162).**

Media Studies, it could be argued, being concerned at least in part with the nature of society and social formation (and most certainly with an analysis of 'other people's viewpoints'), could share in this contribution and its resulting benefits to learners in the area of moral development.

Quite apart from this general argument as to the moral development aspects of humanities and social studies, there is the research findings provided by writers such as Lawrence Kohlberg concerning the basis upon which children and adolescents make moral choices.

> **"Moral action is purposive, and rests on the ability to conceive of alternatives and to envisage their outcomes" (ibid., p.164-6).**

Kohlberg mapped six levels of moral judgement, of which one in particular would seem pertinent to discussion of the second-level learner, especially at senior cycle. This is the stage at which he found

> **"(particularly among college students) an ethical perspective based upon an 'outsider's' rejection of conventional good behaviour as a basis for morality. It is as if the young man or woman has perceived the limitations of a morality based upon a particular way of life, but has**

not yet found more general principles that can apply to different societies and different ways of life" (ibid., p.165).

The potential of all parts of the curriculum to help students towards the formation of these 'more general principles' has been outlined above. Kohlberg's work makes it clear that this potential is neither tenuous nor ambiguous. Social experience plays an important part in moral development, and - in the light of this - the several contexts of media education explored in chapter three, concerned as they are with the nature of this experience, and how it comes to be so constituted, would seem to have have an important role to play in this 'moral development'. Nor would this development depend, as in so many subjects, on 'issue-based' classroom discussion. The participative nature of 'production skills' learning, for example, would seem an ideal site for learning how much a subjection of personal ends to common endeavour is necessary if certain communal goals are to be met. And again, the several 'value areas' (ie., areas in which crucial 'moral sense' advancement takes place: 'Laws and Rules', 'Conscience', 'Authority'. & etc.,) as listed by Kohlberg (ibid., p.167) would seem bound to benefit from analytic work in the core concept areas outlined in chapter five (ie., Realism, Representation, Ideology, Audience, Narrative and Genre).

There is no doubt that the 'dialectic' initiated in the classroom by the study of these core concepts for the prevailing christian ethos of second-level schools. Central to the teaching of the media, as outlined in chapter five,

would be an analysis of the 'ideological' dimensions of representation and mediation. In Morley's phrase, media activity leads to an individual's 'definition of the order of thing's' (1980:8) and media studies would be expected to focus on an analysis of this most elusive and pervasive of media activities. It is difficult to think that this sharpening of the learner's 'critical intelligence' would not have implications for his perception of the Christian ethos which surrounds him/her in the everyday school environment of many of the Republic's second-level schools. That is to say, the Roman Catholic 'ethos' could well become a subject of investigation within a course of media studies, on grounds of its being 'ideological' in nature and function.

In this regard, it should be pointed out that there are several doctrinaire and 'canonical' positions within Roman Catholicism which might not facilitate such teaching approaches, particularly within a curriculum where an unquestioning 'respect for authority' and for 'Church teachings' has long been regarded as the hallmark of a good education. Indeed it could be said that 'lay' Catholic opinion also might not welcome such analytical activity, regarding it as an attempt 'to change the values, attitudes and beliefs of our school children...' (from a Letter to the Editor of 'The Sunday Press', 27.8.1989, on the Health Education/ Lifeskills programme promised in 'Programme for Action in Education 1984-1987').

Economic Pragmatism

What might be termed 'Economic Pragmatism' represents a curriculum base of comparatively recent historical origin and one which is quite different in educational philosophy from the Christian Humanism described above. This base may be said to encompass the practical concern of ensuring the State's economic viability and of answering the needs of its citizens in terms of vocational training and 'marketable' skills.

The Irish Free State inherited a 'rickety and run-down intermediate education machine' when it came to power in February 1922 (Coolahan, op.cit., p.73). In that year, too, a commission on education (set up in 1922) advised on changes which might make the second-level system less of the 'classical grammar-school type'. Notable among its recommendations was the granting of a more central place to 'manual instruction' within the curriculum. However, this was ignored by the Government and other recommendations more in line with the grammar-school 'humanist' tradition were adopted and were to form the basis of the Programme for Secondary Schools which came into operation in 1924. This implementation continued to exert great influence on curriculum at second-level for the next forty years, the 'Investment in Education' report commenting in 1962 that 'the curriculum in a great many schools is limited and is of a classical grammar-schools type' (p.78). It could be said that this type of curriculum is still, in 1989, a dominant

force, particularly within the publicly-funded, privately-run denominational schools.

This situation of a 'de-emphasis' of manual instruction and the more 'practical' aspects of learning within the Irish second-level system has been the object of numerous 'correctives' over the years. The most important, and most effective resulted from another government commission, appointed in 1924, 'to enquire into and advise upon the system of Technical Education in Saorstat Eireann [Irish Free State] in relation to the requirements of Trade and Industry' (McElligot, op.cit., 1966:104). This led to the Vocational Education Act of 1930 which in effect established a separate and distinct educational system alongside that already obtaining, with a new type of school and a new type of curriculum. This new curriculum emphasised a 'vocational' as distinct from a 'general' education and led to a new type of certificated examination.

Within this 'vocational' curriculum, the Act itself distinguished between 'continuation' and 'technical' education. Continuation Education was defined as

> **"education to continue and supplement education provided in elementary schools, and [including] general and practical training in preparation for employment in trades, manufactures, agriculture, commerce, and other industrial pursuits, and also general and practical training for the improvement of young persons in the early stages of employment" (ibid., p.105).**

From this description it may be seen that the Irish Act of 1930 anticipated much of the thrust of Prime Minister

Callaghan's arguments in 1970 in Britain regarding 'the needs of industry' (see chapters one and four).

A gradual merger of the two educational systems commenced in the late sixties with the establishment of the first 'comprehensive' schools. The 'continuation education' of the 'Vocational Schools' and the more 'grammar-school' education of the 'Secondary' schools are now provided together within the curriculum of many of these schools and in the 'community schools'. The concern for 'young persons in the early stages of employment' has found expression during the last decade in the many courses devised as 'pre-employment' and 'vocational preparation' in all these types of school.

It is this 'vocational' sector of the second-level curriculum that has shown the most change in recent years, taking under its wing a wide range of school-based pilot-schemes and innovative courses (Crooks, McKernan 1984:14-24). This mainly because it is to this dimension of the curriculum that successive governments have looked when faced with changes in the economic and social parameters. This pragmatic concern for the more 'worldly' aspects of educational provision was expressed clearly in the 1980 White Paper on Educational Development which spoke of 'the developing connections between Ireland and the other [European] Community countries in social, economic, and cultural affairs...'. In 1985, the Curriculum and Examinations Board Report on "Language in the Curriculum" spoke of 'Ireland's economic needs as a trading nation' in the context of the European market and the need for better

foreign language skills (p.5). These, and other frequent declarations of intent, declare the State's increasing concern that the 'vocational' aspect should be developed.

The extraordinary growth of the strength of this base since the early 1970s has been viewed with some unease by parties accustomed to lay much emphasis on the other two curriculum bases. While it is true that some of this unease is generated by a narrow conservatism, some would seem to be well grounded in a concern for the 'quality' of the 'education' offered by the base Some of these misgivings have already been dealt with in the section on the 'Skills' approach to Media Education in chapter three, and there is also the illustration offered at the beginning of this chapter regarding the Republic's continuing controversy over educational aims. Here it will suffice to note that, regarding the British experience of the growth of 'skills provision' in the 1980s, Alvarado et al (1987:32) view with some disquiet the way that

> **"the Manpower Services Commission,... lavishly funded by the Department of Employment, steadily colonised much of further education and also made inroads into the school curriculum through the Technical and Vocational Education Initiative..."(op.cit.).**

The potential imbalance within an Irish educational system resulting from the insertion of narrowly-based training courses into an essentially broad-based curriculum should also concern Irish educationalists.

In short, it may be said that the demands and exigencies imposed upon the Republic by its emergence as a modern

nation state within the European Community continues to strengthen a curriculum base first recognised by the 1930 Vocational Education Act. Much of this growing strength is derived from the high priority given by successive governments to the State's economic well-being and the need to make 'realistic' decisions in pursuit of that well-being. Thus, this base - concerned to turn out citizens who might further their own and their country's economic well-being by having 'useful' and 'marketable' skills - might well be described by a phrase redolent of the realpolitik of the cost-conscious 1980s, ie., 'Economic Pragmatism'.

Economic Pragmatism and Media Education

In view of the many 'Media Studies'/'Communication Studies'/ 'Communications' courses currently on offer at second-level within the 'vocational' area of school curricula, there should be no need to argue that media education has much to offer in the area of 'vocational skills' acquisition. Indeed the rapidity with which these courses were organised sometimes surprised educationalists accustomed to experiencing 'curriculum innovation' as a long and complex process. On the British experience, Blanchard (1985:2) remarks that such speed 'is not conducive to detailed and careful planning by the institutions involved'. As a general observation, this could also be said to be true for the Irish experience where it has often been the case that certain activities were carried out on a 'post-hoc ergo

propter hoc' basis. That is to say, courses were instituted based on the slimmest of rationales and syllabus guidelines and justified afterwards. It could be said that this kind of intuitive teaching is part of the process of the initial stages of any curriculum innovation, but the proliferation of media studies/communication studies courses within 'vocational' programmes in the Republic and their diversity as to rationale and content would indicate a lack of co-ordination, not to say basic planning.

Vocational Preparation Programmes, since their inception in the Republic in the mid-seventies have consisted of three main areas - personal development, work experience and technical knowledge - which, 'while expressed separately, are inter-related and interdependent' (Department Guidelines 1978:6).

Regarding 'personal development' (ie., '...giving young people an understanding of the values of adult life, and the resources to come to terms with adult reality...' loc.cit.), the possible contribution of media education within the Christian Humanist base has already been outlined and those arguments apply equally to vocationally oriented courses. The only refinement to suggest itself is that the activities/ discussions should be framed within contexts more immediately related to 'employment'. For example, the many everyday 'moral dilemmas' and difficulties of 'interpersonal relationships' to be found in the workplace can be usefully explored and there exists a wealth of teaching materials suited to such exploration.

Regarding 'work experience', since this is mainly an 'out-of- school' activity it will not be discussed here. However, much of the educational benefits of this activity will be lost unless the programme, mindful of the 'inter-relatedness' and 'interdependence' of the three areas advised by the Department, allows the learner classroom time to interrogate his/her experience and distinguish within it what is 'vocationally useful' (and what is not). In this regard, the analyses of work practices and production practices, which is so much a part of the rationale for media education in the first place (see chapter three, and also the discussions regarding 'concepts of technique' in chapter five), could significantly improve the learner's gains from work experience.

In the third area of 'technical knowledge', the emphasis is on

> **'practical work and on personal initiatives and standards in the completion of tasks assigned... [and students should have] the opportunity of working together on the completion of an assignment according to a planned schedule' (Dept. Guidelines, loc.cit.).**

These guidelines, as noted in chapter one and four, have led to the 'production module' of media studies, not always with sound educational gains for the learner. Nevertheless, there is much that is valuable in this approach, especially in the ease with which a 'skills inventory' made be written to parallel the activity, thereby making direction and assessment easier for teacher and learner. For example, the production of a rudimentary a magazine-style 'news and views' television programme in the classroom can be guided

by the teacher to cover a wide range of 'vocational skills acquisition' (camera handling, graphic lettering, interviewing techniques, etc.).

These 'other aspects' centre around the notion of 'interrogating' the media in order to render problematic, and therefore analysable, the practices taken for granted as 'natural'. Thus, to 'produce' a media artefact, such as a magazine programme, should be only the first stage of the media studies classwork. The second, and arguably the more important, stage is the interrogation of this work by the learners, and the focus on the decisions made en route (in selection, etc.) and the consequences of those decisions for the nature and quality of the resulting media artefact. Treatments of varying intensity may be made into the core concepts outlined in chapter five, but particularly perhaps in those more concerned with media artefact construction and deconstruction, especially Genre and Narrative.

This analytic activity may carried out with prerecorded off-air material, but the ideal material is the own-produced variety, where fruitful mistakes abound for analysis. There is too the advantage that learners are, in this method, involved in the analysis of both construction and deconstruction, a far more active experience that 'passively' analysing professionally produced material.

The potential contribution of media studies to furnish an 'integrated, practically-based course' (Blanchard, op.cit.,

p.9) should therefore be clear. In terms of the 'marketable skills' deemed valuable by the Department, a treatment of the core concept of Audience, and an analysis of the media as producers of artefacts (see chapter five) should serve to increase the learner's appreciation of 'the market economy' and his/her potential within it, in whatever capacity. Specific material relating to the Irish economy should further sharpen his/her appreciation of the 'open-economy' constraints of the Republic. This type of study could, therefore, enable the learner to become a useful contributor to within the Irish economy, rather than just a passive consumer.

Nationalism

To understand the importance of nationalism as a curriculum base in Irish education, it should be sufficient to recall that the curriculum and teaching programmes of the new self-declared Irish Free State ('Saor-State Eireann' 1922), were shaped against a background of political revolution and civil war - events which were themselves the outcome of centuries of political unrest and agitation against what the majority of the population regarded as an alien occupying power. The force of decisions made then - and later - concerning the propagation and transmission of a 'nationalist' ideology still remains a potent force within the Irish second-level curriculum.

Following a Dail (Irish Parliament) Commission on Education in 1924, a revision of the educational basis of the system

was effected (McElligot 1966:67). This involved fundamental changes in the general thrust of the primary and second-level system, most of which remain to this day. In summary, these changes may be seen as an attempt to correct a centuries-long process of 'cultural imperialism' by Britain, and amounted to an over-riding emphasis Gaelic culture and tradition. Study of the Irish Language became compulsory and a new emphasis on Irish history was introduced (O'Suilleabhain 1971:82ff).

This emphasis on Irish language and culture was to become the focal point for much of the subsequent development of the educational curriculum towards goals of national and cultural identity:

> **"To benefit by the past which is enshrined by [our] heritage, to ensure that our people will follow as closely as possible the line of growth and development that is native and natural to them, our young people must be given the opportunity to become acquainted with the thought, the philosophy, the belief and the achievements of their ances tors..." (Minister's address to the Council of Education, 1950, op.cit.).**

When the importance of Roman Catholicism as a political force within Irish Nationalism is considered, and the fact that the new self declared 'Saor-Stat' comprised only the twenty six predominantly 'Catholic' of the 32 Irish counties (the six 'Northern' and predominantly 'Protestant' counties refusing to form part of the Saor-Stat), it is fair to say that this 'thought, philosophy and belief' was consistent with the Christian Humanism already described in this chapter. In a sense both of

Christian Humanism and Nationalism, as curriculum bases, could be said to have been aiming for the same outcome, ie., the creation of an independent nation, Gaelic in language and culture, and Roman Catholic in religious persuasion. In short, a catholic country for a catholic people.

The Irish Language and the Nationalism it represents is still, in 1990, a powerful curriculum base in Irish education, although it is true that some of the more overweening aspects of this power have now disappeared. It is no longer the case that a pupil must achieve a required grade in Irish before receiving ANY certification in public examinations. Nevertheless, it is still the case that Irish is an essential subject in primary and second-level schools, and that a 'pass' in Irish is necessary for entry to the National University. Proficiency in Irish is also necessary for entry into the three levels of the teaching profession.

Several factors have been instrumental in a general 'weakening' nationalism as a curriculum base. One in particular would seem to be the gradual 'europeanisation' of the Republic which has gradually taken place since membership of the European Community in 1974. This process has tended to de-emphasise narrower interpretations of what it means to be 'Irish' and 'a nation' and has led, as described above, to a strengthening of the base of 'Economic Pragmatism'. Another factor, and stemming from the aforementioned 'europeanisation', could be the realisation

during the 1970's that a revival of the Irish Language as the everyday spoken language of the Republic was not likely and that, in the best of scenarios, a bilingual state was the only realistic goal at which to aim.

There are no official pronouncements on this most politically sensitive of issues. However the increasing emphasis on bilingualism by state organisations such as RTE and Bord na Gaeilge from the late seventies onwards give some indication of slowly changing attitudes in quarters once stridently in pursuit of 'Gaelicisation'. (Ni Chonghaile 1984:61). Most important of all, perhaps, is the difficult question of how the Irish Republic's people as a whole view the Irish Language. Many surveys over the years have shown a deep seated respect for the Irish language, but this respect has - as events have shown - fallen far short of a desire to use it in day-to-day living. Indeed, it could be argued that perhaps Irish society is in the process of discarding the Irish Language, however unconsciously. If so, this would mirror the behaviour of many other ex-colonial nations with respect to their 'native' language(s) and the language inherited from their former rulers, inasmuch as the language of the coloniser often becomes an 'official' language, within which importent governmental and trade business is carried on. This is particularly so in the case of the English, a language which no people or nation can afford to discard in today's world economy. This 'anglification' of the nation's linguistic expression may be

seen as yet another movement towards the economic pragmatism discussed above.

Last, and certainly not least in its influence on changing attitudes towards nationalism, is the continuing imbroglio of Northern Ireland. This factor cannot be examined here, but its importance must be noted. It can be said that the continuing violance has caused many Irish people to re-examine inherited attitudes towards 'nationalism', 'pluralism' and what it means to be 'Irish'.

Despite this weakening of 'Nationalism' as a curriculum base due to the changing nature of Irish society and its aspirations, it is still a base with immense influence on the general thrust of the second-level curriculum. Rather more than the two mentioned above, it is concerned with the survival of a sense of national identity within its young people, a concern which ironically becomes more acute with the impending 'europeanisation' mentioned above. As such, as a curriculum base, and despite the remarks made above regarding 'changing attitudes', it may be on the verge of a resurgence owing to a reappraisal of the benefits of 'separateness', whether for monetary gain as in the development of 'ethnic tourism', or inspired by older and loftier ideals encapsulated by DeValera in his famous St.Patrick's Day radio broadcast of 1943 in which he painted an idealised vision of an Ireland which would be 'the home of a people living the life that God desired that man should live...' (in Farrell (ed) 1984:114).

Nationalism and media education

It should not be contentious to state that 'nationalism' is a manifestation of a particular ideological standpoint, and furthermore, that the the adoption of this standpoint by a people is a political decision of the highest importance. From this political decision flows a number of consequences for society and the individual. A study of the mass media activity could deepen the understanding of these consequences.

Firstly, there is the consequences for the individual and his/her sense of identity. The potential contribution of media education to the personal and moral development of the learner has been noted. It could be argued that central to this development is the sense of 'personal identity' which includes the notion of belonging to a particular social, ethnic or national group. As pointed out above, much effort in Irish second-level schooling has been devoted over the years to the furtherance of a Christian Humanist education which identifies 'Gaelic' traditions and culture as the preferred milieu within which the learner's own personal identity should be located.

On the basis of the arguments presented in this dissertation, it should be clear that it is not the business of media education to 'aid and abet' any form of cultural insulation. However, this is not to say that there is no place within the curriculum for an exploration of the way

Irish culture is being affected by external influences. To take one example,

> **"The case made by the Irish-language community (and by others concerned with the transmission and development of traditional forms of Irish culture) for a greater share in the broadcast output, is generally made in the context of a wider claim, namely that Irish society as a whole is the victim of a serious form of cultural imperialism, and that the situation has been deteriorating in recent years. This charge cannot be dismissed as a mere rhetorical flourish. It rests on a serious analysis of culture-flows in the media" (Farrell 1984: 107).**

An exploration of this issue within media studies might well reveal to the learner the strengths of Gaelic/Irish culture, while at the same time bringing a realisation of the dangers to which it - and other cultures - are exposed.

Then, too, besides self-conception as a member of a particular culture (a 'nationality'), there is also self-conception as a member of a particular political system (a 'nation-state') within larger political systems. It seems clear from the arguments advanced in chapter five that media education has much to offer within 'Social, Political and Environmental Education', to use the term employed by the Curriculum and Examinations Board. The CEB Board of Studies for this particular curriculum area notes that

> **'Young people growing up in the Ireland of the 1980s face the task of finding their place in our changing society. They are young citizens of a country... an independent country playing its part in the European Community, the United Nations and other international bodies and contributing in a variety of ways to world development" (CEB August 1987: 2).**

The Report argues generally (among other things) the need to equip learners 'to be prepared for active engagement in democratic structures, processes and institutions' (ibid., p.5) and, in a passage with much relevance to the aims of media education, argues specifically for an education which will enable learners

> **"to analyse structurally and critically the social, political and economic processes, arrangements and institutions of their society and to recognise the sources and nature of power; to be familiar with the ways in which people are kept informed about major social and political issues and concerns, particularly through the mass media; to identify bias, prejudice, stereotyping, discrimination at personal, group, local, national and global levels" (ibid., p.6).**

Concluding Remarks

It may be said that the second-level curriculum derives its general thrust from three inter-related though nevertheless distinct bases within the society it serves. These bases exhibit a concern for the learner's personal and moral development, his/her acquisition of skills useful in a modern economy, and the inclination to be a fully-participating citizen in the political development of his/her country. It may be said that these three bases have 'shifted' somewhat in the course of the last fifty years in terms of their relative influence on the educational philosophy of the curriculum, but that, nevertheless, they remain as strong influences

Media Education has much to offer within each of these bases. Like most areas of study, it can enable the moral development of the learner and his/her social and political development. Its emphasis on critical awareness and the interrogation of seemingly 'natural' activities would seem very suited to the development of analytical skills valuable in all aspects of life, not least those associated with gainful activity within a modern market economy.

CHAPTER SEVEN

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Chapter Seven: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This dissertation has identified and discussed a number of problems and possibilities inherent in the introduction of media education at second-level in the Republic of Ireland. It may be said that these problems and possibilities arise within three overlapping contexts of second-level activity, ie., the context supplied by state educational policy; the context supplied by the second level schooling system itself; and the context supplied by the study area itself. All of these contexts have been discussed previously in this dissertation, especially in chapters one and six. The purpose of this seventh and final chapter is to present some conclusions and recommendations arising from those discussions. While it is true that most of these conclusions and recommendations will not be new to many Irish media teachers and media specialists, it might be said that this reiteration, based on research and cogent argument, presents together for the first time a number of key issues facing media education at second-level in Ireland.

Media education: problems and possibilities arising from state educational policy

Problems arising from state educational policy

Most of the problems for media education - in common with other 'new areas' - arise from the highly centralised nature

of curriculum and syllabus provision and examination, and its resistance to change or reform.

While it is true that individual schools may initiate school-based programmes in new areas, these areas remain outside the scope of the 'official syllabus' of the school, as prescribed by the Department of Education and outside Public Examination and Certification. The result is a perception of these 'new areas' - by schools, teachers, parents and pupils - as being of only marginal importance. This perception has several regrettable consequences, chiefly the following:

* schools often use these areas as 'timetable-fillers' after the mainstream school activity (ie., the 'examination classes') has been planned;

* schools often use these areas to siphon off pupils of weak ability from the mainstream school activities;

* some teachers who have little interest in the area sometimes 'get stuck with it' for a school year and, lacking interest and expertise, fall back on whatever they have of the prevailing 'conventional wisdom' regarding the mass communication process (see chapter two);

* parents often react unfavourably to their children being timetabled for non-examination subjects, particularly when other children in the same school

and year group take examination subjects instead. This problem can often occur at senior cycle and given the pressure on second-level students to acquire 'points' for entry to third-level cours es, this reaction of parents is understandable, if regrettable;

* learners often react unfavourably to being timetabled for non-examination subjects, and for much the same reasons as their parents. In addition, a consistent school policy of allowing weaker learners to 'do' media studies will not enhance its reputation among the student body at large.

In short, it may be said that curriculum development (ie., devising, implementing and evaluating a new area of study) is always a difficult process. The factors abovelisted makes it almost impossible.

Possibilities arising from state educational policy

On the other hand, the freedom allowed to 'new areas' within the Irish second-level system at present is remarkable. With regard to those classes described above as 'siphoned off' from the mainstream school activity, it could be said that the teacher has almost a completely 'free hand' in the devising and implementing of syllabi. Provided that the teacher is committed to the furtherance of the area, and is supplied with in-service training, this freedom is of great advantage to the development of new areas since it is in the

nature of 'new departures' to need administrative flexibility.

Finally, the advent of the Junior Certificate (commencing September 1989), which replaces the prescriptive Intermediate Certificate, offers a number of opportunities to widen the coverage of media studies at Junior Cycle, especially within the teaching of English (see Appendix V).

Recommendations with regard to state educational policy

The freedom allowed to new areas at present in the Republic's second-level system is a freedom by default. That is to say, it is a freedom that stems from the indecision, postponements, prevarications and discontinuities of state educational planning. Nevertheless, it is a freedom which contrasts favourably with the 'rules and programme' approach to the established 'mainstream' subjects. An effort to safeguard this freedom should form part of the effort to standardise new areas and incorporate them into the 'official' curriculum. This will entail:

* Agreement among practitioners and specialists on the field of study, and on methods of evaluation which allow some movement away from the present rigidities of terminal examinations;

* regular and informed representation of the interests of media education at those forums where state educational policy is decided.

In short, any area of study, and especially a 'new' area, must have an professional body or Association of

practitioners and specialists which will look after the interests of the area. In the case of Media Education this means that the Teachers Association for Media Education (TAME) should be reactivated in order to further the interests of media education at second-level by the provision of in-service courses, by monitoring existing activity in media studies in schools, by disseminating information among members regarding these courses and activities, and by representing the interests of the area at the highest levels of policy- and decision-making.

Media Education: Problems and Possibilities arising within the second-level schooling system

Problems within the second-level schooling system

Two major problems confront the teacher of media education within the actual second-level system itself. First, there is the distinction within the system between those learners considered capable of undertaking public examinations, and the less capable 'early school-leavers'. Second, there is the traditionally conservative ethos of the Irish second-level system which might be said to be hostile to certain aspects of media education practice - particularly those which would encourage the student to 'interrogate' long-established values, beliefs and norms.

With regard to the first of these problems, an outline has been offered in this dissertation of the distinctions drawn between 'general education' (ie., the schools' 'mainstream' activity) and 'continuation education' at Irish second-level. This distinction has meant that two kinds of curriculum are provided: one for those learners destined for third-level, and the other for early school-leavers. This division, which has important social implications, is particularly evident at senior cycle and has been accentuated in recent years by the introduction, throughout the second-level system, of Vocational Preparation Programmes.

These latter programmes emphasise 'manual instruction', often at the expense of broader educational goals and its learners could be said to be those who are 'less able' generally. Furthermore, these programmes, conceived, organised and mounted within a relatively short space of time, have usually been well planned in their technical/vocational aspects, but are often severely lacking in appropriate teacher-training or development of classroom materials in the 'Personal and Social Development' area.

It is this 'Personal and Social Development' which has seen the much of the 'media studies' activity at second-level in recent years. Media teachers have been (understandably) eager to insert a media studies 'modules' and 'units' where the opportunity has arisen, thereby giving the study area at least a sort of standing and development within the school and - they hope - eventually within the second-level system.

To this end, elements of media studies have, over the years, been tailored to suit the requirements of these courses.

The result of this 'tailoring' has not always been good for the long-term interests of the area. First, because the difficulties of developing a new area in the classroom are often compounded by having to deal with a poorly-motivated group of youngsters quite conscious of having been 'relegated' to this 'marginal' area. And, second, because the 'vocational' premise of the programme often emphasises unduly the 'production' aspects of the studies and can lead to the difficult situations discussed in chapter four with regard to the 'skills' approach. Taken together, then, the overall results of 'tailoring media studies to suit the demands of a particular school situation can be a sapping of morale among teachers and learners.

With regard to the second problem concerning the ethos prevailing in the vast majority of second level schools in the Republic, and the possibility of its being hostile to aspects of media education, there is little to add to the discussion in chapter six. It is a fact that education in the Republic generally is highly sensitive to 'positions' or 'ideologies' not consistent with traditional beliefs, and prevailing social norms. Various reasons could be advanced for this conservatism and it is quite outside the scope of the present discussion to detail them. However, this dissertation has indicated in chapter six the influence of the Roman Catholic church and maintained that there are aspects of its teaching and practice which might not be

immediately receptive of areas of study which might seek to interrogate long-held beliefs. This ethos might also be said to be responsible for the deeply rooted attitudes towards 'authority' so evident at second-level schooling, attitudes which do not encourage the strategies of learner participation so much at the heart of media studies.

Possibilities within the second-level schooling system

Despite the problems associated with the 'vocational' bias of some programmes, there is scope for the development of valuable media studies courses within these programmes, provided a balance is kept between 'productive/vocational activity' and the development within learners of their 'critical intelligence' This possibility is emerging more and more strongly as specialists begin to appreciate the advantages of a pedagogy founded on active learner participation.

Regarding the conservative 'ethos' of Irish second level schooling, and its apparent hostility to an area like media education, it is in no sense an attempt to diminish the nature of this problem to say that it is only part of another, and greater, problem, ie., the delay and prevarication of the educational authorities on the introduction of what the Curriculum and Examination Board termed 'Social, Political and Environmental Education'. Given that media education may be seen to be, at least in part, a form of political education, the best strategy for overcoming conservative opposition to its introduction would

seem to be for media teachers and specialists to monitor closely - and actively to help - moves to introduce social, political and environmental education. At the same time, media teachers should emphasise the potential contribution of media education to the moral development of the pupil.

Recommendations with regard to the second-level schooling system

Media teachers and specialists should continue their involvement

in the devising and implementing of media studies courses within 'vocational' programmes, but with caution lest a heavily 'production' emphasis emerge. A reappraisal should commence of such involvement and of the value of production activity in terms of the general aims of media education. Media teachers should be advised regarding classroom activities which have only a superficial contribution to make towards those general aims.

A study should be undertaken of the current position of social and political education at second level, the prospects of its further development and the ways in which media education could form a part of that education.
In the case of both of these recommendations, the need for a

Media Education Association is again demonstrated. Only such an Association, concerning itself solely with the problems and possibilities outlined in this dissertation, and supported and advised by practising second-level media

teachers, would have the commitment and expertise to advance the interests of media education and its study programmes.

Media Education: Problems and Possibilities arising from within
the Study Area itself
Problems arising from within the study area itself

Two problems arise from within the study area itself. First, there is the great diversity in the issues, concepts, and aims generally considered to be within its field; and, second, there is the central question of whether media education should be cross-curricular in organisation, or should be organised as a self-standing subject.

With regard to the field of study, in the past conceptions of the field have often been based on views informed by the prevailing 'conventional wisdom' regarding media activity (see chapter two), and/or upon widely differing ideas of what constitute the goals of media studies (see chapter three). This has often led to such a diversity of teaching approaches that, in real terms, many courses of 'media studies'/ 'communications studies' are similar in little more than name.

Much of the discussion of this dissertation has been directed at this diversity and confusion in an attempt to formulate a teaching approach best suited to the aims of

media education, and a list of concepts which ought to be taught. It is hoped that the syllabus supplied in Appendix V is will be of help to media teachers in this regard.

With regard to the second, and central, problem of whether media education should be cross-curricular in organisation, or should be organised as a self-standing subject, there are compelling arguments to support both views. The 'core concepts' recommended in chapter five (particularly Ideology, Representation and Realism) are undoubtedly concepts at the heart of many 'subjects' on the curriculum. There is too the argument that the 'subject divisions' are in themselves only very artificial boundaries which often impair the learner's ability to relate knowledge and skills developed in one 'subject' to another.

It is not proposed in this final chapter to detail these arguments. Nor, in what follows, is it intended to denigrate them or in any way question their value. Nevertheless, it has to be pointed out that that a 'cross-curricular approach' to media education at second level in Ireland is fraught with dangers for the area. That is to say, while media studies could be 'spread' over a number of different 'subjects', almost certainly a different emphasis will emerge within each subject. For example, in the light of teacher practices, school expectations and examination requirements at present obtaining at second level, it is not unreasonable to expect that the following emphases would emerge:

Business Organisation: - Marketing, Advertising

English: - Artefact Appreciation, Discrimination, Mass Media Issues

Religious Education: - Mass Media Issues, Moral Questions

Computer Studies: - Communication as 'process'/ Technical Knowledge

History: - Narration, Selection

These differing emphases would need monitoring and co-ordination in order to ensure that the core concepts considered essential to media education are taught. Otherwise, there will be too little of the 'interrogation of media practices' recommended in this dissertation as being at the heart of media education, and too much of the 'issue-based discussion' traditionally used as a primer for the 'real' work of the subject area. That is to say, there will be a danger of media studies being used simply as a means towards the ends of the 'host' subject, rather than as an education in itself.

Possibilities arising from within the study area itself

This dissertation has pointed a way out of the confusion that surrounds the question of what it is that should be taught within media studies. The six core concepts recommended in chapter five, and the range of subsidiary concepts which they include, could form the basis for a more coherent and incisive general practice among media teachers.

More than most study areas, media studies offers opportunities to put into practice those modes of enquiry long recommended as an alternative to the artificial constraints of 'subject' divisions.
Given the essential co-ordination, a cross-curricular approach to media education offers an exciting prospect for new developments in teaching at Irish second-level. It must be said, though, that the existing system, centred around rather rigid 'subject' demarcations, and a very severe form of terminal examinations will not be immediately conducive to such cross-curricular learning.

Recommendations

The Syllabus presented in Appendix V should be discussed, implemented, and evaluated by a number of schools, under the general direction of some interested body. A reactivated Teachers Association for Media Education would seem the ideal monitoring agency. Implementation could take a cross-curricular or 'self-standing' form.

SUMMARY OF CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE FURTHERANCE OF MEDIA EDUCATION AT SECOND-LEVEL

CONCLUSIONS

At least four conclusions may be drawn from the discussions of this dissertation. These conclusions pertain directly to the standing of Media Education at second-level schooling in the Republic of Ireland at present (January 1990) and to its

prospects for development as a major area of study in the years ahead. The four conclusions are:

(i) That Media Education must have its interests represented and furthered at all important levels of educational policy decision-making;

(ii) That media education teachers should welcome any curriculum development which promises a less rigid, less prescriptive form of study and examination at second-level and work towards the inclusion of media studies within the new forms;

(iii) That Media Education is cross-curricular in the range of concepts which falls within its ambit and that - furth ermore - its general thrust approximates more towards social and political education than towards any one of the subjects listed by the Department of Education (Rialacha agus Clar), with the exception of 'Civics';

(iv) That the range and diversity of concepts which could be seen as important, in some sense, within Media Education is so extensive as to encourage confusion among teachers and learners; but that this diversity is, nevertheless, capable of being defined to 'core' and 'subsidiary' concepts;

RECOMMENDATIONS

The conclusions outlined above suggest a number of recommendations which, as is evidenced in the discussions of this dissertation, could help considerably the furtherance of Media Education in the Republic.

With regard to **(i)**, Media Education interests and educational policy decisions, the absence of any professional body or Association to represent media education and its teachers is a comment on the state of the subject area at second-level at present. Furthermore, what little recognition has been afforded to the area by the Department of Education may be traced directly to representations made by the Teachers Association for Media Education (TAME) and the Irish Film Institute. The change of direction in the IFI (see chapter one) and the abeyance of TAME leaves a vacuum within which the interests of Media Education are completely neglected. This is all the more regrettable given the movement towards a less rigid and less prescriptive study and examination system at second-level.

The only recommendation possible therefore, given this scenario, is that TAME - or some similar institution - reformed immediately and it existence and proposals be circulated widely among media teachers.

With regard to **(ii)**, the opportunities presented for the inclusion of Media Education within 'new' forms of second-level study, encouragement and enthusiasm must be tempered with a degree of caution. Of course it is true

that 'Vocational' and 'Pre-Employment' Programmes have in the past, and will in the future, offer exciting opportunities for the development of Media Education. This is even more true of the new Junior Certificate and its proposals for English teaching. However, there is evidence that in the past the more 'vocational' bias of Pre-Employment Programmes seriously distorted the direction of the 'media studies' undertaken within their framework. Media teachers must, therefore, ensure that the media studies undertaken within Junior Certificate English (and elsewhere) remain 'media studies' while at the same time fulfilling the requirements of the 'host' subject. Since this entails an area of 'double vision' on the part of the media teacher, and since it is more than likely that he or she will be trained within a discipline other than Media Education, a thorough grounding for the teacher in the core and subsidiary concepts of media studies is vital if he or she - 'with the best will in the world' - is not to see Media Education as simply another way of attaining the objectives of the host subject.

The only recommendation possible, given this scenario, is that in-service training in Media Education be provided by a competent body, recognised as such by the Department of Education and that this training be included within the Department's in-service provision.

With regard to **(iii)**, the close relationship between Media Education and 'social and political' education,

an assessment should be made of the current position of social and political education at second-level, and the prospects offered within this area for the development of media education. In effect, this assessment could take the form of enquiries as to the position and standing of the CEB's Board of Studies document on 'Social, Political and Environmental Education' which was published in August 1987, but never widely distributed or discussed. (The Board itself, though never formally disbanded, has never been invited to meet since that date). If, as has been argued in this dissertation, there is a close link between Media Education and 'Social and Political Education, it follows that the position and standing of the one is inextricably bound up with the other.

With regard to **(iv)**, the dangers inherent in the great diversity of study matter to be found under the heading of 'Media Education', this dissertation has shown that there is a central 'core' within this diversity that may be considered the 'heart' of the subject, and that there is a range of 'subsidiary' concepts which depend on this central core for their relevance and value as areas of study. These 'core' and 'subsidiary' concepts, presented in the form of a syllabus in Appendix V, should be discussed, implemented, and evaluated by a number of schools, under the general direction of some interested body (as was the procedure regarding 'Humanities', ie., a number of 'pilot schools' under the general supervision

of the City of Dublin VEC Curriculum Development Unit. Implementation could take a cross-curricular or 'self-standing' form.

APPENDICES

Appendix I: Department of Education Syllabus for Communications: Pre-Employment Courses (July 1978)

Extracts from the Syllabi in 'General Studies and Personal/ Social Development

(Page 6) Aims, Objectives and General Structure of Programme.

Pre-employment courses are intended for students who would ordinarily leave school to seek employment on attaining the school-leaving age, but who, on failing to get employment, would return to school to attend a course specifically aimed at assisting them in their efforts to secure a job... it is open to schools to establish alternative programmes, particularly in the technical subject areas, where they feel that such alternatives can be well justified by local circumstances...

The general aim of pre-employment courses is that of bridging the gap between the values and experiences normally part of a traditional education and those current n the adult world of work. Increasingly modern industrial society demands individuals with personal resources and flexibility to cope with the complexities of the labour market and the rapid changes of work roles. In the service industries, the most rapidly growing sector of industry, personal and interpersonal skills are particularly important and all young workers must have the ability to plan and make life and career decisions if they are to be successful in working life...

Pre-employment courses are structured into three main areas which, while expressed separately, are inter-related and interdependent. The areas in question are personal development, work experience and technical knowledge...

The emphasis on the personal development of the individual taking the programme reflects the importance attached to giving young people an understanding of the values of adult life, and the resources to come to terms with adult reality. The whole programme is, in this sense a stage in the maturation of the individual, in his or her choosing an adult role and all the elements of the course should knit together to provide the student with the knowledge and skills to move from school to work...

Work experience is an attempt to provide each student with formal experience of work situations, (in most cases in actual industries, sometimes - where industry is scarce - in work simulation situations) with a view to enabling students to understand the reality of work and work roles. It is not a probation prior to taking up work in an organisation but, rather, a means of broadening the awareness of young people of the variety of work roles available to them...

Learning experience in the [technical knowledge] sectors should be organised so as to lay the strongest possible emphasis on practical work and personal initiative and standards in the completion of tasks assigned... ... In this way the student is strengthened in his preparation for working life, not only by the enlargement of the range of vocational outlets to which he may aspire, but also through the cultivation of skills, disciplines, and attitudes which have a general applicability in any work situation...

... (Page 19) COMMUNICATIONS SYLLABUS.

Aim: To improve the student's literacy skills to the levels required in adult life, thereby facilitating (later) progress into employment and to courses of further education.

1. Communication (Oral and Written)

(a) How to speak clearly and precisely. Oral reporting, etc.
(b) How to use the telephone: receiving and communicating messages: sending messages in a concise and accurate manner.
(c) Interviewing techniques.
(d) How to write letters properly: letters to business: enquiries: orders: complaints: acknowledgement: letters to prospective employers, etc. Letters concerning personal and social welfare, health, insurance, pay, allowances, etc.
(e) Writing of simple reports and descriptions and specifications: on simple mechanical processes: on machines and machine parts: situations likely to arise in the workplace, eg. accidents, breakages, problems with raw materials, machine malfunctions, etc. (Clarity of expression, absence of ambiguity, correct spelling and punctuation will be emphasised throughout).
(f) A study of the various documents and technical terminology used in the employment sectors under study
(g) Conduct of meetings, rules of procedure, roles of various participants, minutes, motions, etc.
(h) The Media: a study of the functions of the Media and their comparative effects: selectivity and critical appraisal.
(i) Sources of information: dictionaries: telephone directories: bus and train timetables: Yellow Pages: How to use street maps and district maps and tourist guides, etc.

<u>Teaching Methods:</u> These will include discussions, debates, oral reporting, etc. (Tape recorders will be of use here). The communications teacher is advised to consult with the teachers of the Technical Modules with a view to integrating the topics being taught...

Appendix II: **Department of Education Syllabus for Communications Studies: Vocational Preparation and Training Programmes (November 1984: 84VP/GS/C2)**

COMMUNICATIONS STUDIES

Aims

(1) To develop course participants' awareness of the nature and function of communication in contemporary society.
(2) To develop their enjoyment and appreciation of communications skills.
(3) To help them, by means of those skills - (a) to become more mature; (b) to acquire greater social competence; (c) to enrich their experience of life; (d) to become effective and responsible members of adult society.

Objectives:

To enable course participants to develop -

(i) their competence in the basic communications skills of listening, oral expression, reading and writing;

(ii) their ability to cope with various systems of communication, including the mass media;

(iii) their capacity for personal enjoyment and enrichment through the medium of one of the following - drama, movement, music, visual art, a second language.

Syllabus

The overall course in Communications is intended to be fully integrated with the other areas of the vocational preparation programme. The teacher(s) responsible for Communications should, in consultation with the other teachers on the programme, make sure that the language demands for each section of the programme are met.

Participants must cover Sections I - V (inclusive) and one of the remaining sections, VI - X ... ...

[The sections are listed, with outline details, as (I) Listening, (II) Oral Expression, (III) Reading, (IV) Writing,
(V) Systems of Mass Communication, (VI) Drama, (VII) Movement, (VIII) Music, (IX) Visual Art, (X) A Second Language]

... Section V. SYSTEMS OF MASS COMMUNICATION

(1) The Mass Media:

- Kinds of mass media
- Processes of production in the different media
- Decision-making in media communication; truthfulness, objectivity and bias.
- Public interpretation of media communication.
- Practical production of newsheet/ magazine.
- Familiarisation with and use of a range of media techniques and technology: audio and video recorders, cameras, layout and graphics, film.
- Music, drama and art in media communication.
- Film club and critics club; local radio club (using school intercom system).
- Careers in the media

(2) Outline of other systems of communication - mail; telecommunications; transport systems ....

Appendix III: Teachers' Association for Media Education - Statement on the publication of 'Language in the Curriculum' (Curriculum and Examinations Board, September 1985).

We welcome the publication of 'Language in the Curriculum' and would ask that the Board give consideration to including media studies in their deliberations on language for the following reasons:

1. Each of the mass media uses language in a special and special way which is worthy of study in its own right and as a means towards understanding the media, modern society and the "important linguistic demands of contemporary life" (CEB 3.3.4)

2. Students are often seen as passive consumers of the media and television is often blamed for the decline in reading and other language-related skills. A study of the media would help to promote active participation and response.

3. The media are the main sources of contemporary popular culture and students need the ability to criticise and discriminate.

4. The culture of previous eras, including most of the literature studied in school, is often first experienced through television or film. It is necessary for the students to understand the limitations and advantages of the radio, visual and the print media and the unique nature of each.

5. The pedagocical approach demanded by media studies would allow mother tongue teachers to "liberate themselves from the restricted role they have played in the past" (3.4.5) by providing an opportunity for the development of language s kills through the use of language in "meaningful situations" (2.4.1) to form and exchange opinions and to deal with new c oncepts and situations.

Appendix IV: Irish Film Institute - Media Education: A Proposal for Action (May 1985) (Extracts)

... Proposal for the Formal Introduction of Media Education in the School Curriculum

'Curriculum' may be defined as the totality of educational experiences offered to pupils. The Curriculum and Examinations Board have initiated important innovations in Irish education ... one of the most significant [of which] to date has been the decision to initiate a programme of Social and Political Education at post-primary level... ...it is clear that study of the media is an essential part of any [such] Programme since it involves:

* the experience and understanding of the pupils' own social and cultural environment through which analysis of media products and forms/ and the processes by which they are made.
* the study of structures and organisation of media industries.
* the study of representation in the media, eg., of how different social groups... are represented and stereotyped.
* the study of how different social groups make sense of the media messages...
* understanding how local national groups use the media and the dominant flow of the developed countries media media industries.

At this juncture the Irish Film Institute proposes that media education be introduced as a constituent element in the curricular provision for Social and Political Education at Junior and Senior Level by 1988/1989. As a core element all students would take media education as an essential part of their educational experience. However, it is our view that ideally media education has an input across all areas of the curriculum, having a significant interaction with subjects like English, Art, Music, Geography, History, etc.

The Institute proposes that action be taken on the following key issues to achieve the introduction of media education in the curriculum within the next three to five years

- **Course planning**
- **Training and resources**
- **Evaluation and assessment**

COURSE PLANNING

...Responsibility for media education within the existing educational structures should be formally established. The Department of Education could appoint an inspector with responsibility for media education. This would best be facilitated by adding media education to the duties of the existing English inspectorate in September 1986.
...It is proposed that the Curriculum and Examinations Board should establish a Sub-Committee for media education possibly by September 1986. The function of this committee would be:

a) to liaise with the Social and Political course committee and other relevant elements of the CEB to take account of timetable structures, aims and objectives, local/individual needs and resources.
b) to develop a media education curriculum in consultation with relevant agencies and bodies eg., Irish Film Institute, CDVEC Curriculum Development Unit, the Teachers' Association for Media Education, etc.
c) to examine and develop methods of assessment.
d) to complete a formal interim report by Autumn 1987.

...Media education in Ireland is still regarded as a 'new' area. For this reason, careful planning and attention to details of learning strategies appropriate to the Irish context will be required in constructing guidelines for teaching at various levels...

...Media education is best undertaken through the pupils' experience of media and popular culture, and this will have implications for the teaching approach. Collaborative work and analysis will of necessity be pupil-centred. The long tradition of teacher as 'bearer of knowledge' is challenged by media education and teachers will require adequate in-service training to absorb the implications for their teaching method of this different approach, which will facilitate a dynamic interaction between teachers' and pupils' experiences...

TRAINING AND RESOURCES

It is proposed that

- A formal scheme of release for teachers to pursue in-service training in media education be negotiated with the Department of Education in Autumn 1986.
- A programme of 'Introductory' and 'Advanced' courses be co-ordinated by the Irish Film Institute/ Curriculum Development Unit/ Department of Education/ CEB/ TAME in association with teachers' centres in Spring 1987. The course should be designed so that teachers can begin to develop the knowledge and skill essential for media teaching...
- Representations [be made by the Irish Film Institute] to the third-level institutions, universities, colleges of education, with a view to co-ordinating adequate pre-service training for teachers at all levels in 1986/ 1987 by the proposed committee and relevant bodies. This could be achieved through H.Dip.Ed./ B.Ed courses. The communications degrees courses would also need to be examined in relation to providing a teacher-training element.
- Representations [be made by the IFI] to the Teachers' Unions, and other relevant bodies in Ireland as part of general co-ordination and planning.
- Immediate attention be focused on the provision and research of teaching materials appropriate to every level... ... The nature of media education necessitates a range of materials rather than text-books, which are

word-bound. It is essential that continued development of materials for use in Irish schools is planned and developed in Ireland and is co-ordinated across the institutions and bodies concerned... ... In the long term, it is our view that the provision of a formal qualification, eg., a certificate/ diploma in media education be investigated with the various educational establishment and validation bodies...

EVALUATION AND ASSESSMENT

Evaluation is concerned with the effectiveness of the educational experiences being offered to pupils.

The main function of assessment should be to serve and reinforce the aims, objectives and methodologies of a course Assessment procedures should be integral to the learning process. Media education involves a range of skills and concepts which are acquired through practical work. Much of this work is collaborative, so assessment should be capable of applying to groups as well as individuals.

* Equal emphasis should be placed on the analytical and practical activities in a course.
* Progressive assessment of units of work, projects and group assignments is an appropriate means of evaluating the success of pupil learning.
* The differing abilities and skills involved in media education indicate that a terminal examination would not be an appropriate mode of assessment alone.

A broad framework of assessment could include:

* **Formal Assessment**
Within a national structure. Assessment to take place through written work, practical work, student profiles at local level, but moderated nationally.

* **Self-Assessment by Students**
Students could be asked to examine what they have achieved, how they have achieved it and to suggest follow-up work in relation to a given unit of work. Such assessment could take the form of written/ recorded material in school records and/ or in the form of a media diary.

* **Local/ School Assessment**
The effectiveness of approaches to learning needs to be assessed locally in order to plan and design future programmes. A local group could examine their work in relation to resources and planning and the monitoring of pupils' progress in a term/ year...

The Irish Film Institute, Dublin

Appendix V: **A General Syllabus** for Media Studies.

GENERAL SYLLABUS OUTLINE: Aims, Methodology, Evaluation.

Aims: Media Education should enable the learner

- .. to recognise the nature and extent of media power and influence on the formation of the individual and on society at large;
- .. to recognise and analyse the nature and extent of media presence within society;
- .. to understand the ideological dimensions of media activity;
- .. to understand the informational dimensions of media activity;
- .. to analyse media artefact production
- .. to analyse media artefact consumption.

Methodology: In pursuit of these aims, a methodology is recommended which would combine elements from the variety of approaches developed within the study area over the past twenty years. In summary, these approaches are:

- ... the 'sociological' approach which would treat of those aspects of mass media activity which have a direct or indirect influence on the development of the individual and society;
- ... the 'culturalist' approach which would treat of those aspects of mass media activity which have a direct or indirect influence on the formation a society's culture - both as to 'high' and 'popular' culture, ie., the society's culture as evidenced by its tradition in fine arts, literature, etc., and the society's 'contemporary' culture as evidenced in its more 'ephemeral forms of music, entertainments, etc.;
- ... the 'skills' approach would would treat of those aspects of mass media activity which are directed towards the production of mass media artefacts and which, by so doing, impart mental and manual skills to the learner;
- ... the 'political' approach which would treat of those aspects of mass media activity which have a direct or indirect bearing on the formation of social norms, civil liberties, and public opinion, and - therefore - on the nature of the learners' society .

These four approaches should provide opportunities in the classroom for

- .. discussion of mass-media research findings;
- .. discussion of mass-media issues;
- .. class-group/ year-group surveys, questionnaires;
- .. text/artefact analysis;
- .. artefact production and production analysis;
- .. interrogation of media artefacts for implicit values and .... underlying rationales;
- .. structured and free role-play to explore media practices .... and representations;
- .. invited speakers/excursions in media-related contexts.

Evaluation:

Evaluation may take one of three forms:

Terminal Assessment: Test-papers termly or at year's end to assess the learner's discursive, analytical and interrogative capabilities in six core concepts, viz., Realism, Representation, Ideology, Audience, Narrative and Genre. By 'discursive' is meant the learner's ability to describe and discuss these concepts. By 'analytical' is meant the learner's ability to examine in detail significant aspects of these concepts. By 'interrogative' is meant the learner's ability to use his/her understanding of the core concepts to investigate the premises and assumptions underlying media artefact construction.

Continuous Assessment: Submission by learner of a required number of items of coursework per term, preferably including one extended item, carrying somewhat more marks. Assessment to be based on learner capabilities described above Accumulation of marks to final grade.

Continual/Terminal Assessment: A combination of the described above assessment procedures, with - preferably - a weighting of marks to the 'continuous' submissions.

(see also the remarks on assessment in Appendix IV)

SYLLABUS CONTENT: The general aims of Media Education, as outlined above, will be achieved through an exploration of the following **core and subsidiary concepts:**

Core Concepts	Subsidiary Concepts
Realism	selection
Representation	illusionism
Ideology	convention
Audience	transparency
Narrative	artefact
Genre	professional ideology
	bias/prejudice

Core Concepts	Subsidiary Concepts
	discourse
	dominant/preferred meaning
	audience construction
	audience positioning
	audience segmentation
	media ownership
	meaning construction
	construction
	non-verbal communication
	denotation and connotation
	myth
	distribution
	mediation
	pleasure
	sign/signification
	signifier/signified
	participation/access/control
	rhetoric
	naturalism
	coding/encoding
	iconography
	anchorage

Core Concepts

These are concepts considered by media theorists to be of fundamental importance to Media Education and which, in one way or another, tend to include those listed as **'subsidiary'**. Further information, broader or more precise treatment may be found in (A) Argyle 1975, (Alv) Alvarado et al 1987, (F) Fiske 1982, (H) Hill 1986, (Mc) McQuail 1983, (M) Masterman 1985, (Mo) Morley 1980, and in (especially) chapter five of this dissertation.

REALISM: The process by which the audience is convinced of the truth/'matter of factness', etc., of what it is perceiving; the exclusion of alternatives. (Alv. p.94; H. p.57-9; F. p.107).

REPRESENTATION: the process by which an event/experience, etc. is re-presented to an audience and the implications of this re-presentation for 'truth'/ accuracy / realism, etc. (Alv. p.117).

IDEOLOGY: The process by which media create, reinforce or erode a culture's values; the media as value systems. (M. p.187-214).

AUDIENCE: The process by which media artefacts are consumed; how media-consumers come into being. (Mo. 1980).

NARRATIVE: The processes by which apparently 'natural' media representations are constructed, and the ways in which this construction is reinforced by other structures; analysis of the determinants, values, techniques beneath the 'flow' of media artefact communication. (Alv. p.119; M. p.175).

GENRE: The systematisation of the media artefact in terms of its artistic construction and mode of production. (N.1980)

Subsidiary Concepts

These are concepts which tend to be included in discussions of the **core concepts** listed above. They also tend to delineate specific functions, techniques or skills associated with media operations and the creation of media artefacts.

Selection: The act of media artefact composition - investigation of the processes and rationales of editing - exploration of the range of alternatives excluded by a particular re-presentation. (M. p.145)

Illusionism: The process whereby an audience is drawn into empathy with the media artefact and takes its construction of events as real and feels enthralled by it; the process by which an audience is prevented from reflecting critically on both the mode of representation and the actions represented (M. pp.127-8).

Convention: Agreements between audiences and media practitioners which limit and structure the form and meaning of a media artefact; the unwritten, unstated expectations that derive from the shared experience of members of a culture (F. pp.12-13,82).

Transparency: The process by which media representations appear unmediated; the 'window on the world' or 'mirror on the world' view of media activity. Similarly **'naturalism'** , ie., the process by which media constructions appear spontaneous, casual or otherwise unconstructed, thereby giving rise to the illusion that media techniques are **transparent** in the sense that they interpose no interpretations but 'simply mirror' the event they relay.

Artefact: The actual product of media activity - That which is the subject of investigation as to structure, properties, aesthetic/ social/ commercial functions & etc. 'Artefact, arti- , (noun): A product of human art & workmanship...' (Oxford Dictionary).

Professional ideology: The work ethic of the media practitioner - his view of his job - and how this effects his practice, especially as to practices such as 'self-imposed censorship' (M. p.88).

Bias/ prejudice: Bias may be seen as consistent deviation in a particular direction, which may result from tendencies to ease the organisational task (Mc. p.167). For example, news programmes which feature strongly material more readily available. To be distinguished from **prejudice** in that the latter stems from preconceived opinions on a subject rather than on institutional or organisational constraints.

Discourse: the processes by which a hierarchy of discourses is established within a media text and the implications of this for the audience's notion of 'truth' (M. pp.183-5).

Dominant/preferred meaning: The process by which a media artefact attempts to exclude several alternative readings/interpretations in favour of one 'preferred' reading. (Alv. p.5; Mo. p.10)

Audience construction/ positioning/ segmentation: The media audience as it is called into being by the artefact; investigation of the marketing of media artefacts, their creation of specific audiences and their 'positioning' and 'segmenting' of those audiences in terms of receptivity. (M. p.229).

Media ownership: The media as public and private organisations, enterprises, companies, incorporations etc., and the implications of this organisation for media practices and general media activity. (M. p.82-5).

Meaning construction: The nature of the media practices and processes by which meaning is inscribed within the artefact (F. p.2-5).

Construction: The process by which apparently 'spontaneous' or 'natural' media events/artefacts are always subject to media re-presentation involving selection and editing. 'Construction' is a 'portmanteau' term often used in a very general sense which could include most 'subsidiary concepts' listed here. A more limited usage would refer to a series of specific 'construction' techniques, traditions, mechanisms, etc., as in Masterman's **'Rhetoric'** (see below).

Non-verbal communication: Conscious or unconscious communication by a person through gestures, posture, emotional states, tones of voice, etc. NVC is an important feature of ritual and ceremony, art and music, propaganda and politics (A. pps. 3-9).

Denotation and Connotation: 'Denotation' is the commonsense, obvious meaning of a sign, ie., an interpretation involving very little ambiguity. 'Connotation' describes the interaction that occurs when the sign meets the feelings or emotions of the user and the values of his/her culture. Denotation may be termed the 'objective' meaning; connotation may be termed the 'subjective' meaning. (M. p.200-204; F. 91-95).

Myth: The media as reinforcers of a culture's way of thinking about something; how the media activate chains of concepts grouped around traditional beliefs and perspectives (F. p.93; Davies in M. p.183).

Distribution: The implications for the communication process of defined channels by which artefacts are to teach their audience. These implications should arise in the course of discussion on media ownership and the media as industries (M. p.73). Most particularly should they arise in discussion of **participation/ access/ control/ availability** (see below).

Mediation: A general term covering the processes by which media act as relaying agencies for an event and, in so doing, affect in some way the nature of the event. In practice, this term is so general as to be of little use to the media teacher.

Pleasure: Exploration of the ways in which dominant ideologies are 'naturalised' within media artefacts through the engagement of the audience's interest and emotions; eg., 'stereotyping' which, through humour, promotes values and viewpoints which might otherwise be rejected (M. p.237-240; N. p.48-51).

Sign/ signification: Signs are artefacts or acts that refer to something other than themselves; they are signifying constructs (F. p.2)

Signifier/ signified: A sign consists of a 'signifier' and a 'signified'. The signifier is the sign's image as we perceive it, the signified is the mental concept to which it refers. This latter 'mental concept' must be broadly common to all members of the same culture if the sign is to 'work' (F. p.47).

Participation/ access/ control/ availability : Exploration of the concept of 'access to the media' will address questions such as - To what extent does the audience participate in the media experience? Who has access to the media? Who makes the selection and whose picture of the world is made available? Is media access a means of exerting power and social control? (F. p.28-29).

Rhetoric: A general term which may be used to describe the total effect of a combination of media practices, ie., Selection, Set-ups, film and sound editing, camerawork, interpretive frameworks, visual codings, narrative (M. Chapter 5, p.127).

Coding/encoding/decoding: A code is a system of meaning common to
the members of a culture or subculture within which signs are organised. These 'systems of meaning' are manifested through codes of behaviour and signifying codes. Media studies will be concerned here with the latter, ie., sign systems. 'Encoding' and 'decoding' may be regarded respectively as the

processes of 'packing' and 'unpacking' a core message. (F. p.20,27)

Iconography: Exploration of signs which resemble their object (ie., the signified) in some way, by looking or sounding like it. Also media practices that resemble audience reaction to the media event, eg., 'close-ups' which mirror and encourage 'curiousity', thereby lending 'credibilty' or 'realness' to the event (F. p.50-60).

Anchorage: The effect of words when used as captions for photographs to pin down one preferred meaning from the many which are potentially available (F. p.112; M. p.144).

Appendix VI: The **Junior Certificate:** Strategies for the inclusion of Media Studies within the teaching of English.

General Remarks

The introduction of the Junior Certificate of Education in place of the Intermediate Certificate and Day Vocational Certificate (commencing in September 1989) offers the English teacher a new flexibility and independence as to how he/ she will pursue the general aims of English at Junior Cycle. These aims are outlined in the Department's 'Junior Certificate English Guidelines for Teachers' (Sept. 1989) in terms of 'Targets and Activities' for first, second and third year learners:

"[First Years]... To facilitate the transition from first to second-level education, students in the first year of the English course should be encouraged to use, explore, develop, and refine the language that is most immediate and closest to themselves. The orientation of first year teaching will be towards building the student's confidence in language-use in a range of concrete and familiar personal, social, and cultural contexts..." (op. cit., p.3).

"[Second Years]... During the Second Year of the course, students should consolidate the progress made throughout the First Year... ... While the First Year emphasises language use in informal situations, and while this should remain important, the Second Year should challenge the students in more formal and demanding language situations..." (op. cit., p.9).

"[Third Years]... The Third Year involves re-encountering at more challenging levels all the skills and concepts encountered during the first two years. At this level it would be expected that the student should be able to exhibit more confidence,expertise and understanding in all the domains of language experience... This year should be seen as providing the opportunity to exercise and apply the expertise gained and so build up confidence in his/ her own response and ability to use words accurately and appropriately..." (op. cit., p.14).

Whereas formerly the English teacher found the coursework prescribed for him/ her yearly, it is now the case that a teacher may devise a number of teaching 'units' through which - over the three years of Junior Cycle - he/ she will may fulfil the aims of the English syllabus. The Foreword to the 'Guidelines' (op. cit., p (i)) states that these guidelines **'...are not prescriptive. Each individual teacher is free to chose his or her preferred teaching methodology for the achievement of the specified objectives and desired outcomes...'.**

The Department expects that, over the three years of the course, teachers will teach 'six substantial syllabus units', which 'should be designed and planned to suit the ability level of the students' (op. cit., p.1). A 'syllabus unit' is defined as **"...a selection of concepts and skills in literature and language organised about a chosen focus (Texts, Theme, Genre, Language forms/ functions) which gives purpose and direction to a part of a programme in English."** (ibid.)

Clearly these guidelines allow room for a wide variety of teaching and learning experiences at Junior Cycle. Given the close relationship which has always existed between the teaching of English and the teaching of media studies, one of the ways in which learning experiences in English could be enriched is through the inclusion of media studies. Indeed the Department is most encouraging on this aspect of Junior Cycle English:

"The syllabus is consciously to retain the best elements of English Teaching and learning as it has developed in the past while also allowing teachers to introduce new elements such as adolescent literature, classroom drama and media studies" ('Comhairle': NCCA information bulletin, October 1988).

STRATEGIES FOR THE INCLUSION OF MEDIA STUDIES WITHIN THE TEACHING OF ENGLISH

There are two ways in which media studies may be introduced within English:

- The teacher can teach a range of 'English' material <u>while keeping in mind</u> the core and subsidiary concepts described in Appendix V. This may be termed the **Indirect Approach**;

- The teacher can devise a separate 'Media Studies' teaching unit which fits easily within the range of the other English materials offered but which is in itself an independent unit focusing <u>directly</u> upon the core and subsidiary concepts of Appendix V. This may be termed the **Direct Approach.**

<u>Media Studies within Junior Certificate English: The 'Indirect Approach'</u>

Fundamental to this approach to media studies within English is a clear grasp, on the part of the teacher, of concepts which are considered by media theorists to be essential to media education.
These concepts (described in chapter five of this dissertation) may be taught gradually over the three years of Junior Cycle, using materials, texts and methodologies commonly employed within the English classroom.

It is very important that the texts and materials are used as an entry to the 'concept'. That is to say, at no

time -and most especially not with First and Second Years - should learners be presented with a definition of (say) 'Realism', which they are then asked to 'apply' to the materials. The concept should not be mentioned by the teacher until such time as discussion and classwork has provided learners with a firm grasp of what it is that the concept attempts to describe. An example (based on actual classroom practice) of this 'indirect approach' is provided below.

SUGGESTED UNIT: 'DREAMS AND DAY-DREAMS' ('Realism')

General Outline:

This unit will explore the pupil's real world experiences and those he/she would prefer to happen. Study-texts will reflect 'real' everyday events and those of 'the imagination'. Discussions will be guided towards discussion of the concept of **'realism'** in literature: in what sense is one work of art more 'real' than another? What part is played by vocabulary, setting, narrative, etc? How important is selection?

Materials

Most of the work of the Unit will be built on a careful reading of three short stories, each of which are included in 'Exploring English', edited by Augustine Martin (Gill and MacMillan, 1967). These are: 'The Secret Life of Walter Mitty', by James Thurber; 'The Wild Duck's Nest', Michael MacLaverty; and 'The Potato Gatherers' by Brien Friel.

Classwork

It is recommended that three lessons per week be given to this work. All written work, tapes etc. arising from the Unit should be stored, so that the Unit may be 'revived' at a future date, when the learners may build on this work.

The Unit could last four to five weeks and should seek to explore received texts and concentrate on comprehension and 'factual writing'. This work could then be used as a basis for learners' own factual and imaginative composition.

Week One: 'The Secret Life of Walter Mitty' - Read and discuss. Elicit views on whether learners see it as 'true to life'. **['REALISM']**. Why is he day-dreaming? What have the dreams in common? Look at vocabulary and imagery. Write 'Walter Mitty's Fifth Dream...' Discuss/ write about own dreams .
/ hopes.

Week Two: 'The Wild Duck's Nest' - Read and discuss. As a story, how is it different to Mitty? (Especially in the way it is told **['NARRATIVE']**.Any similarities? Vocabulary and imagery (cf., Mitty's American vocabulary and expressions). Which story do the learners prefer? Why?

Week Three: Factual reporting. 'Things that really happened': Look at some newspaper reports. Discuss language used. (Ideally also include different accounts of the same incident, where the reporting is more interesting to read in one). Discuss/ write about 'How I Spent my Summer Holidays'. Followed quickly by 'How I Would Like to Spend my Summer Holidays'.

Week Four: Composition in photos. How does arrangement and **selection** affect interpretation? Pupils bring in their own photos from newspapers. Interpret **WITHOUT** captions (the concept of **anchorage** might be raised?). Teacher supplies photos without captions. Written interpretations. Discussion on the differing views. How a photo has a past and a future. Written work, imagining the situation that led to the photo and what happened afterwards. Work may be 'factual' or 'imaginative'.

Week Five: Read aloud written work on photos. Discuss 'factual'/'imaginative' aspects. What happened **after** the two short stories finished. How does the narrative decide the story's 'afterlife'? Write a short piece continuing 'The Wild Duck's Nest. Read aloud.

Finish with a reading of 'The Potato Gatherers', and broach the idea of 'stereotypes'. This story, with its continual reference to the world of 'The Western', could also be very useful as an introduction to the the way in which stories fall into certain 'types' and how these 'types' arouse certain expectations **['GENRE']**.

Media Studies within Junior Certificate English: The 'Indirect Approach'

The following Units are provided by the Department of Education in its Junior Certificate 'Guidleines for English Teachers' (September 1989: 84-87). Both are adapted from Units supplied by the Irish Film Institute

Sample Unit 14 - Mass Media

Introduction to Media Studies

Introduction to Media Studies is designed for 1st year students and hopes to encourage them to begin to think and talk about the media as products/ processes. Through a range of linguistic exercises it aims to develop:

1. Basic cognitive skills in terms of media.

2. The understanding of underlying media concepts

    * media/ medium
    * broadcast media
    * print media
    * images/ visuals

* selection
* construction

3. The awareness of personal, social and cultural facets of the media -

* student's own interaction with the media
* peer group consumption/ preference/ opinions
* views/ judgements of consumption patterns of other subgroups

Aesthetic and Imaginative Contexts

1. Pervasiveness and Persuasiveness of the media

- Possible language assignments:

* In-class survey and discussion of media consumption and preference
* Write a description of the media for people from Mars.
* Debate: Younger children should be allowed to watch what they like on TV.

- Supplementary Material

* (TITLE) was a popular story/ play: What does it share with television stories/ plays today?

2. Mass Media

- Possible Language Assignments

* Describe a medium for the class without using certain key words
* Write two letters about an issue, one to a newspaper, another to a friend. How do they differ in style,content?

- Supplementary Material

* Discuss the poems of a selected writer. Which modern mass medium would best popularise them?
* Does a TV soap have an author, like a short story has?

3. The Power of the Image

- Possible Language Assignments

* Write the story of a TV ad - Compare with the class. How is it similar to a short story?
* What does it share with news on TV?
* Write an outline for the next episode of your favourite soap/serial.

- Supplementary material

* Expand a poem into a short TV drama.
* Describe one image that would best express the sentiments in a story/ poem/ film.

4. The Media Make the News: Selection/ Construction

- Possible Language Assignments

  * Given a list of possible articles, write headlines and by-lines and arrange them for the front page of a newspaper.
  * Discuss your selection and what you left out
  * Listen to a radio news and compare the selection of items with front page of newspaper. Compare headlines across the newspapers that deal with the same topic - choice and use of words and typeface.

- Supplementary material

  * Take a 'nasty' character from a novel or story and write a sympathetic description of him or her. Construct a sensational news item from a selected poem

Sample Unit 15 - Mass Media

Advertising

'Advertising' is designed to follow on the Introduction to Media Studies Unit for first Year Students. Through a range of linguistic exercises focusing on advertising, it aims to develop:

1. Basic cognitive skills , in terms of media.

2. The understanding of fundamental media concepts -

   * denotation
   * connotation
   * anchorage
   * preferred reading
   * target audience
   * representation

3. The awareness of personal, social and cultural facets of the media -

   * range of media products in society
   * personal consumption of media products
   * personal/ social preference for media products
   * media as a source of pleasure
   * cultural-specific elements in the media

The unit is designed to encourage the use of a wide range of media formats as is feasible - magazines, newspapers,

record/book sleeves, comics, bill board reproductions, radio, television, video as well as integrating literary texts (drama, poetry, novels).

Duration of the course would be approximately 6 weeks

Aesthetic and Imaginative Contexts

1. Favourite/worst advertisement: range of ads across the media; aesthetic, personal, cultural preferences.

- Possible Language Assignments

* Individual/Group oral selection and justification of favourite/ worst ads from a selection of media;
* Class discussion

- Supplementary Material

* Survey of ad consumption - school/ home.

2. Composition/Style of images/messages denoted/connoted.

- Possible Language Assignments

* Oral/ written analysis, checklists of contents and technical composition of selected images.
* Description of messages, both explicit and implicit.

3. Context and target audience for an advertisement.

- Possible Language Assignments

* Select or compose an ad to sell a product;
* Organise a presentation to sell your ad to the company concerned - explain where it would appear and whom it would be aimed at.

4. Representation in advertising images

- Possible Language Assignments

* Find a character in a number of TV ads that you think is a stereotype - list the shared features of each ad.
* Select a character from a play as a model to sell a product - explain your choice.

- Supplementary Material

* School book covers - How do they represent the subject and attract students?.

5. The Moving Image

- Possible Language Assignments

* Select a . Programme and watch the credit sequence.
* Organise and write a description of how it sells a programme.
* Develop a credit sequence to suit a novel - Describe how it would attract a particular audience.

- Supplementary Material

* Compare a video 'teaser' and the fly-cover of a novel - Do they give the same information?

BIBLIOGRAPHY

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Alvarado, M., Gutch, R., Wollen, T., (1987) Learning the Media, London: Macmillan Education.

Argyle, M. (1975) Bodily Communication, London: Methuen.

Aristotle, Poetics, in 'Ten Great Works of Philosophy' (1969) (Ed. by R.P.Wolff) New York: New American Library

Armes, R. (1988) On Video, London: Routledge.

Babin, P., (ed.) (1970) The Audio-Visual Man, Ohio: Pflaum.

Barnes, D. (1985) Practical Curriculum Study, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

Barthes, R. (1977) Image- Music- Text, London: Fontana.

Blanchard, S., (1985) Media Studies and the CPVE, London: University of London Institute of Education

Breen, R., (1986) Subject Availability and Student Performance in the Senior Cycle of Irish Post-Primary Schools, Dublin: The Economic and Social Research Institute.

Catholic Communications Institute of Ireland (August 1989), Information Booklet.

Coolahan, J. (1981) Irish Education: History and Structure, Dublin: Institute of Public Administration.

Council of Education (1950) Terms of Reference, Government Publications (available Trinity College Library, Dublin).

Council of Education (1962) Report on the Secondary School Curriculum, Government Publications.

Crooks,T. and McKernan,J. (1984) The Challenge of Change, Dublin: Institute of Public Administration.

Curriculum and Examination Board, Information Bulletin No.1, Dublin (May 1984).

Curriculum and Examinations Board, Issues and Structures, Dublin (September 1984).

Curriculum and Examinations Board, Language in the Curriculum, Dublin (September 1985).

Curriculum and Examinations Board, The Arts in Education, Dublin (September 1985).

Curriculum and Examinations Board, Social,Political and Environmental Education, Dublin (August 1987).

Department of Education (1978) Pre-Employment Courses, Dublin: Government Publications.

Department of Education (1984) Programme for Action in Education (1984-1987), Dublin: Government Publications, 1984.

Department of Education (1984) Vocational Preparation and Training Programmes, Dublin, Unpublished circular letter to Chief Executive officers, School Principals, and Managers.

Department of Education, Rialacha agus Clar do leith Meanscoileanna/ Rules and Programme for Secondary Schools (1984/5), Dublin: Government Publications.

Department of Education (NCCA) (Sept.1989)
- Junior Certificate Syllabus, and Teacher's Handbook (Feb.1989).
- Junior Certicate English: Guidelines for Teachers, (Sept. 1989)

Department of Education/OECD (1962) Investment in Education, Government Publications.

Dick, E., (1988) Signs of Success, (Report of the Media Education Development Project, Scotland), Glasgow: Scottish Film Council.

Dunleavy, J. (1982) 'Second-Level Education', in Education in Ireland, Eurydice Information Seminar Report, Brussels: Eurydice Central Unit.

Eliot, T.S. (1948) Notes towards a Definition of Culture, London: Faber.

Enzensberger, H.M. (1970) 'Constituents of a Theory of the Media', in Enzensberger (1976) Raids and Reconstruction - Essays on Politics, Crime and Culture, London: Pluto.

Farrell, B., (Ed.) (1984) Communications and Community in Ireland, Dublin: RTE/Mercier Press

Fiske, J., (1982) Introduction to Communication Studies, London: Methuen.

Glasgow University Media group (1976) Bad News, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

Glasgow University Media Group (1982) More Bad News, London: Writers and Readers

Gurevitch, M., Bennet, T., and Woollacott, J. (Eds.) (1982) Culture, Society and the Media, London: Methuen.

Hall, S., 'Culture, the Media, and the 'ideological effect', in Curran, J. et al (eds.) (1977) Mass Communication and Society,
London: Arnold.

Hall, S. and Whannel, P. (1984) The Popular Arts, London: Hutchinson.

Halloran, J. (ed.) (1970) The Effects of Television, London: Panther.

Hannan, D.F., and Boyle, M. (1987) Schooling Decisions: The Origins and Consequences of Selection and Streaming in Irish Post-Primary Schools, Dublin: The Economic and Social Research Institute.

Hartman, P. and Husband, C. (1974) Racism and the Mass Media, London: Davis-Poynter.

Hass, G. (1987) Curriculum Planning: A New Approach, (5th ed.) London: Allyn and Bacon.

Hattendorf, M. (1988) Media Express (The Journey to Media Education and Film Training in Northern Ireland), Published by the N.I. Film and Television Working Group. Also: Report on Media Education Conference November 19th, 1988, by WEA and 'E Force' (N.Ireland)

Hill, J. (1986) Sex, Class and Realism, London: British Film Institute.

Hoggart, R., (1957) The Uses of Literacy, London: Penguin.

Irish Film Institute (1984) Submission from the Irish Film Institute to the Curriculum and Examination Board Regarding the Necessity for Media Education in Irish Schools, Dublin: unpublished.

Kelly, A.V., (1982) Curriculum: Theory and Practice, London: Harper and Row.

Leavis, F.R., (ed) (1933, reprinted 1976) Towards a Standard of Criticism, London: Fokroft.

Lowery, S., and DeFleur, M.L. (1983) Milestones in Mass Communication Research: Media Effects, New York: Longman.

Lusted, D., and Drummond. P. (Eds) (1985) Television and Schooling, London: British Film Institute.

Lynskey, E., Learning to Learn a Second Language, in 'The Language Teacher', (Spring 1988) Dublin: Linguistics Institute.

Manpower Services Commission, (UK) (1984) TVEI Review.

Martin, A., (Ed.) (1967), Exploring English (Anthology Short Stories), Gill and MacMillan, and The Educational Company.

Masterman, L. (1980) Teaching About Television, London: MacMillan.

Masterman, L. (1985) Teaching the Media, London: Comedia.

Maugham, W.S., (1948) Here and There (Short Stories), London: The Reprint Society (Heinemann)

McBride, S., O'Dwyer, D. and Stokes, D. (1986) Roll It There, Colette, Dublin: O'Brien Educational.

McElligot, T.J., (1966), Education in Ireland, Dublin: Institute of Public Administration.

McLoone, M. (1983) Media Studies in Irish Education, Dublin: Irish Film Institute.

McLoone, M. and MacMahon, J. (Ed.) (1984) Television and Irish Society, Dublin: RTE/IFI Publication, 10.

McLoone, M., O'Dwyer, L. and Stokes, D. (1985) Every Picture Tells A Story, Dublin: O'Brien Educational.

McQuail, D. (1987) Mass Communication Theory, London: Sage.

Morley, D. (1980) The Nationwide Audience, London: British Film Institute.

Murdock, G. and Phelps, G. (1973) Mass Media and the Secondary School, London: MacMillan.

Murphy, C. (1979) The Newspaper in the Classroom, Dublin: The Irish Times.

National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (formerly CEB) (1988), Comhairle (Information Bulletin, October), page 5.

Neagley, R.L. and Evans, N.D. (1967) Handbook for Effective Curriculum Development, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall.

Neale, S. (1980) Genre, London: British Film Institute.

Newsome Report (1963) Half Our Future, London: HMSO.

Ni Chonghaile, B. (1984) An Ghaeilge agus an Rialtas 1922-83, BA thesis (unpublished), Dublin City University.

Norreklit, L. (1973) Concepts - Their nature and significance for Metaphysics and Epistemology, (Odense University Studies in Philosophy Vol.2), Odense University Press.

Owens, D. and Hunt, P. (1985) An Introduction to the Mass Media and Understanding the Mass Media, (school textbooks). Also, accompanying Teacher's Guide, Dublin: Veritas.

O'Suilleabhain, S.V. (1971) Secondary Education, in 'A History of Irish Catholicism', Vol.V, Dublin: Gill & MacMillan.

Parkin, F. (1973) Class Inequality and Political Order, London: Paladin.

Plato, The Republic, (Trans. B.Jowett), New York: Random House.

Pring, R. (1984) Personal and Social Education in the Curriculum, London: Hodder and Stoughton.

Ranson, S. (1984) 'Towards a Tertiary Tripartisan: New Codes of Social Control and the 17+', in Broadfoot, P. (ed.) (1984).

Report of the Central Advisory Council for Education (The Crowther Report) (1959), HMSO, (paragraph 510: in TV and Schooling, p.16)

Rogers, K. (1985) Media Studies in the Post-Primary Curriculum, Unpublished BA Thesis, NIHE Dublin.

Stenhouse, L., (1975) An Introduction to Curriculum Research and Development, London, Heinemann.

Sullivan, B. (1970) Movies: Universal Language - Film Study in High School, Indiana: Fides.

Taba, H. (1962) Curriculum Development: Theory and Practice, New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovitch.

Thompson, D. (ed.) (1964) Discrimination and Popular Culture, London: Penguin.

Udall, R., and Udall, S. (1979) People and Communication, Buckinghamshire: Hulton Educational.

White Paper on Economic Development (1980), Government Publications.

Wills, H.R., (October 1959) 'Editorial', Screen Education, No.1.

Wilson, J., (1966) Thinking with Concepts, Cambridge University Press.

Wilson, J., (1977) Philosophy and Practical Education, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul

Wright, C.R. (1959) Mass Communication: A Sociological Perspective, New York: Random House.